

Thus, in paragraph 8 of *Lumen Gentium* one finds the following declaration:

Christ, the one mediator, set up his holy Church here on earth as a visible structure, a community of faith, hope and love; and he sustains it unceasingly and through it he pours out grace and truth on everyone. This society, however, equipped with hierarchical structures, and the mystical body of Christ, a visible assembly and a spiritual community, an earthly church and a church enriched with heavenly gifts, must not be considered as two things, but as forming a complex reality comprising a human and divine element. It is therefore by no mean analogy that it is likened to the mystery of the Incarnate Word. For just as the assumed nature serves the divine Word as a living instrument of salvation inseparably joined with him, in a similar way the social structure of the church serves the Spirit of Christ who vivifies the church towards the growth of the body (Eph 4, 16).

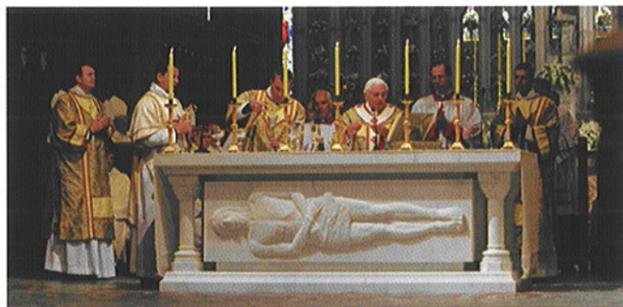
Accompanying this move away from a focus on a juridical notion of the Church with its primary distinction between priestly and other religious members on the one side, and lay members on the other, was the Council's endorsement of a universal call to holiness. According to paragraph 34 of *Lumen Gentium*:

All their [the lay faithful's] activities, their prayers and their apostolic endeavours, their conjugal and familial life, their daily labour, their relaxation of spirit and body if they are lived in the spirit of God – and even the trials of life, so long as they are patiently endured – all this becomes 'spiritual sacrifices, pleasing to God through Jesus Christ.'

Notwithstanding this affirmation of a variety of spiritual missions in the life of the Church, some lay and some clerical, *Lumen Gentium* nonetheless also affirmed the authority of the Petrine Office (papacy) and the sacerdotal priesthood. There was nothing in this document that could in any way justify the subsequent attacks on the papacy which were some of the more infamous products of the application of the hermeneutic of rupture (Pope Benedict's phrase for interpretations of the Council according to which 1965 represented a complete break with the pre-Conciliar tradition) in the decade of the 1970s and beyond.

FROM VATICAN II TO BENEDICT XVI

There is a strong Trinitarian thread running through the documents of the Second Vatican Council into the encyclicals of Pope Paul VI and Blessed



John Paul II and now into the papacy of Benedict XVI. Many of the themes summarised above were encapsulated in the following concluding prayer of Benedict XVI to the recent Synod (meeting of bishops) on the subject of the New Evangelisation:

Today, we too turn to the Lord Jesus, *Redemptor hominis and lumen gentium*, with joyful gratitude, making our own a prayer of Saint Clement of Alexandria: "until now I wandered in the hope of finding God, but since you enlighten me, O Lord, I find God through you and I receive the Father from you, I become your co-heir, since you did not shrink from having me for your brother. Let us put away, then, let us put away



all blindness to the truth, all ignorance: and removing the darkness that obscures our vision like fog before the eyes, let us contemplate the true God ...; since a light from heaven shone down upon us who were buried in darkness and imprisoned in the shadow of death, [a light] purer than the sun, sweeter than life on this earth" (*Prorepticus*, 113: 2 – 114:1). Amen.

In this prayer Pope Benedict reiterated Blessed John Paul II's description of Christ as the 'Redeemer of Man' and Vatican II's description of Christ as 'The Light of the Nations'. He also emphasised that Christ is the revelation of God the Father to humanity, and that as human beings we are called to be co-heirs with Christ (what is otherwise described as 'divine filiation'). Moreover, this light of Christ is humanity's liberation from ignorance.

This, in a nutshell, was the core message of the Conciliar documents. In the Year of Faith that lies ahead there will no doubt be many references to the Christocentric Trinitarianism of the Council.

Questions

1. What does the Council teach about how we can know what it is to be human?
2. What relationship does the Council see between the Trinity and marriage?
3. How does the Council primarily understand the concept of revelation?
4. In what ways did the Council move away from a solely juridical account of the Church?

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RE-CENTREING ON CHRIST

In a preface to his *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, published in 1966, Fr Joseph Ratzinger as he was, now Pope Benedict XVI, described his reflections as an attempt to 'delineate the inner aspects, the spiritual profile of the Council'. He went on to say that the Conciliar idea of 'renewal' had a twofold intention – 'its point of reference is contemporary man in his reality and in his world, taken as it is. But the measure of its renewal is Christ, as scripture witnesses Him'. Recalling Pope Paul VI's Opening Address to the second session of the Council, Fr. Ratzinger acknowledged that 'while the accents can be variously placed', what most impressed him was 'how Christ-centric it was'.

