

THE PLACE OF THE CONSTITUTION ON THE LITURGY WITHIN THE HERMENEUTICS OF VATICAN II

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1. A Fact and a Question

As liturgists, whenever we come to consider the question of the hermeneutics of the Second Vatican Council, we are faced with an immediate and overwhelming fact: there are two distinct schools of reflection on the conciliar corpus.¹

On the one hand, there are the exegetes of the Constitution on the Liturgy, who are usually focused on the relationship between the text of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (hereafter *SC*) and its implementation in subsequent liturgical reform.² A typical example of this would be the issues of the French liturgical review *La Maison Dieu* which were

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²For the documents of Vatican II's liturgical reform, the texts (except for the ritual books themselves) are all published together in R. Kaczynski, *Enchiridion documentorum instaurationis liturgicae a studiis S. Congregationis pro Culto Divino*, [EDIL], Vol 1 (1963-1973), Torino: Marietti, 1975, Vol 2 (1973-1983), Roma: CLV - Ed. liturgiche, 1985, Vol 3, (1983-1993), Roma: CLV- Ed. liturgiche, 1997.

published in 1963, immediately after the promulgation of SC,³ and from 1983, celebrating the 20th anniversary of SC.⁴ These commentaries give greatest attention to the programmatic part of the Constitution (the programme for liturgical reform it outlines) to the detriment of coverage of the doctrinal aspects which can be found throughout the entire document, and in particular to its first chapter, “General Principles for the Restoration and Promotion of the Sacred Liturgy.” However, it does need to be said that these commentaries never fail to underline the importance of the major doctrinal elements of the Constitution, such as the actualisation of the Paschal Mystery (SC 2), or such as the presence of Christ in liturgical celebrations (SC 7).⁵

Liturgists, then, explored the text of SC as the charter for liturgical aggiornamento with great attention; however, they gave little attention to the other conciliar texts. The index of a 2011 German commentary on SC reveals the typical way in which it was handled separately from the other documents.⁶

On the other hand, research and publications on Vatican II as a whole give little space to SC.⁷ Very simply, in studies of Vatican II,

³2^e Concile du Vatican, *La Constitution sur la Liturgie*, Texte officiel, traduction française, notes et index, LMD 76, 1963/4 et 2^e Concile du Vatican, *La Constitution sur la Liturgie, Commentaire complet* par J. Gelineau, P.-M. Gy, P. Journel, A.-M. Roguet, X. Seumois, LMD 77, 1964/1.

⁴“*La Constitution sur la liturgie, De sa préparation à sa mise en application I*”, LMD 155, 1983/3 and “*La Constitution sur la liturgie, De sa préparation à sa mise en application II*”, LMD 156, 1983/4.

⁵Obviously a complete bibliography cannot be offered here, but here are two important works, chosen because they each offer, at different moments in history, a kind of synthesis: M. Sodi, “*La Sacrosanctum Concilium e i suoi commenti dal 1964 ad oggi*,” *Notitiae* 19 (1983) 571-607; R. Kaczynski, “*Theologischer Kommentar zur Konstitution über die heilige Liturgie*” dans *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, Bd 1, Freiburg: Herder, 2004, 1-227. It should be said that the principal doctrines in SC have been broadly accepted by liturgists, including those who do not belong to the Roman Catholic Church: one example of the latter (by a Swiss Reformed liturgist) is this stimulating article: B. Bürki, “*Le Christ dans la liturgie, d’après l’article 7 de la Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium de Vatican II*,” *QL* 64 (1983) 195-212.

⁶M. Stuflesser (Hg.), *Sacrosanctum Concilium. Eine Relecture der Liturgie konstitution des II. Vatikanischen Konzils*, Friedrich Pustet, “1. Theologie der Liturgie”, Regensburg: Verlag, 2011, 129: in addition to the numerous references to SC there are only the following: *Dei Verbum* (DV 21); *Lumen Gentium* (LG 1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 19, 24, 34); *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (PO 2); and *Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR 4, 6, 7, 22).

⁷For example, in G. Alberigo and J.-P. Jossua (red.), *La réception de Vatican II, “Cogitatio fidei,”* Paris: Cerf, 1985, 134, only two contributions out of 16 are about the liturgy. In Part III “*Tentatives infructueuses durant le Concile mais reprises au cours*

the Constitution on the Liturgy, despite being the first of Vatican II's documents, remains the forgotten part of the Council.⁸

There is, however, one exception: the way in which the Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) has been set in relationship with SC. Father Pierre-Marie Gy, who was both an important commentator on SC and a major player in the liturgical reform, constantly underlined the consequences that the close relationship between LG and SC has for the liturgy.⁹ Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter marking the 25th anniversary of SC, *Vicesimus quintus annus*, even proposes a sort of reciprocity in the interpretation of the two documents:

On several occasions I have developed various aspects of the conciliar teaching on the Liturgy and have emphasized the importance of the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* for the life of the people of God: in it 'the substance of that ecclesiological doctrine which would later be put before the conciliar Assembly is already evident. The Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the first conciliar document, anticipated' the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* on the Church and amplified, in its turn, the teaching of the Constitution.¹⁰

1.1. The Debate around the Hermeneutics of Vatican II and the Liturgy

As is well known, the debate around the hermeneutics of Vatican II was given fresh impetus because of an important comment made by

de la réception," A. Nocent, OSB shows the impact liturgical reform had on ecclesiological concepts («L'Église locale, réalisation de l'Église du Christ et sujet de l'Eucharistie," 285-302). In Part IV *Requêtes conciliaires non honorées au cours de la réception*, the Spanish liturgist L. Maldonado highlights the danger of developing two kinds of Christian community ("l'une exclusivement liturgique et catéchétique, l'autre seulement sociale et politique," 424).

⁸See Patrick Prétot, "La Constitution sur la liturgie : une herméneutique de la tradition liturgique" in Ph. Bordeyne and L. Villemin (dir.), *Vatican II et la théologie, Perspectives pour le XXI^e siècle*, "Cogitatio fidei" 254, Paris: Cerf, 2006, 19-34. See also M. Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Collegeville/Minnesota: Liturgical Press/Pueblo, 2012, 15.

⁹See especially P.-M. GY, "La liturgie de l'Église, la tradition vivante et Vatican II," *Revue de l'Institut Catholique de Paris* 50 (1994) 29-37. See also M. Faggioli, "Quaestio Disputata: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the Meaning of Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 71/2 (2010) 437-452, reprinted in M. Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1-18.

¹⁰John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus quintus annus*, December 4, 1988 (made public at Pentecost 1989):http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_04121988_vicesimus-quintus-annus_en.html. The quotation within this extract (from para 2) is from Pope John-Paul II's allocution to the Congress of Presidents and Secretaries of National Liturgy Commissions (October 27, 1984): *Insegnamenti*, VII, 2, 1984, 1049.

Pope Benedict XVI in December 2005, right at the beginning of his pontificate.¹¹ The Pope set out the alternative between “two contrary hermeneutics”: on the one hand “a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture”; and on the other “hermeneutic of reform,” of renewal in continuity.

However, the Pope’s position should not be reduced to a pure and simple opposition between rupture and continuity. Laurent Villemain has clearly shown how what Benedict XVI said to the Curia, and which is clearly a deliberate echo of Pope John XXIII’s objective of *aggiornamento*, is more complex than that it first appears: “It must be noted that, while it may be a question of continuity, it is also one of reform, and so we are not just in a perspective of restoration.”¹²

This is extremely important for what concerns the liturgy, because a blunt opposition between rupture and continuity would be problematic not only for any consideration of reform in as much as this implies change—and therefore of a measure of discontinuity, at least in practice—but also for the whole approach that SC offers, in as much as it implies essential transformation of certain fundamental theological notions.

By way of example we can refer to something significant relating to the theology of the Mass. In the course of elaborating the schema for SC, the title of the chapter on the Eucharist changed from *De sacrosancto Missae sacrificio* (August 10, 1961) to *De sacrosancto Eucharistiae mysterio* (November 15, 1961).¹³ Choosing to change the title in this way was important, as we can see from the report made by Bishop J.E. Viana of Mallorca on October 8, 1963, during the 43rd General Congregation.¹⁴ However, in addition, this change led to a

¹¹Cfr Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia, December 22, 2005. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_roman-curia_en.html

¹²Cfr L. Villemain, “Pourquoi commémorer Vatican II?,” *Transversalités* n° 121 (janvier-mars 2012) 115-127, especially, 116-117.

