

The Second Vatican Council and the Theological Authority of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* as a Constitution

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RECENTLY A few historians and theologians have proposed a new theory concerning the interpretation of the Second Vatican Council, arguing that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is a hermeneutical key for understanding the other documents of the Council, a proposal that is as intriguing as it is attractive.¹ These authors seem to specify the way in which this is a key when they assert that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is not only the chronological starting-point but also the theological starting-point.² The difficulty with this new thesis is that its proponents are imprecise in identifying the exact way in which *Sacrosanctum Concilium* should be seen as being a key or as having theological priority. This essay will attempt to determine more precisely the ways in which *Sacrosanctum Concilium* should be seen as being a key or having theological priority. To this end, I will trace the development of the text of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* with respect to what the Council intended to accomplish with the liturgical constitution. The

¹ Massimo Faggioli, “*Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the Meaning of Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 71, no. 2 (2010): 437–452; Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York: Paulist, 2012), 104; Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2012), 19; Gerald O’Collins, “*Sacrosanctum Concilium* as a Hermeneutical Key for Vatican II,” in *The Second Vatican Council: Message and Meaning* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), 57–88.

² O’Collins, “Hermeneutical Key,” 88; Faggioli, *True Reform*, 10.

“mind of the council,” as the Council itself suggested, “may be known either from the character of the documents,” from its “frequent repetition of the same doctrine,” from its “manner of speaking,” and from “the matter treated.”³ In the first part of this essay, I will attempt to determine the “mind of the council” with respect to *Sacrosanctum Concilium* as a constitution. I will examine the nature of a constitution as a magisterial document, the various types of constitutions, and the historical development of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* as a constitution. In the second part of this essay, I will examine some of those theological aspects of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that advocates of this new proposal have put forth as the elements that give it the status of having a theological priority. Finally, I will offer a reflection on the ways in which the liturgical constitution can be understood to be a key, or to have theological priority.

The Nature of a Constitution

The Second Vatican Council promulgated four constitutions, designating two “dogmatic constitutions,” one a “pastoral constitution,” and the last simply a “constitution.” The use of the genre of constitution by the Council was hardly novel. The papacy used “apostolic constitutions” only for its most solemn acts dealing with either doctrinal or disciplinary matters,⁴ although some apostolic constitutions have more theological

³ Peter Hünemann, Helmut Hoping, Robert L. Fastiggi, Anne Englund Nash, and Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43rd edition (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2012), 4149 (hereafter *DH*). The Council itself, in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (hereafter, *LG*), §25, laid out a basic principle for understanding documents of the ordinary papal magisterium, i.e., the pope’s mind and will in doctrinal matters. This is equally true not only for papal documents but also for all magisterial texts; therefore the mind of the Council can be known in part from the “character of the documents.” This was also made clear in the *Notificatio* concerning *LG* and *Dei Verbum* (hereafter, *DV*), which explains the theological authority of propositions asserted by the Council. On this occasion the Theological Commission made reference to its Declaration of March 6, 1964, the text of which we transcribe here: “Taking conciliar custom into consideration and also the pastoral purpose of the present Council, the sacred Council defines as binding on the Church only those things in matters of faith and morals which it shall openly declare to be binding. The rest of the things which the sacred Council sets forth, inasmuch as they are the teaching of the Church’s supreme magisterium, ought to be accepted and embraced by each and every one of Christ’s faithful according to the mind of the sacred Council. The mind of the Council becomes known either from the matter treated or from its manner of speaking, in accordance with the norms of theological interpretation” (*DH* 4351).

⁴ J. A. Forgas, “Apostolic Constitution,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York:

authority than others.⁵ Pius XII, for example, issued forty-nine apostolic constitutions.⁶ One of these, *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950), not only infallibly defined the assumption of Mary's body and soul into heaven but also provided a number of scriptural, patristic, and papal arguments in favor of the dogma. Without invoking the charism of infallibility, Pius XII's *Sacramentum Ordinis* (1948) resolved the debate over the nature of the matter of the sacrament of ordination. Pius XII also used apostolic constitutions for such important disciplinary matters as erecting dioceses, such as he did in his *Chilapensis* (1958), and for modifying the rules for papal elections, as seen in his *Vacantis Apostolicae Sedis* (1945). In these juridical apostolic constitutions, Pius did not authoritatively assert any doctrinal claim, and they generally contain almost no theological argumentation.