Joseph Ratzinger's emphasis on the Christocentric accent was also shared by Blessed John Paul II. At the 1985 Synod of Bishops, called to reflect upon the Council's reception, Christ-centredness emerged as one of the key Conciliar motifs. In particular, reference was made to paragraph 22 of the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, known by its Latin title, *Gaudium et Spes*. According to paragraph 22:

The Truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father, and His Love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.

The central point of the paragraph is that the human person only understands his or her identity to the extent that she or he is open to a relationship with Christ. An understanding of Christ is deemed necessary for any adequate understanding of what it means to be human. Christ is the New Adam to whom the first Adam already pointed, the true image of God who transforms the human person once more into a likeness to God. By emphasising this paragraph, Blessed John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger effectively draw our attention to the point of *Gaudium et Spes*, which was not to accommodate the faith to whatever happened to be fashionable in the contemporary culture, but to affirm certain aspirations of so-called 'modern man', such as the longing for human freedom and self-fulfilment, and to argue that only a Christocentric understanding of the human person (anthropology) has any hope of realising these legitimate aspirations.

This Christocentrism of paragraph 22 of *Gaudium et Spes* became something of a signature tune for the whole pontificate of John Paul II. It was the most often quoted of all the paragraphs of all the Conciliar documents by the late pontiff. Moreover, the very first of John Paul II's encyclicals, *Redemptor Hominis*, began with the statement that Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of Man, is the Centre and Purpose of Human History. This encyclical focused on the human person's relationship to Christ and was followed by encyclicals on the human person's relationship to God the Father (*Dives in Misericordia*) and God the Holy Spirit (*Dominum et Vivificantem*). Taken as a trilogy these encyclicals sketch the outlines of a whole Trinitarian anthropology which represents one of the most significant theological developments of the post-Conciliar era.

THE ENRICHMENT OF THE THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

In his Wednesday audience *Catechesis on Human Love*, which has been popularly described as his 'theology

of the body', Blessed John Paul II linked anthropology to Trinitarian theology and even situated human sexuality within this framework of God's offer of divine filiation (son and daughter-ship). Within his theological framework the married couple is raised to the exalted position of being a 'radiant icon of Trinitarian love' and the seal of their marital holiness is viewed as nothing less than a 'supernatural work of art'. To quote Cardinal Marc Ouellet, who is a former Professor of the John Paul II Institute at the Lateran University:

The hour of conjugal and family spirituality is therefore the hour of the transcendence of the self into the image of the Trinity, the hour of becoming a house of God, a home of the Most High, an icon of the Trinity, memory and prophecy of the wonders of salvation history.

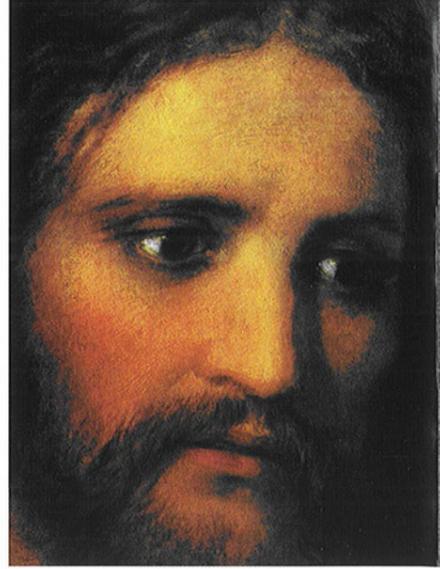
In his book *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, Cardinal Ouellet explains that this means that the sacramental mission of the couple and their family is not primarily a job or list of social responsibilities. Rather, more fundamentally, the mission is inscribed in the very being of the couple as a *communio personarum* (communion of persons) sealed by the Holy Spirit. As a consequence:

The doctrine of the *Imago Dei* should be reconsidered in a radically Trinitarian perspective...The gifts of creation, the gift of life, the gift of *fides* and of the sacrament signify, in the final analysis, the gifts of the Father to the Son and of the Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit. Created gifts express and signify the uncreated love between the divine persons. Thus human love in its beauty and fragility allows us to see, like a living icon, the Glory within God. The Holy Spirit prolongs in marriage what he does in the relationship of Christ and the Church, he makes of it the nuptial incarnation of the "Nuptial Mystery" par excellence.

This 'nuptial mystery theology' associated with Blessed John Paul II's *Catechesis on Human Love* and the work of such scholars as Cardinal Angelo Scola of Milan, Cardinal Marc Ouellet of the Congregation for Bishops and Cardinal Carlo Caffara of Bologna, as well as numerous lay theologians, is another example of the theological renewal called for by the Fathers of the Council. In particular its treatment of the meaning and purpose of human sexuality represents a major improvement upon the pre-Conciliar theology which, though not wrong in itself, lacked a personalist dimension. In other words, while there was some understanding of the ends of marriage there was not much attention given to the way in which the sacrament contributes to the development of the couple as persons made in God's image.