¹³Cfr the dossier on the evolution of the text with the various different versions of the schema in *LMD* 155, 1983, 40-47.

¹⁴“Du rapport de Mgr Jesus Enciso Viana, év. de Majorque, membre de la Commission Conciliaire de liturgie (43^e congrégation générale, 8 octobre 1963), *LMD* 156, 1983, p. 153: “The title of this chapter received a *non placet* from two Fathers, because it fails to make a distinction between Sacrifice and Sacrament. It is the Commission’s opinion that the word ‘mystery’ covers both concepts and should be maintained, especially given that the two concepts are clearly treated in what follows”]; the fact that only two of the Council fathers expressed reservations about

reworking of the section, a reworking that continued in the conciliar aula, to lead to the concentration on the Paschal Mystery that we find in SC 47.¹⁵ Through this reworking, the Council was able to make the actualisation of the Paschal Mystery in the liturgy a factor that unified the theological debates of the past, especially those of the 20th century on the nature of the sacrifice of the Mass.¹⁶

This is, moreover, exactly what Pope John Paul II underlines in his Apostolic Letter for the 25th anniversary of *SC*, *Vicesimus quintus annus*. It is a remarkable and authoritative rereading of *SC*, which has the benefit of the hindsight of the reform accomplished in the intervening years:¹⁷

The guiding principles of the Constitution which were the basis of the reform, remain fundamental in the task of leading the faithful to an active celebration of the mysteries, “the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit” (*SC*, 14). Now that the greater part of the liturgical books have been published, translated and brought into use, it is still necessary to keep these principles constantly in mind and to build upon them. The first principle is the re-enactment of the Paschal Mystery of Christ in the Liturgy of the Church, based on the fact that “it was from the side of Christ as he slept on the Cross that there issued forth the sublime sacrament of the whole Church” (*SC*, 5).¹⁸

this title is itself significant when compared to the place the question of the sacrifice of the Mass would occupy in subsequent controversy about the liturgical reforms.

¹⁵Vatican II, Constitution on the Liturgy, 47: “At the Last Supper, on the night when He was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity (Cfr St Augustine, *Tractatus in Iohannem*, VI, n. 13), a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us (Roman Breviary, feast of Corpus Christi, Second Vespers, antiphon to the Magnificat).” Full official English translation available on Vatican website at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html#_ftn36

¹⁶Concerning the debates before the Council on this question of sacrifice, see the synthesis offered in Ch. Journet, *La Messe, Présence du sacrifice de la croix*, “Textes et études théologiques,” Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1957, 3rd edition, 1961.

¹⁷John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus quintus annus*.

¹⁸John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus quintus annus*, 5 & 6; see also the following essential passage which is the continuation of *Vicesimus quintus annus* 6:

“The whole of liturgical life gravitates about the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the other sacraments in which we draw upon the living springs of salvation (Cfr Is 13:3).

What is absolutely clear is that SC, and the doctrinal reflections it offers—presented on the quotation above as “guiding principles”—are meant to set out the framework for an *aggiornamento* which, of course, cannot be understood as doctrinal rupture, but neither can this be understood as a mere continuation of liturgical tradition.¹⁹

1.2. Sacrosanctum Concilium within the Evolving Hermeneutics of Vatican II

Recently, specialists on Vatican II have shed light on the different approaches to interpreting the conciliar corpus;²⁰ Laurent Villemin in particular has shown how three of Vatican II’s Constitutions, each, in turn, as it were polarised how the Council was interpreted.

There was a first moment, when, because it was Pope John XXIII’s objective of institutional *aggiornamento* that was being emphasised,

Hence we must have a sufficient awareness that through the ‘Paschal Mystery we have been buried with Christ in Baptism, so that we may rise with him to new life’ (*Roman Missal*, The Easter Vigil, Renewal of Baptismal Promises). When the faithful participate in the Eucharist they must understand that truly “each time we offer this memorial sacrifice the work of our redemption is accomplished” (*Roman Missal*, Evening Mass ‘*In Cena Domini*,’ Prayer over the Gifts), and to this end bishops must carefully train the faithful to celebrate every Sunday the marvellous work that Christ has wrought in the mystery of his Passover, in order that they likewise may proclaim it to the world (Cfr *Roman Missal*, Preface of Sundays In Ordinary Time, 1). In the hearts of all, bishops and faithful, Easter must regain its unique importance in the liturgical year, so that it really is the Feast of feasts. Since Christ’s Death on the Cross and his Resurrection constitute the content of the daily life of the Church (Cfr Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, 7), and the pledge of his eternal Passover (Cfr *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7; Cfr Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*), the Liturgy has as its first task to lead us untiringly back to the Easter pilgrimage initiated by Christ, in which we accept death in order to enter into life.”

¹⁹The report by Bishop J.E. Viana shows the extent to which the Council fathers weighed up the wording of the text so that it would fully reflect the deep meaning they intended: it was designed to avoid “making an exposition of the entire theological doctrine on the Eucharist as sacrament and sacrifice,” and so not having “to repeat what had already been so well treated by the Council of Trent (Session XXII).” The report also indicates that this text, para 47 in the final text of SC, has “no other purpose than to justify the dispositions that are to follow for reforming the Mass with the aim of better participation of the faithful and it being more fruitful”: Cfr “Du rapport de Mgr Jesus Enciso Viana ...”, *LMD* 156 (1983) 154-155; the quote is on 154.

²⁰See C. Theobald, *La réception du Concile Vatican II, I. Accéder à la source*, “Unam Sanctam, Nouvelle série,” Paris: Cerf, 2009 (this already considerable piece of work is to be extended further by the same author in a second volume with the title *L’Église dans l’histoire et la société*); O. Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles*, New York: Paulist Press, 2004; Ph. Bordeyne et L. Villemin (dir.), *Vatican II et la théologie*; see also: G. Alberigo, J.-P. Jossua, *La réception de Vatican II*.

the Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) was seen as the cornerstone for understanding the work of the Council. Then later, and influenced by an important intervention by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in 2000, the key role was attributed to the Constitution on Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), with the notion of subordinating the question of the Church to that of God.²¹ In recent years it is the Pastoral Constitution (*Gaudium et Spes*) seems to be rediscovering an essential place, given that in this document explores a new relationship with the world, and in a style that has its origin in the Council as “event”.

To speak of the Council as “event” is, of course, to echo the fundamental work of the Jesuit John O’Malley, published in English as *What happened at Vatican II?* (and in French as *L’événement Vatican II*).²² Founded on a global vision of the history of Councils, O’Malley is able to show how Vatican II appeared as a new kind of Council because of the participation by a great number of bishops from throughout the entire world, because of the presence of non-Catholic observers, and above all because of a style of language that looked to Scripture and the Fathers of the Church for its sources and preferred invitation to issuing anathemas and even definitions.

The Council as event, with its process of discernment, and the sometimes passionate debates and moments of crisis, all bore fruit in something that we might call a conversation starter. It was the encyclical *Ecclesiam suam* (August 6, 1964) that would offer the charter for this renewed vision, founded on the experience of the bishops took part in and so who had intimate contact with the inner workings of the Council, but founded also on and inseparable from other events which acted as a sounding board for the work of the Council.²³ Pope Paul VI’s visit to the Holy Land (January 4-6, 1964) and his historic meeting with Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople, and

²¹L. Villemin, “Pourquoi commémorer Vatican II?,” *Transversalités* n° 121 (janvier-mars 2012) 119 ; L. Villemin underlines that the work of Cristoph Theobald, though beginning from a different perspective, reaches similar conclusions to his own.

²²J. W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II?*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008; tr. fr.: *L’événement Vatican II*, “La part-Dieu” 18, Bruxelles: Lessius, 2011.