Ecumenical councils have issued constitutions for almost eight hundred years, and these, like papal apostolic constitutions, were only used for solemn acts of councils dealing with the great doctrinal and disciplinary issues of the day. The Fourth Lateran (1215), First Lyon (1245), Second

McGraw Hill Book Co., 1967), 1: 689; J. T. Catoir, "Documents, papal," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 4: 946; Claudia Carlen, *Papal Pronouncements: A Guide: 1740–1978* (Ann Arbor, MI: Pierian Press, 1990), 1: xii.

⁵ On the doctrinal authority of papal constitutions, see Lucien Choupin, *Valeur des décisions doctrinales et disciplinaires du Saint-Siège*, 3rd ed., revised and expanded (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1928), 50–52. The 1917 code of canon law reads, "Can 1324. Satis non est haereticam pravitatem devitare, sed oportet illos quoque errores diligenter fugere, qui ad illam plus minusve accedunt; quare omnes debent etiam constitutiones et decreta servare quibus pravae huiusmodi opiniones a Sancta Sede proscriptae et prohibitae sunt" (CIC [1917], 1324). Pius XII stated, "Et quamquam hoc sacrum Magisterium, in rebus fidei et morum, cuilibet theologo proxima et universalis veritatis norma esse debet, utpote cui Christus Dominus totum depositum fidei—Sacras nempe Litteras ac divinam 'traditionem'—et custodiendum et tuendum et interpretandum concredidit, attamen officium, quo fideles tenentur illos quoque fugere errores, qui ad haeresim plus minusve accedant, ideoque 'etiam constitutiones et decreta servare, quibus pravae huiusmodi opiniones a Sancta Sede proscriptae et prohibitae sunt'" (Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis*, Promulgated August 12, 1950 [Washington, D.C., National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1950], §18). The First Vatican Council stated, "Quoniam vero satis non est, haereticam pravitatem devitare, nisi ii quoque errores diligenter fugiantur, qui ad illam plus minusve accedunt; omnes officii monemus, servandi etiam Constitutiones et Decreta, quibus pravae ejusmodi opiniones, quae isthic diserte non enumerantur, ab hac Sancta Sede proscriptae et prohibitae sunt" (DH 3045).

⁶ This is according to the Vatican website, at http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/apost_constitutions.index.html#apost_constitutions.

Lyon (1272–1274), and Fifth Lateran (1512–1517) Councils all issued one or more constitutions;⁷ however, the immediate influence on the Second Vatican Council for understanding the theological authority of constitutions was the First Vatican Council.⁸ Vatican I had expected to deal with a wide range of issues and so prepared a large number of schemata of both simple constitutions and dogmatic constitutions. In fact, the Council prepared three dogmatic constitutions, twenty-eight disciplinary and juridical constitutions, eighteen constitutions dealing with religious life, one concerning Eastern rites, and one attending to the missions.⁹ Unfortunately, the First Vatican Council was not able to complete its task due to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war.¹⁰ The Council only had time to promulgate two “dogmatic constitutions”: *Constitutio dogmatica de fide catholica*, known by its incipit *Dei Filius*, and *Constitutio dogmatica prima de ecclesia Christi*, known by its incipit *Pastor Aeternus*.¹¹ Nevertheless, it is useful to compare the proposed schema of the simple constitution, *Schema constitutionis de episcopis, de synodis, et de vicariis generalibus* (hereafter,

⁷ Norman Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London: Sheed and Ward; Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 1990), 1: 230 (4th Lateran), 283 (1st Lyon), 309 (2nd Lyon), and 650 (5th Lateran).