There has been much work undertaken since the Second Vatican Council in the areas of the theology of marriage, including the meaning and purpose of human sexuality, and the area of moral theology, which is all building upon the Trinitarian anthropology of *Gaudium et Spes*.

(Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006).



"Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (*Deus Caritas Est*).

CHRIST AS THE FULFILMENT OF REVELATION

The Christocentric accent is also carried through in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, known as *Dei Verbum*. As a young *peritus* (expert theological advisor) Professor Ratzinger was involved in the drafting of *Dei Verbum* and his superior, Cardinal Frings of Cologne, also intervened extensively in the debate on this document. Ratzinger's reflections on these interventions were published in 1988 in the *Communio: International Catholic Review*². In this paper Cardinal Ratzinger explained that Cardinal Frings argued that when one speaks of the two sources of revelation as scripture and tradition (a practice that was popular in the Council of Trent era); one is right at the level of epistemology (knowledge); *we do* experience what revelation is from scripture and tradition. Nonetheless Frings also argued that the 'scripture and tradition two sources formula' was false if looked at from a "metaphysical perspective":

[From a metaphysical perspective] the sequence is reversed: revelation does not flow from scripture and tradition; but both flow from revelation, which is their common source...For if one does not hold that revelation precedes its objectification in scripture and tradition, remaining always greater than they, then the concept of revelation is reduced to the dimensions of the historical and simply human.

Ratzinger then observed:

For if it is further true that what is living, revelation itself, is Christ, that Christ is still alive, and that he did not only live in those times, then it is clear that the subject of revelation is precisely this Christ himself and that he is such through his Body with which he binds us irreversibly to that beginning in *illo tempore* [in that time] and at the same time leads us forward to his "full maturity".

In *Dei Verbum* both scripture and tradition find their source in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Dei Verbum is thus a classic example of how the Council reformed an area of theology which had given rise to a rather large number of problems from at least as far back as the 16th century to the present. This was especially so in the field of ecumenism. Specifically, Ratzinger argued that there were three reforming motifs that came together in *Dei Verbum*: (i) a view of tradition as an organically developing process by which tradition had to be understood in the categories of growth, progress and knowledge of the faith; (ii) views about the application of critical historical methods to the interpretation of scripture and (iii) the growing interest in biblical scholarship in Catholic circles which itself was a highly positive development in 20th century theology.

In particular Cardinal Ratzinger stated that in the drafting of *Dei Verbum* the Conciliar Fathers were 'concerned with overcoming neo-scholastic intellectualism, for which revelation chiefly meant a store of mysterious supernatural teachings, which automatically reduces faith very much to an acceptance of these supernatural insights'. This was the view of Francisco Suárez, a sixteenth century Spanish Jesuit. For Suárez revelation did not disclose God himself, but rather pieces of information about God. For this reason the Suárezian account of revelation is often described as the 'clutch purse of doctrines' theory of revelation. When Joseph Ratzinger was a student the Suárezian account was popular, however at Vatican II the Council Fathers were persuaded of the merits of the approach advanced by Cardinal Frings. As Cardinal Ratzinger expressed the idea positively:

[T]he Council desired to express again the character of revelation as a totality, in which word and event make up one whole, a true dialogue which touches man in his totality, not only challenging his reason, but, as dialogue, addressing him as a partner, indeed,

giving him his true nature for the first time.

While doctrines are important and help to identify danger zones in the study of theology, they are secondary to the personal revelation of Jesus Christ himself and the work of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation and the faith development of every individual person. As Pope Benedict was to write in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction".

CHRIST AS THE LIGHT OF THE NATIONS

While *Dei Verbum* addressed the topics of scripture, tradition and revelation, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, focused on ecclesiology (a study of the Church). The 'reform' accomplished here was one of moving away from a solely juridical account of the Church focused on the distinction between clerical and lay members to an understanding based on multidimensional relationships. Here the relations with the Trinity are of primary importance, but also important are the typological relationships³ found in the Scriptures, the sacramental relationships, the historical relationships between the Old and New Testaments, and the social relationships both within the Church and between members of the Church and those outside her body.

With reference to the notion of sacramental relations, Henri de Lubac SJ emphasised that the sacramental form of relationality is one that ties together the Church as the mystical body of Christ with the Church as the historical people of God. Specifically, de Lubac argued that 'if Christ is the sacrament of God, the Church is for us the sacrament of Christ: she represents him, in the full and ancient meaning of the term, she really makes Him present⁴. Moreover, the Church not only links the visible with the invisible, time with eternity, but also the universal and the particular, the Old and New Covenants. This link between the invisible and visible elements of ecclesial communion constitutes the Church as the sacrament of salvation.

²Cardinal Frings's Speeches During the Second Vatican Council: Apropos of A. Muggerridge's 'The Desolate City,' in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 15, no. 1 (1988): 131-47

³'Types' are events or people in the Old Testament, which prefigure or anticipate New Testament figures or events.

⁴*Catholicism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1950), 29



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