²³Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam*, 3: “The aim of this encyclical will be to demonstrate with increasing clarity how vital it is for the world, and how greatly desired by the Catholic Church, that the two should meet together, and get to know and love one another.” http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam_en.html

then his speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations (October 4, 1965) represent two huge symbols of the style that contributed so strongly to the impact of the Council. To this we must add the liturgical celebrations, especially those for the opening and closing of the Council sessions, the liturgies presided by the various Eastern Rite Patriarchs, and above all the first concelebrations around the Pope at the altar of the Confession—all of these also, and perhaps above all, contributed to forging this sense of style, thereby translating into action the ideas which, without the liturgy might have remained theoretical, and with no concrete application in the life of the faithful.²⁴

However, to the best of our knowledge, in all these different approaches to Vatican II as an event, there has never been a reference to SC as an essential key for understanding the work of the Council.²⁵ That is something we should be asking about today: the liturgical reforms of Vatican II (some of which were implemented as early as 1964) were the tangible and immediate ways in which the Council touched the People of God as a whole. However, certain current developments in how liturgy is practised, even in terms of liturgical norms, put in question to what extent there is a real lack of understanding of the work of the Council. Sadly, the impact of such practices have greater impact on the faithful than technical reference to what the Council intended, and which in any case has not been well understood; indeed, the purposes of the Council may well have been obscured by such practices, some of which have been simply wrong.

²⁴Cfr S. Antoni, “La liturgie dans la vie d’un concile: un regard sur Vatican II à partir de *La Croix*”, *LMD* 272 (2012/4) 13-42.

²⁵There is, however, as Professor Andrea Grillo (Padua) alerted us, a commentary on the conciliar texts by Giuseppe Dossetti (1913-1996), an Italian politician who became a monk in 1956, and who played a major role in the Bologna School. Moreover at the International Congress on the implementation of Vatican II organised by the Year 2000 Jubilee Year Committee, Cardinal Ratzinger’s presentation on the ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* (February 27, 2000) underlined the intimate connection between SC and *Lumen Gentium*, and expressing regret that “dans l’histoire de l’après-Concile, la Constitution sur la Liturgie ne fut plus comprise à partir de ce primat fondamental de l’adoration, mais plutôt comme un livre de recettes sur ce que nous pouvons faire avec la liturgie” [in post-conciliar history, the Constitution on the Liturgy was no longer understood on the basis of the fundamental primacy of adoration, but rather as a book of recipes on what we can do with the liturgy]. The complete text of Cardinal Ratzinger’s address can be found here: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000227_ratzinger-lumen-gentium_fr.html

2. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: A Key to the Hermeneutics of Vatican II?

This second part will develop the reasons why *Sacrosanctum Concilium* can be considered as the hermeneutic key to the Second Vatican Council.

2.1. The “Preface” of the Council

First and foremost we can say that precisely because *SC* was the first text voted at Vatican II (December 4, 1963)—and voted almost unanimously by the Council fathers—it has special status within the ensemble of Vatican II texts. This status is precisely that this text can be considered as the entrance into the work of the Council, and also as the key to how to interpret it. A good number of commentators have commented on why, of the schemas proposed to the bishops, schema 5 was the first to be accepted, and this to the surprise of many; the reason is that the way was already prepared by the huge work already accomplished by the Liturgical Movement, so that reflection on its content was already more mature.²⁶ What is more, the very fact that this document has the status of being a “Constitution” assures it a place among the four major documents of the Council. It can be seen, therefore, as a sort of “preface” to the entire work of the Council, where the force of the word “preface” is not simply something that comes “before” but rather meaning it is the entrance into the very aim and purpose of the Council.²⁷

2.2. Liturgical *Aggiornamento* and the Renewal of the Church

Secondly, *SC* is not merely a text that is both pastoral and doctrinal—as indeed are all the texts of Vatican II—but it is also a programme for the reform of all the Church’s liturgical institutions. This objective of reform is clearly proclaimed in the opening paragraph of the document, but whose import may be somewhat masked by the formal way in which this intent is expressed:

This sacred Council has several aims in view: it desires to impart an ever increasing vigour to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all

²⁶Cfr P. Declerck, “L’inscription de certaines grandes intuitions du Mouvement Liturgique dans l’œuvre de Vatican II,” *LMD* 269, (2012/1) 79-100.

²⁷Cfr in this sense the commentary in *LMD* 77, 1964 (published within weeks of the adoption of *SC*) 10-11: the author of the commentary on the Introduction to *SC* highlights the consequences or effect that the Council deliberations on the liturgy would have for the rest of the Council, and in particular on the schema on revelation.

who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church. The Council therefore sees particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy.²⁸

So, from its very opening words, Vatican II, speaking of the liturgy, defines the task before it as a fourfold programme:

- to give greater vigour to the Christian life
- to adapt the Church's institutions to match the need of our times
- to foster whatever promotes union among those who believe in Christ
- to strengthen the Church's mission to attract to Christ all those whom God wants to be saved (cf. 1 Tim 2 :3-6, explicitly quoted in SC 5).²⁹

In these terms, SC matches exactly the objective of *aggiornamento* which Pope John XXIII assigned to the Council.³⁰ What is more, it is an act of "reform within the line of tradition," which corresponds to

²⁸VATICAN II, Constitution on the Liturgy, 1: "*Sacrosanctum Concilium, cum sibi proponat vitam christianam inter fideles in dies augere; eas institutiones quae mutationibus obnoxiaesunt, ad nostrae aetatis necessitates melius accommodare; quidquid unionem omnium in Christum credentium conferre potest, fovere; et quidquid omnes in sinum Ecclesiae vocandos conducit, roborare; suum esse arbitratur peculiariratione et iam instaurand amat que fovendam Liturgiam curare*"; Cfr also n°3 : "*Quare Sacrosanctum Concilium, de fovendaque instauranda Liturgia quae sequuntur principia censet in mentem revocanda et practicas normas statuendas esse.*"

²⁹On the universal call to holiness through the Paschal Mystery of Christ, see Vatican II, Constitution on the Church in the modern world, *Gaudium et spes*, 22: "All this ("linked with the paschal mystery and patterned on the dying Christ, man will hasten forward to resurrection in the strength which comes from hope") holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery"; see also *Lumen Gentium* 16; the Decree *Ad gentes* (in particular 3-5); and the Declaration *Nostra aetate* on relations with non-Christian religions 2.

³⁰Cfr G. Alberigo, "L'annonce du Concile. Des sécurités du retranchement à la fascination de la recherche," "Un geste de tranquille audace", in G. Alberigo, *Histoire du Concile Vatican II, 1959-1965, I. Le catholicisme vers une nouvelle époque, L'annonce et la préparation (Janvier 1959–Octobre 1962)*, French edition under editorial directorship of E. Fouilloux, Paris/Louvain: Cerf/Peeters, 1997, 55: "Le Pape Jean voulait un concile de transition entre deux époques, c'est-à-dire un concile qui ferait passer l'Église de l'époque post-tridentine et, dans une certaine mesure, de l'ère constantinienne pluriséculaire, à une phase nouvelle de témoignage et d'annonce, en récupérant des éléments forts et permanents de la tradition, jugés aptes à alimenter et à garantir la fidélité évangélique d'une transition si difficile".

the very idea of what a council is, as Bernard Sesboué has shown in terms of the first Councils and Christology, as indicated by use of the expression “that is to say.”³¹ In liturgy, this “that is to say” consists in taking up the inheritance of tradition, but differently, so as to actualise it in and for new cultural situations or conditions. Reform, then, works via discontinuity in terms of liturgical forms, but that very change is designed to sustain and maintain continuity of Tradition. The “that is to say” in liturgy operates at one and the same time and inseparably—which means the process here is far more complex than it is for dogma—across pronouncements, texts and rites. This aspect was probably not made sufficiently clear, and the failure to do so led to many a conflict.

It was Vatican II’s intention, then, to conjugate Tradition and progress. This is why from the very opening words of *SC* the work of the Council is seen as a duty to be “undertaken,” a duty which implies the reform and promotion of the liturgy. We see here affirmed what Pope John Paul II in his turn would designate as the need to find “with great balance the part of... tradition and progress.”³²

2.3. Aggiornamento to Give Greater Vigour to Christian Life

It might seem that we can already refuse the idea that *SC* and the liturgical reform that flowed from it should be considered as acts of rupture.

It is quite the contrary of an act of rupture. The theological axes of *SC* were laid out precisely so as to assure renewal within continuity, and so as to safeguard the fundamental relationship between doctrine and liturgical practices. This relationship is very often treated in terms of the adage *lex orandi, lex credendi*, which, for all that it is traditional³³ carries with it the risk of reducing what we do in liturgy

³¹B. Sesboué, *Jésus-Christ dans la tradition de l’Église. Pour une actualisation de la Christologie de Chalcédoine*, 2^e éd., “Jésus et Jésus-Christ,” Paris: Desclée, 2000.