⁸ The Council of Trent, for example, issued a number of decrees, investing some with more theological authority than others. Thus, in the sixth session, the Council issued both the *Decretum de iustificatione* and the *Decretum de residentia episcoporum et aliorum inferiorum* (Christian D. Washburn, “Transformative Power of Grace and Condign Merit at the Council of Trent,” forthcoming in the *The Thomist* [2015]). The former is clearly superior in theological authority than the latter, even though both are decrees. This is evident not just from material content, but also from the wording of the two decrees. In the case of the *Decretum de iustificatione*, the Council was clear that its teaching is binding for one’s salvation: “The council has strictly forbidden that henceforth anyone dare to believe, preach, or teach anything contrary to what is determined and declared in this present decree” (“districtius inhibendo, ne deinceps audeat quisquam aliter credere, praedicare autr docere, quam praesenti decreto statuitur ac declaratur”) (DH 1520). In contrast, the disciplinary decree on residence was merely intended “to restore ecclesiastical discipline,” warning those who have jurisdiction to “fulfil their proper ministry,” otherwise various penalties would be assessed (Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2: 681–682).

⁹ Theodore Granderaeth, *Geschichte des Vatikanischen konzils von seiner ersten ankündigung bis zu seiner vertagung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1903), 1:431–433; Klaus Schatz, *Vaticanum I, 1869–1870* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1992).

¹⁰ Cuthbert Butler and William Bernard Ullathorne, *The Vatican Council: The Story from Inside in Bishop Ullathorne’s Letters* (London: Longmans, Green, 1930), 2:166–167.

¹¹ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2:804, 811.

Schema de episcopis),¹² to the schema of the dogmatic constitution, *Schema constitutionis dogmaticae schematis de ecclesia Christi* (hereafter, *Schema de ecclesia*). This comparison will help illustrate the theological priority a dogmatic constitution has over a simple constitution.¹³ Three important differences show this priority.

First, the First Vatican Council intended to invest a dogmatic constitution with more theological and doctrinal authority by labeling a constitution “dogmatic.” By doing so, the Council was signaling not only that some of its content was dogmatic, but also that the label itself gave that constitution greater authority than simple constitutions. This is not to say, however, that all the content of a dogmatic constitution was understood to be necessarily dogmatic, in the proper sense, by virtue of being in a dogmatic constitution.¹⁴

Second, the First Vatican Council intended to invest dogmatic constitutions with more theological and doctrinal authority than simple constitutions by using language (i.e., its “manner of speaking”) in three distinct ways: (1) The theological authority of a document is signified by the language of the introductory material of the schemata. The *Schema de ecclesia*, for example, stated at the beginning that “the goal is to lead all men to the way that leads to eternal salvation” and to show to those who are “in error” the nature of the true Church. The schema continued on to say that the bishops consider it their duty “to present the most important points of the true Catholic doctrine on the nature, the properties, and the power of the Church, and to respond to errors opposed to this teaching, by the proclamation of the appropriate canons.”¹⁵ The introductory material in the *Schema de episcopis*, on the other hand, mentioned neither the salutary nature of its theological content nor an intention to teach doctrine. (2) There was a corresponding use of technical terms to signal that the Council was investing a particular doctrinal proposition

¹² Giovan Domenico Mansi, (continued by J. B. Martin et L. Petit), *Sacrorum conciliorum nova, et amplissima collectio*: . . . , 53 vols. (Florence, Venice, Paris, and Leipzig: 1759–1927), 50:cols. 339–352 and 517–522.

¹³ Mansi, 51:cols. 539–553 (*Schema de ecclesia*) and 50:cols. 339–352 (*Schema de episcopis*).

¹⁴ Alfred Vacant, *Études théologiques sur les constitutions du concile du Vatican: d’après les actes du concile* (Paris: Delhomme et Brigue, 1895), 2:41–44; Theodor Granderaath, *Constitutiones dogmaticae sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani: ex ipsis eius actis explicatae* (Friburgi Brisgoviae: Herder, 1892), 74.

¹⁵ “Quare nostri muneris esse ducimus, potiora capita verae et catholicae doctrinae, de ecclesiae natura, proprietatibus, ac potestate exponere, et grassantes oppositos errores subiectis canonum articulis condemnare” (Mansi, 50:col. 539).

with more doctrinal authority than other propositions. This was typically accomplished through expressions such as “we teach” or “we declare.”¹⁶ The *Schema de ecclesia*, for example, used *docemus* nine times and *declaramus* seven times,¹⁷ while *Schema de episcopis* never used *docemus*, and used *declaramus* a mere three times.¹⁸ (3) The Council used canons to anathematize doctrinal errors. The *Schema de ecclesia* had twenty-one canons anathematizing various doctrinal errors, whereas the *Schema de episcopis* contained none.