³²John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus quintus annus*, 4; Constitution on the Liturgy, 23.

³³The expression has its origin in the work of Prosper of Aquitaine, a disciple of St Augustine: *Indiculus de gratia*, Cap. 8: “*ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*” [“so that the law of praying governs the law of believing”]: PL 51, col. 209s; on interpreting this adage: K. Federer, *Liturgie und Glaube. “Legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi” (Tiro Prosper von Aquitanien). Eine theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung*, “Paradosis” 4, Fribourg/Suisse: Paulusverlag, 1950; P. De Clerck, “*Lex orandi, lex credendi*. Sensorinel et avatars historiques d’un adage équivoque,” *QL* 59 (1978) 193–212; P.

and what we profess in dogmatic faith to being two sides of the same coin. In reality it is Scripture that is the *lex* which unites one to the other by regulating the circular relationship they have with each other. This is why the theological justification for any liturgical practice must be based on the authority of Scripture, which must be understood as the first criterion of discernment.³⁴ Liturgy is the orchestration of biblical revelation: it is from Scripture that liturgy draws its strength and legitimacy. This means that, strictly speaking, making the distinction between the doctrinal aspect and the pastoral aspect is impossible; indeed the Council seems to have had an intuition of this in not adding to SC (as it did with the three other Constitutions) either the qualifying adjective “dogmatic” or “pastoral”.

Consequently, to reduce liturgical questions to merely ritual aspects backed up by a disciplinary arsenal does justice to neither the nature of the liturgy in its relation to faith confessed, nor to the fundamental role of the magisterium in this domain. The vigilance of the hierarchy over liturgical institutions is not primarily a question of disciplinary power, but rather has to be understood in relationship to their responsibility for the deposit of faith.³⁵ What is more, concentrating on purely ritual approaches opens the danger to forgetting that the liturgy is at one and the same time source of life and life transmitted, because it is the voice of living Tradition of the Church which resonates in the liturgy, and as we are reminded by *Dei*

De Clerck, “*Lex orandi, lex credendi*: un principe heuristique”, *LMD* 222 (2000/2) 61–78.

³⁴Cfr M. Klöckener, “Augustins Kriterien zu Einheit und Vielfalt in der Liturgie nach seinen Briefen 54 und 55,” *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 41 (1991) 24–39, who shows how for Augustine, in particular on the basis of his Letter 54 to Januarius, if a liturgical practice can be shown to be founded, for example, on a universal tradition going back to the apostles, or on a general Council, or on a usage recognised by a local Church, if this practice is attested by the Bible, then the authority of such a practice is not in doubt: “Sacred Scripture is the first source and norm for the liturgy. What it indicates for the liturgy is obligatory and unavoidable both for the universal Church and for particular Churches” (p. 30).

³⁵Cfr our article “Liturgie et confession de foi. À propos de quelques questions actuelles,” *Documents Épiscopat*, n° 11 (2009) 24 p., in which we explore in particular the question of the responsibility of bishops, as it is expressed by *Christus Dominus*, 15; see also L. Villemin, “L’autorité des conférences épiscopales en matière de liturgie. Interprétations initiales et réinterprétations récentes,” in G. Routhier and G. Jobin (dir.), *L’Autorité et les autorités, L’herméneutique théologique de Vatican II*, “Unam Sanctam, Nouvelle Série,” Paris: Cerf, 2010, 151–166.

Verbum.³⁶ It is above all in the unceasingly renewed celebrations of the liturgy, but also in its multiple evolutions throughout history and as it encounters different cultures, that the People of God experience the development of Tradition.

2.4. Doctrinal development

From this point of view, *SC* represents a key to understanding all of Vatican II's work, a Council that is not only "pastoral" but is dogmatic precisely because it is pastoral³⁷ and opens the way to doctrinal "progress". *SC*, because it performs a sorting exercise, operates as an exercise in the discernment of Tradition. This process would go as far as restoring practices long since lost, but which the Council, as a major instance for actualising Tradition, designates as a "development" of Tradition.

It is worth noting that the notion of progress—which sits midway between rupture and continuity—has to be understood within a

³⁶Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei verbum*), 8: "This tradition which comes from the Apostles develop in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit (Cfr First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Chap. 4, "On Faith and Reason": Denzinger 1800 (3020). For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Lk 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her. The words of the holy fathers witness to the presence of this living tradition, whose wealth is poured into the practice and life of the believing and praying Church."

³⁷The arguments that attempt to deny the authority of Vatican II often appeal to the idea that it was not a "dogmatic" Council, but only a "pastoral" one, meaning thereby it had no doctrinal authority. Pope Paul VI, in his letter of October 11, 1976 to Archbishop Lefebvre, explicitly dismisses the unjustifiable usage of this distinction: "*Neque amplius in medium proferre tibi licet illam distinctionem inter rem dogmaticam et pastorem, qua fretus alios textus Concilii Vaticani II accipias, alios respuas. Re quidem vera, quae in aliquo Concilio edicta sunt, ea non eiusdem indolis consensionem postulant; etenim solum id, quod ut veritas fidei ve1 ut fidei adnexum actibus "definitivis", quos vocant, affirmatur, assensum fidei infert.*" [Our translation: You cannot appeal to the distinction between what is dogmatic and what is pastoral to accept certain texts of the Second 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.] http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/letters/1976/documents/hf_p-vi_let_19761011_arc-lefebvre_it.html

larger development, expressed in the four verbs from the opening paragraph of *SC*: *augere* (Christian life); *accomodare* (institutions); *fovere* (union of all who believe in Christ); and *roborare* (whatever contributes to the call to all to be part of the Church). In other words, liturgical reforms, to the extent that they concern correcting and improving liturgical books and rituals are not doing so primarily for liturgical progress, but rather for the progress of the Christian life.³⁸ Given that inculturation is a constant concern in the history of liturgy,³⁹ it is preferable to bring to the fore the notion of “adaptation” of the liturgy to a given era and culture, rather than the idea of “progress”.

In fact, it is by its work of reform (*instauratio*) that Vatican II sought to contribute to the progress of Christian life, founded on a development of Tradition, which corresponded to a deepening of the mystery of faith, in a new moment of history. This framework provides the terms on which judgement can be made as to whether the new liturgical books enable an authentic living out of the act of Tradition performed by the Council.

2.5. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: Setting a Style for Vatican II?

If we are able to consider *SC* as the hermeneutic key to Vatican II, it is above all because it established a “style”. It is no exaggeration to say that *SC* made a major contribution to forging the style of Vatican II, and precisely because of this, deserves to be thought of as a sort of conciliar paradigm.⁴⁰

³⁸The category of “progress” does not really suit rituality: what would be the criteria for saying there was progress? Historically, arguments in favour of reforms have most often been founded on returning to more original sources, judged as being “purer”. The notion of adapting to a new context seems to be more recent. On the history of liturgical reforms, see M. Klöckener, B. Kranemann (hrsg.), *Liturgiereformen, Historische Studien zu einem bleibenden Grundzug des christlichen Gottesdienstes* (Festschrift Angelus Häußling), Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2002, 2 t.

³⁹Cfr P.-M. GY, “L’inculturation de la liturgie en Occident”, *LMD* 179 (1989) 53-73 ; *La liturgie dans l’histoire*, Paris: Cerf, 1990, ch. 3.

⁴⁰On the notion of “style” as applied to Vatican II, see especially J. Famerée, (dir.), *Vatican II comme style. L’herméneutique théologique du concile*, “Unam Sanctam, Nouvelle série,” Paris: Cerf, 2012, and in particular J. Famerée, “Introduction. Le style comme interprétation,” 9-14 ; J. Famerée, “Vatican II comme style ecclésiologique. *Communio* notio et *Dominus Iesus*: une herméneutique de rupture?,” 131-148 ; G. Jobin, “Vatican II, le style et la rhétorique,” 15-36 ; C. Theobald, “Le style pastoral de Vatican II et sa réception postconciliaire. Élaboration d’une critériologie et quelques exemples significatifs,” 265-286 ; L. Villemin, “La notion de “style” est-elle pertinente en ecclésiologie?,” 95-110.

This “style” which was to emerge gradually over the course of the process of the Council—for which the discussion on Schema XIII would seem to be the most significant—is moreover the direct result of the schema for the Constitution submitted to the Council fathers at the opening of the Council. The reply by Cardinal Pierre Gerlier, Archbishop of Lyons, to the seven schemas developed by the General Secretariat in the Summer of 1962 is extremely enlightening.⁴¹ He saw a contradiction between, on the one hand, the theology expressed in the schemas and on the other, the expectations that the Council had raised for the clergy and for society. This led him to suggest that the purpose of the Council be made clearer in the sense of the renewal of the Church that Pope John XXIII wanted. What is particularly interesting is to see how Cardinal Gerlier underlines that the lack of sensitivity on the part of theologians to pastoral questions prevented them from being judges on matters of faith.

However, he notes that there is one exception, which was precisely... the schema on the liturgy! Certainly, this specificity of the schema on the liturgy seems to have been recognised very soon. As early as October 1962, Msgr. Martimort, who would be one of the major actors in the liturgical reform, noted that he perceived in the schema on the liturgy “a new theological language,” a new “ecclesiastical style” that was both biblical and patristic, and above all that it was “totally focused on what is pastoral.” This new style, that it was hoped would “touch people deeply,” was also a theological expression⁴²: “God is the first served,” Pope Paul VI said enthusiastically in his address at the closing of Session 2 on December 4, 1963, after the promulgation of SC.⁴³

⁴¹*Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii ecumenici Vatican II*, App., 77-79 (reply dated September 26, 1962): after expressing serious reservations about the schema (“I hesitate greatly to subscribe to the schemas as they are presented”), Cardinal Gerlier adds: “What I have just said for the dogmatic schemas does not apply to the schema on the liturgy. There are some points I would like to see modified, I am full in accord with what it proposes and the manner in which it is proposed” (78); the same is found in the response of Cardinal Frings, Archbishop of Cologne, 74 and 76; Cfr K. Wittstadt, “À la veille du Concile. Les sept premiers schémas et la réaction des évêquats,” in G. Alberigo (dir.), *Histoire du Concile Vatican II, 1959-1965*, I, 451-474, and on Cardinal Gerlier’s response in particular, 465.

⁴²Exposé by Mgr. Martimort, October 30, 1962, reprinted in *LMD* 77 (1964) 10.

⁴³PAUL VI, Address at the closing of Session 2, December 4, 1963: “Deo summum locum esse tribuendum; nos primo eo officio teneri Deo ad moven di preces; sacram Liturgiam primum esse fonte millius divini commercii, quo ipsa Dei vita nobis cum

2.6. Liturgy: Locus Theologicus or Affair of the Sanctuary?

However, it is possible that behind these generous affirmations lies hidden an essential question on the relationship between liturgy and theology, one of those ambiguities that, paradoxically one might qualify as “decisive,” and which could lead to SC being overlooked in research on the hermeneutics of Vatican II. Could it be that the style of SC is the object of so much praise by some people because it is different from others, and where the style of the latter is taken as a sign to mean they are more fully theological? If this is the case, then SC would be the Achilles’ heel of everything built by the Council.

In his introduction to the volume from the *Unam Sanctam* Collection on SC, Père Congar expresses genuine esteem for SC, which he describes as an “admirable” text one of the “best,” one of the “most important.” He adds: “moreover the text itself sets out the way in which it will be overtaken and actually launches that process in calling for the setting in place of reforms which the Council would pursue, following the line set out by the text.”⁴⁴ Yet, in order to justify the particular character of this volume on the liturgy in the collection (markedly different from the parallel works on the other conciliar texts), Père Congar points out that it offers a commentary that is “literal, almost exegetical, whose intention is more practical and pastoral than strictly theological, however, presenting perhaps more of the ‘how’ of things rather than their deep ‘why’.”⁴⁵

communicatur; prima messe animi nostri scholam; primu messe donum a nobis christiano populo dandum, nobis cum fide precationum que studio con iuncto...” (“The first place goes to God; prayer to God is our first duty; the liturgy is the first source of the divine exchange in which the very life of God is shared with us; the first school of our souls, the first gift we can give to the Christians, which unites their faith and their prayer with ours...” [Our translation]). Full text available at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1963/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19631204_chiusura-concilio_it.html

⁴⁴Y.M.-J. Congar, “Introduction,” in J.-P. Jossua – Y.M.-J. Congar (dir.), *La liturgie après Vatican II. Bilans, Études, Prospective*, “Unam Sanctam,” 66, Paris: Cerf, 1967, 11 ; he also explains: “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*—the only document drafted by the preparatory Pontifical Commissions which was accepted and promulgated by the Council without substantial reworking—came before other very important documents such as the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, or the Decree *Presbyterorum ordinis*, which were more strictly fruits of the Council itself. (...) We thought we should come back to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, not to offer a literal commentary, because that has already been well done, but rather to take time for the reflection that this text calls for, and in particular at the level of what is presupposed by Christian worship.” [Our translation]

⁴⁵Y.M.-J. Congar, “Introduction,” 11.

So at this point in our exploration, it is clear that while there are good reasons to justify thinking of Vatican II as an ensemble from the perspective of the SC, at the same time the question of the style of SC opens the door to an important ambiguity in the very understanding of Council as a theological act. The underlying challenge here concerns the relationship between theology and liturgy: is the liturgy a *locus theologicus*? Or is the liturgy simply the ritual implementation of theological principles that are not only elaborated out with the liturgy (by theologians), but above all without the liturgy.

That is why, fully recognising that we cannot offer an exhaustive account of why so little attention is paid to SC in the hermeneutics of Vatican II, it is important to take time here to reflect on the circumstances that might have led to this.

3. Rejection of the Liturgical Reform and of the Hermeneutics of Vatican II

The debates about Vatican II's liturgical reform, made public by Msgr. François Ducaud-Bourget, but especially by Archbishop Lefebvre, led to a consolidated front against the aggiornamento of the liturgy—something which began in fact before Vatican II with criticism against the reform of Holy Week by Pius XII.⁴⁶

This liturgical protest evolved into an ecclesial crisis in the period 1970-1976, with the media coverage of the Masses celebrated in Paris in the Salle Wagram, and then the occupation of the Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet church in Paris.⁴⁷ This crisis gave the protest a wider scope than it being simply a debate about liturgical forms. It became increasingly clear that the currents of opposition to the Council were using the liturgical question as the cornerstone for their defence of a certain idea of the Church and the relationship of the Church to the world, and especially of a certain idea of Tradition, which was

⁴⁶Concerning this, see in particular: F. Lafage, *Du refus au schisme, le traditionalisme catholique*, Paris: Seuil, 1989; L. Perrin, *L'Affaire Lefebvre*, Paris: Cerf, 1989; see also our article, "La réforme de la semaine sainte sous Pie XII (1951-1956). Enjeux d'un premier pas vers la réforme liturgique de Vatican II," *QL* 93 (2012) 196-217.

⁴⁷The Mass celebrated at Lille on August 29, 1976 (can be viewed in the INA online video archives) had a huge impact, most probably because it came just after the *suspens a divinis* (July 22, 1976) and the publication in the *Figaro* of an interview with Archbishop Lefebvre (August 4, 1976) where he described Vatican II as "a schismatic Council," and even questioned the legitimacy of Paul VI. Those who followed this movement found a place for their celebrations by forcefully occupying the church of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet (February 27, 1977).

distinctly different from the first interpretations of the Council, and from the vision that was thought to be that of the majority of the Council fathers. Following on from this, some have maintained a distinction that might be characterised as follows: yes to SC, but no to the new liturgical books.⁴⁸

The publication of the *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum* of July 7, 2007 on celebrating the pre-Vatican II liturgy was understood by people of this opinion as recognition that their position was well-founded. We should note that Pope Benedict XVI, who admitted the existence of two forms—ordinary and extraordinary—of one single Roman rite, explicitly says that these two forms are two expressions of one unique *lex orandi*:

The Roman Missal promulgated by Paul VI is the ordinary expression of the *Lex orandi* of the Catholic Church of the Latin rite. Nonetheless, the Roman Missal promulgated by St Pius V and reissued by Bl. John XXIII is to be considered as an extraordinary expression of that same *Lex orandi*, and must be given due honour for its venerable and ancient usage. These two expressions of the Church's *Lex orandi* will not in any way lead to a division in the Church's *Lex credendi*. They are, in fact two usages of the one Roman rite.⁴⁹

The motivation for this decision, as can be found especially in the letter accompanying the *Motu Proprio*, is a pastoral one: it was designed to make for a calming of the liturgical debate and pave the way for a return to the unity of the Church of those who rejected the aggiornamento of Vatican II.

However, the Pope also makes reference to the idea that the Church cannot forbid the use of a liturgical book that at some time in history has served as *lex orandi*:⁵⁰ the *lex orandi* cannot be abrogated

⁴⁸For a very well informed overview, see: A.G. Martimort, "La réforme liturgique incomprise, L'Ordo Missae face aux controverses et aux dissidences," *LMD* 192 (1992) 79-119.

⁴⁹Benedict XVI, *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum* on the "Roman Liturgy Prior to the Reform of 1970," July 7, 2007, art. 1; English translation by Vatican Information Service (there is no official Vatican English translation). Full Latin text available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20070707_summorum-pontificum_It.html. In the passage quoted here it is worth noting the reference to the Church (in the form "lex ... of the Church") which occurs no less than four times.

⁵⁰Cfr Benedict XVI, Letter to Bishops accompanying the *Motu Proprio* of July 7, 2007: "As for the use of the 1962 Missal as a *Forma extraordinaria* of the liturgy of the Mass, I would like to draw attention to the fact that this Missal was never juridically

because it is so intimately connected to the *lex credendi*. This raises all kind of questions for liturgical institutions, not least the abrogation by Paul VI of the use of liturgical books that predate the reform of Vatican II,⁵¹ but above all the question of whether the publication of new liturgical books can or should be considered as changing the *lex orandi*. When St Pius V published the Missal in 1570, it was not his intention to change the *lex orandi*. This opens the way to the key question of how liturgical transformations are to be evaluated. At what point do liturgical changes cause a change in the *lex orandi*?⁵²

Without going into questions which are beyond the scope of this present article, we can go some way to shedding light on the history of the interpretation of SC.

abrogated and, consequently, in principle, was always permitted.”; Full text of official English translation available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/letters/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20070707_lettera-vescovi_en.html

See also Cardinal J. Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs, 1927-1977*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998: “... I was dismayed by the prohibition of the old missal, since nothing of the sort had ever happened in the entire history of the liturgy. (...) In this case we cannot speak of the prohibition of the previous missal that had formerly been approved as valid. The prohibition of the missal that was now decreed, a missal that had known continuous growth over the centuries, starting with the sacramentaries of the ancient Church, introduced a breach into the history of the liturgy whose consequences could only be tragic. It was reasonable and right of the Council to order a revision of the missal such as had taken place before and which this time had to be more thorough than before, above all because of the introduction of the vernacular. (...) A renewal of liturgical awareness, liturgical reconciliation that again recognizes the unity of the history of the liturgy and that understands Vatican II not as a breach, but as a stage of development: these things are urgently needed for the life of the Church. I am convinced that the crisis in the Church that we are experiencing today is to a large extent due to the disintegration of the liturgy, which at times has even come to be conceived of *etsi Deus non daretur*: in that it is a manner of indifference whether or not God exists and whether or not he speaks to us and hears us. (...) That is why we need a new Liturgical Movement, which will call to life the real heritage of the Second Vatican Council.”

⁵¹Cfr R.P.A. de Lassus, OP (Chéméré), “Le statut de la messe traditionnelle à la lumière du droit” (can be found at <http://docs.leforumcatholique.org/>); the Constitution *Missale Romanum*, the notification of the Congregation for Divine Worship, June 14, 1971, and especially the address to the consistory of June 24, 1976 can be considered as important documents against the theses of the traditionalist currents, but these are discounted as having a juridical basis that would justify the existence of formal abrogation.

⁵²Voir M. Klöckener, “Wie Liturgie verstehen? Anfragen an das Motuproprio *Summorum Pontificum* Papst Benedikts XVI,” in M. Klöckener, B. Kranemann, A.A. Häussling (Hrsg.), *Liturgie verstehen. Ansatz, Ziele und Aufgaben der Liturgiewissenschaft. Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 50, Fribourg, 2008, 268-305.

3.1. A Shift in the Interpretation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*?

As we saw earlier with the example of Père Congar, it can be said that liturgists preferred a historical and practical approach to SC. The complete commentary published by *La Maison-Dieu* shows both how the text is the fruit of a long preparation through what we call the Liturgical Movement, and at the same time it highlights the importance of what SC says for the work of reforms that remained yet to be accomplished. The commentary on SC that *La Maison-Dieu* published in 1983 (to mark the 20th anniversary of SC) is very clearly characterised by the sub-title: "From Its Preparation to Its Implementation". The exegesis of SC has been polarised between, on the one hand, a genealogical approach, aimed above all at offering "an objective commentary," and on the other hand "an authentic interpretation of the text" which includes its implementation in the early reforms.⁵³

There would seem to be, then, a shift in the way SC is regarded and which, in our opinion was motivated principally by a pastoral concern. It is with the 1969 publication of the new *Ordo Missae* that the movement rejecting the liturgical aggiornamento crystallises, and which was to find its founding charter in the publication of the *Short Critical Study of the New Order of Mass*, a document signed by Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci, but which was drawn up by Père Guerard des Lauriers.⁵⁴ The following sound bite from the *Short Critical Study* was to become the rallying cry for this rejection: "...the *Novus Ordo* represents, both as a whole and in its details, a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Holy Mass as it was formulated at Session XXII of the Council of Trent."

⁵³Liminaire, *LMD* 155 (1983/3) 6 : "Ces documents constituent par eux-mêmes un commentaire objectif et une interprétation authentique de la réforme liturgique voulue par le 2^e Concile du Vatican et conduite avec prudence et ténacité par Paul VI" (These documents constitute in themselves an objective commentary and authentic interpretation of the liturgical reform desired by Vatican II and followed through with prudence and tenacity by Paul VI [Our translation]).

⁵⁴Cardinaux Ottaviani and Bacci, *Bref examen critique du nouvel Ordo Missae*, Renaissance catholique, Issy-les-Moulineaux, 2005; in this book, l'abbé Cl. Barthe attributes to Cardinal Medina, former Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, the affirmation that "the Mass of Saint Pius V has never been forbidden": C. Barthe, "Un examen critique en attente de réponse," 38-39; for the position of the followers of Archbishop Lefebvre, see Fraternité Sacerdotale Saint-Pie X, *Le problème de la réforme liturgique, La messe de Vatican II et de Paul VI, Étude théologique et liturgique*, Étampes: Éditions Clovis, 2001; on the origin of the text see A.G. Martimort, "La réforme incomprise...", *LMD* 192 (1992) 83-88, especially note 12, 84-85.

Here we clearly see how the question is framed in terms of the relationship between dogmatic and liturgical theology. The *Short Critical Study* gave weight to what became a permanent challenge, and would lead through various stages to the publication by Benedict XVI of the *Motu Proprio* of July 7, 2007. This document, by according consideration to liturgical books prior to the reform as “an extraordinary form” of the Roman liturgy, thereby opened a new era in liturgical institutions.⁵⁵

All of this meant that the liturgical reform of the Mass had become the symbol for a challenge which included rejecting Vatican II and even more rejecting a certain idea of Tradition.⁵⁶ This is why, in 1976, Paul VI felt obliged to express himself with the greatest authority on the obedience required concerning the liturgy, and doing so explicitly in the name of “Tradition”:

It is in the name of Tradition itself that we demand of all our sons and of all Catholic communities that they celebrate the rites of the renewed liturgy with dignity and fervour. The adoption of the new *Ordo Missae* is certainly not left to the free decision of priests or of the faithful. The *Instruction* of June 14, 1971, allows permission for Mass to be celebrated according to the old rite but with the permission of the Ordinary, and only for elderly or sick priests who celebrate without an assembly. The new *Ordo* was promulgated to replace the old one,

⁵⁵On this point see: A. Grillo, “Riflessioni e domande. Il motu proprio di Benedetto XVI ‘Summorum pontificum’ e la sua recezione,” *Il Regno* 14 (2007) 434–439; German translation: “Ende der Liturgiereform? Das Motu proprio ‘Summorum pontificum,’” *Stimmen der Zeit*, n° 225 année 132 (2007) 730-740; A. Gerhards, “Die Sorge der Päpste. Das Motu Proprio Benedikts XVI. Zur Wiederzulassung der alten Liturgie,” *Herder-Korrespondenz* 61 (2007) 398–403; W. Hauerland, “Ein Ritus in zwei Ausdrucksformen? Hintergründe und Perspektiven zur Liturgiefeier nach dem Motu Proprio ‘Summorum Pontificum,’” *LJ* 58 (2008) 179-203; A. Gerhards, éd., *Ein Ritus – zwei Formen. Die Richtlinie Papst Benedikts XVI. zur Liturgie*, Fribourg/Br: Herder, 2008.

⁵⁶See A.G. Martimort, “La réforme liturgique incomprise,...”, *LMD* 192 (1992) 92, which quotes the declaration by Archbishop Lefebvre published in L. Perrin, *L’Affaire Lefebvre*, 121-122: “We refuse and have always refused to follow the Rome of neo-Modernist and neo-Protestant tendencies clearly manifested in the Second Vatican Council, and the subsequent reforms that were the result of the Council ... The *lex orandi* cannot be profoundly modified without modifying the *lex credendi*. A new Mass calls also for a new Catechism, new priesthood, new seminaries... This is why we hold firmly to all that has been believed and practised always by the Church in faith, morals, worship, the teaching of the catechism, the formation of priests, the institution of the Church, and which is codified in books prior to the modernist influence of the Council...” [Our translation].

after careful deliberation and in order to fulfill the decisions of the Council. This is the same as what our predecessor, Saint Pius V did, when he made the Missal revised with the authority of Trent obligatory. It is with the same supreme authority granted to us by Christ Jesus that we demand the same prompt submission to all the various liturgical, disciplinary and pastoral reforms that have come to maturity in recent years in application of the conciliar decrees" [*Our Translation*].⁵⁷

These debates became a key factor in the reception of SC in as much as liturgists had to choose sides: either to be on the side of criticising the reforms (criticisms which only rarely alluded to SC itself); or the side of those who defended it (who tried ceaselessly to show the legitimacy of the work by shedding light on the continuity between what the Council requested and the work of renewing the liturgical books).⁵⁸ This desire to provide a foundation for the liturgical reforms in the face of their rejection gave a predominant place to discussing the relationship between tradition and liturgy. This effort to legitimise can be seen quite clearly in the rereading of

⁵⁷Paul VI, Allocution to the Secret Consistory, May 24, 1976. "È nel nome della Tradizione che noi domandiamo a tutti i nostri figli, a tutte le comunità cattoliche, di celebrare, in dignità e fervore la Liturgia rinnovata. L'adozione del nuovo "Ordo Missae" non è lasciata certo all'arbitrio dei sacerdoti o dei fedeli: e l'Istruzione del 14 giugno 1971 ha previsto la celebrazione della Messa nell'antica forma, con l'autorizzazione dell'ordinario, solo per sacerdoti anziani o infermi, che offrono il Divin Sacrificio *sine populo*. Il nuovo *Ordo* è stato promulgato perché si sostituisce all'antico, dopo matura deliberazione, in seguito alle istanze del Concilio Vaticano II. Non diversamente il nostro santo Predecessore Pio V aveva reso obbligatorio il Messale riformato sotto la sua autorità, in seguito al Concilio Tridentino.

La stessa disponibilità noi esigiamo, con la stessa autorità suprema che ci viene da Cristo Gesù, a tutte le altre riforme liturgiche, disciplinari, pastorali, maturate in questi anni in applicazione ai decreti conciliari." Full text (in Italian) available at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1976/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19760524_concistoro_it.html. (French translation in *La Documentation Catholique* (20 juin 1976) 556-559, citation p. 558); Cfr also Letter of Paul VI to Archbishop Lefebvre of October 11, 1976; full Latin text available at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/letters/1976/documents/hf_p-vi_let_19761011_arc-lefebvre_it.html (French translation in *La Documentation Catholique*, (December 19, 1976) 1056-1061).

⁵⁸On this point, see: A.G. Martimort, "La réforme liturgique incomprise, *L'Ordo Missae* face aux controverses et aux dissidences," *LMD* 192 (1992) 79-119; see also, R. Cabié, "Les conséquences des détracteurs de la réforme liturgique," *BLE*, 101 (2000/1) 3-14, where he criticises the claim that equal consideration should be given to the new rite and the old rite.

SC published at Pentecost 1989, in other words, just a few months after the failure of the negotiations with Archbishop Lefebvre⁵⁹ which led on to the episcopal ordinations that consummated the schism:

Such an overall reform of the Liturgy was in harmony with the general hope of the whole Church.(...)

The reform of the rites and the liturgical books was undertaken immediately after the promulgation of the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and was brought to an effective conclusion in a few years thanks to the considerable and selfless work of a large number of experts and bishops from all parts of the world.

This work was undertaken in accordance with the conciliar principles of fidelity to tradition and openness to legitimate development; and so it is possible to say that the reform of the Liturgy is strictly traditional and in accordance with “the ancient usage of the holy Fathers”.⁶⁰

3.2. An Interpretation from the Perspective of the Programme of Reform

Within the entirety of the conciliar corpus, SC is a specific or particular text because it contains an explicit programme of reform—admittedly as yet general, but already precise enough for it to have had almost immediate implementation. The hermeneutic that flowed from this was naturally more interested in the aspects of the text that dealt with the changes. It is quite probable that if Vatican II was perceived by the Christian people first and foremost as being concerned with change, not to say radical change (which is what is meant by today’s expression “hermeneutic of rupture”), then this was due to the way the liturgy was transformed at the request of the Council fathers. “The Mass is being changed” was the sort of simple expression that captured the newness of the Council. So the first task of exegesis of SC was to explain the underlying reasons which led to

⁵⁹Although an agreement between Cardinal Ratzinger and Archbishop Lefebvre was signed on May 5, 1988, approving various principles for the regulation of the Fraternity of St Pius X and their ongoing work, the very next day Archbishop Lefebvre withdrew his signature; the ordination on June 30, 1988 of four bishops led to the immediate (July 1, 1988) issuing of the decree of excommunication of Archbishop Lefebvre, the four bishops who were ordained, and of Bishop A. de Castro Mayer who took part in the ordination ceremony.

⁶⁰John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus quintus annus*, 4, which quotes SC 50 and the *Roman Missal, Preface*, 6; we should not overlook the significance of the fact that this is exactly the form of words in the Constitution *Quo Primum* by which Pius V promulgated the Roman Missal of 1570.

these changes, and how the liturgical reform was the translation into action of what the Council fathers asked for in the text. The direct consequence of adopting this approach is that it imposes a sectorial treatment, which allows little space for the dynamic drive of the text.

Moreover, we need to bear in mind the extent to which the mentality of both clergy and laity was so marked by the rubricism which had been imposed, particularly after Trent, that the liturgical work of Vatican II was seen simply as a change of rubrics.⁶¹ It would be when the new liturgical books began to be published that more interest was paid to the fruits of SC, as something that had substance in itself.

All of this means that the debate about the liturgical reform had a sort of stifling effect of the text: on the one hand, those opposed to reform saw it as the source of what they considered to be the abuses which followed it; on the other, those in favour of reform saw it as the source of the principles justifying the legitimacy and validity of the reform. For the former, the liturgy is an institution whose permanence exists precisely to safeguard in an unchanging way the transmission of the content of the faith. For the latter, the liturgy is a practice designed to ensure authentic expression of the faith.

The problem is that from both sides this leads to a sort of mental paralysis focused only on the question of the relationship between theology and liturgy, which, as we saw earlier in this article, lies at the base of a real ambiguity in the very way in which to consider SC. It seems to us, then, that the real question is indeed that of the relationship between liturgy and theology; perhaps even more it is the question of knowing what kind of theology will sit most harmoniously with the liturgy in as much as the liturgy is the ritual deployment of the biblical revelation.

⁶¹Cfr P. Jounel, *Les premières étapes de la réforme liturgique, Les rites de la messe en 1965, Textes, traductions, commentaire*, Paris: Desclée, 1965; in the introduction, P. Jounel notes that, whereas the new code of rubrics published in 1960 under the authority of Pope John XXIII (*Motu Proprio Rubricarum Instructum*, July 25, 1960) was simply clarification and simplification, rather than something distinctly new, on the other hand the *Ritus servandus* and the *Ordo Missae* published on March 7, 1965, did represent a "new liturgy: ("doubtless the new use of the vernacular loomed large in this discovery, but the rites themselves were also presented in a way hitherto unknown: the Liturgy of the Word not being celebrated at the altar; the fact that the celebrant no longer recited in private texts proclaimed by another minister or sung by the assembly. All of this constituted major innovation. These are things which would have surprised a contemporary of Saint Louis as much as they do a Christian of the 20th century, for we need to go right back to the first millennium to find such a clear vision of the fundamental structures of the Mass." [Our translation]) (p. 5).

There are two false routes that we can dismiss here. One would be to say that liturgy is dogma dressed up as prayer, which may be a clever turn of phrase, but is simply not true. This is because the language of dogma is rational, whereas in the liturgy words combine with actions, symbols, and it actually is salvation history. The other false route would be to see the liturgy solely as the particular expression of faith at a moment in time, in a given culture, which would mean it would be condemned to permanent change so as to marry up with the various moments of history. So rather than go down either of these false routes, I believe we are called to reread *SC* with fresh eyes, so as to discern its theological drive and impetus.

4. Toward a Theological Interpretation of the Constitution on the Liturgy

In the third part, our aim was above all to explore the mechanisms which led to a marginalisation of *SC* in the hermeneutics of Vatican II. The preoccupation with liturgical forms on the one hand, and on the other, the need to legitimise the reform in showing its foundation in Tradition, doubtless, led to heightening an even more basic ambiguity concerning the nature of liturgy in its relationship with theology.

Now, by way of conclusion, we would like to sketch out some potential proposals for a theological hermeneutic of *SC*. Here we will follow the presentation which Archbishop Henri Jenny, co-adjutor of Cambrai wrote for the readers of the French Catholic daily newspaper *La Croix*, immediately after the promulgation of *SC* on December 4, 1963. This means we are sharing a synthesis drafted in the heat of the moment, by a French bishop who was a member of the preconciliar liturgical commission, and who subsequently became an active participant in the work of the Consilium. Archbishop Jenny is a teacher par excellence for what concerns the work of the Council, of which this newspaper article is a typical example, with its highly significant title "A Liturgy for the Redemption of Humankind."⁶² The article manages to go beyond exploring only the famous axes of *SC* itself, and to draw in the totality of the teaching of the Council. There is a remarkable strength in this concise text. Through what he writes we can see that for those actively involved in the Council (or at least

⁶²*La Croix*, n. 24 618 (December 6, 1963); reprinted in *LMD* 272 (2012) 30; as far as possible the presentation and style of the original newspaper article has been preserved.

for some of them) there was a direct connection between the discussion on liturgy and all of what the Council was deliberating, above all in seeing it as a powerful source for the renewal of the Church:

- PASCHAL LITURGY, which incessantly announces the Paschal event and offers to all people witness to the victory of Jesus over sin and death, which passes by way of the cortege of those who are baptised, by way of the way of the cross, toward the invisible Father and his eternal splendour.
- EUCHARISTIC LITURGY, which, everywhere in the world and until the end of time, perpetuates the Lord's supper, where all who eat the Body and drink the Blood of the Lord announce his death until he comes again.
- LIFE-GIVING LITURGY, vital in its real sense, which offers the Christian people the opportunity to drink at the very source of the Bible, to hear the Word of God in which God speaks to his children, to reply by faith and by thanksgiving, to spread the Good News for which the poor are longing, and to communicate the incalculable riches of the charity of Christ.
- LIVING LITURGY which cannot be confined within unchanging frameworks nor in signs that change has rendered tightly shut, nor in clever words, but rather which, in direct contact with the minds and hearts of humanity, will bring them redemption.
- ECUMENICAL LITURGY, MISSIONARY LITURGY, which calls for fraternal unity, the unity of all Christians, of all humanity around the only Lord of glory.
- OPEN AND APOSTOLIC LITURGY, which desires celebrations offered not only in holy places such as temples and basilicas, but above all the spiritual offering of hearts, which effects the consecration of the world, of its work, its sorrows, its hope, of its stumbling progress toward unity and universal peace.
- LITURGY OF THE CHURCH AS ASSEMBLY, OF THE COMMUNITY, OF THE PEOPLE which brings together into a living Pentecost people of all races and nations, clergy and laity; who together through Christ the Priest offer all the suffering of humanity, and by transfiguring the image of this world, sets all on the way which leads to the heavenly All Saints' Day.

There is a rare depth to this text, which already casts light on the great themes of the Council deliberations, and so we are able to find echoes of this presentation in other Council texts. A first way to read Archbishop Jenny's text would be in terms of the sequence, in itself

nothing less than a theological programme. Without overdosing on the symbolism, we should at least notice he offers a list of seven headings, which was probably deliberate and carefully calculated. It is a subtle evocation of the symbolism of seven days (and so Sunday), and, of course, the seven sacraments (and so of redemption in Christ).

The two starting items—“*Paschal liturgy*” and “*Eucharistic liturgy*” evoke the paschal mystery as the eschatological locus by which those who are baptised set out on the same road as Christ to victory over death, and witness in the eucharistic liturgy of the coming of the Kingdom, while awaiting the return of Christ. These themes match the underlying structure and teaching of *Lumen Gentium*. In other words SC offers a hermeneutic of Vatican II, which, under the sign of the sacraments of initiation, offers a vision of Easter (the Paschal mystery) as the irruption of the Kingdom as the key to understanding all of Christian life. This, it seems to us, offers an approach where the *ad intra* perspective is balanced by a vision of the Council which is essentially a pastoral one.

The next two items, “*Lifegiving liturgy*” and “*Living liturgy*” reflect the conciliar affirmation that “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows.”⁶³ However, this is not an aesthetic nostalgia for rituality nor a closed vitalist vision which sees in ritual the potential source of a recharge of energy. These two items underline, just as does *Verbum Dei*, that liturgy nourishes the faithful by letting them drink at the source which is the Word and so to live in the joy of salvation.

There are then two items that echo the serious effort on the part of the Council for an apostolic openness and for a new missionary outreach: on the one hand, “*Ecumenical liturgy, missionary liturgy*”; and on the other, “*Open and apostolic liturgy*”. By referring to the liturgy as something which “effects the consecration of the world, of its work, its sorrows, its hope, of its stumbling progress toward unity and universal peace,” Archbishop Jenny is already building bridges toward texts which would reach full maturity only later: the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* on the Church in the Modern World, but also the texts which set out the constitution of the Church in terms of its mission, and in particular the Decree *Ad Gentes* on the missionary activity of the Church.

⁶³Vatican II, SC, 10.

In daring to use the expressions “*Ecumenical liturgy*” and even “*Open liturgy*”, Archbishop Jenny is sketching for us the fundamental coherence of the liturgical choices made by Vatican II, which would later be part of texts such as *Unitatis redintegratio* (the Decree on ecumenism), *Orientalium ecclesiarum* (Decree on Eastern Churches) and the Declaration *Nostra aetate* (on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions).

Then there is the final item—*Liturgy of the Church as assembly, of the community of the people*—which takes up and summarises the vision of the People of God; a people who are “one” in the universal call to holiness, but “many” in their charisms and responsibilities. An ecclesiological vision that gives strength and coherence to the conciliar documents which deal with the various charisms within the Church: the Decrees *Christus Dominus* on the pastoral office of bishops; *Presbyterorum ordinis* on the life and ministry of priests; *Optatam totius* on priestly training; *Perfectae caritatis* on the adaptation and renewal of religious life; *Apostolicam actuositatem* on the apostolate of the laity.

This makes SC a veritable gateway into the totality of the work of the Council, which John XXIII imagined as a new Pentecost: a coming of the Spirit for the Church, but also for a world, with all its nations and races, called to unity and peace, and where—as in the vision of the Book of Revelation—in liturgy, all “together through Christ the Priest offer all the suffering of humanity,” and so participate in the “transfiguration” which sets all on the way which leads to the heavenly All Saints’ Day”.

After what was a somewhat laborious debate, the *placet* vote on SC was almost unanimous⁶⁴ and meant the second Session was able to close on a note of optimism which is evident in the closing address by Paul VI. SC offered the image of a Council that could deliver. However, this vote also reflected in its own way what had been a decisive shared experience by the Council fathers. SC bears witness to a real evangelical concern and is a first response to the request for a meeting between the Church and the people of the time. For all those who were involved, this first work of the Council really seemed to be a veritable gift of the Spirit who guides his Church and gives her the means to pursue the work of grace in the very midst of the world.

⁶⁴There were 2,147 *placet* votes, and only 4 *non placet*.