The third important difference between *Schema de episcopis* and *Schema de ecclesia* that demonstrates the priority of a dogmatic constitution over a simple constitution is that, when the First Vatican Council intended to invest a dogmatic constitution with more theological authority than a simple constitution, it typically also entailed a fundamental change in the “matter being treated.” The two types of constitutions have contents that are quite different. At the First Vatican Council, the schemata of dogmatic constitutions typically contained a significant number of theological

¹⁶ It is true, of course, that only those elements of a dogmatic constitution in which the Council makes a definitive definition of revealed truth (primary object of infallibility) or a definitive declaration of non-revealed truth (secondary object of infallibility) require either the assent of faith or to be “firmly accepted and held.” It is also true that the object of the definition does not include the style and order of the document in which the definition is contained, the introduction, the stated motivation for the definition, ideas incidental to the definition, arguments for the definition, or even explanations of the definition (Sixtus Cartechini, S.J., *De valore notarum theologiarum et de criteriis adea dignoscendas* [Rome: Gregorian University, 1951], 22). The only claim that approaches such an authoritative claim, as Yves Congar noted, is the statement on the sacramental nature of the episcopacy. Congar wrote that “the only passage of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church that could be considered a truly dogmatic declaration is the one that concerns the sacramentality of the episcopate (*LG* III, §21): in fact, it settles a question that until now had been freely disputed by theologians. At the same time it is proposed as a teaching on the same level as the others, without the use of the emphatic, repeated and solemn formulas that normally introduce a ‘definition.’ . . . The manner of expressing it is not that of a dogmatic definition, but the matter is so important, the place it occupies in the doctrine of the episcopate so decisive, that one can hardly see how on this point the council has not issued a definitive judgment. . . . This is not the same as a ‘definition,’ but it does suffice for the doctrine thus proposed to be binding as teaching on which the Catholic magisterium is in unanimous agreement” (cited in Francis A. Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* [New York: Paulist Press, 1996], 166–167).

¹⁷ Mansi, 50:cols. 540, 541, 543, 544, 548, 549, 551.

¹⁸ Ibid., 50:col. 342 [twice], 343.

arguments taken from Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, other local and ecumenical councils, and papal documents; whereas the schemata of simple constitutions rarely cited from such sources. Thus, the *Schema de ecclesia* referenced Scripture thirty-eight times, while the *Schema de episcopis* did so only once. The *Schema de ecclesia* referenced Fathers eight times, and *de episcopis*, once. The *Schema de ecclesia* referenced councils two times, both of which are doctrinal decrees; *Schema de episcopis*, on the other hand, cited the disciplinary decrees of ecumenical councils eighteen times.¹⁹ It should come as no surprise, then, that the Second Vatican Council, like its predecessor, from the initial schemata to the promulgation of its documents, maintained a similar distinction in its documents in which there was a difference in “the character of the documents,” its “manner of speaking,” and “the matter treated.”

The Development of Constitutio de Sacra Liturgia

On January 25, 1959 John XXIII announced to cardinals gathered at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls his intention to call an ecumenical council.²⁰ Preparations for it were well underway by June, and the ante-preparatory commission gathered information on the liturgy and other areas.²¹ On Pentecost Sunday (June 5, 1960), Pope John issued his *motu proprio*, *Superno Dei nutu*, which ended the ante-preparatory period and began the preparatory period of the Council. With this *motu proprio*, the Pope also constituted two secretariats and ten commissions to begin a new stage of preparation. Amongst these ten commissions was the *Commissio de Sacra Liturgia*.²² On June 6, 1960, Pope John appointed Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani (1881–1962), Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, to be president of the liturgical commission. On July 11 he appointed Annibale Bugnini (1912–1982) as secretary.²³ The liturgical

¹⁹ Ibid., 51:cols. 539–553 (*Schema de ecclesia*); 50:339–352 (*Schema de episcopis*).

²⁰ *Acta et documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando*, Series prima (*antepraeparatoria*) (Roma: Typis Vaticanis, 1960), 1/1, 3–6 (hereafter ADA).

²¹ The various letters (*vota*) of the bishops and the *studia* of the faculties of Catholic institutions are gathered in ADA 2/1–2/8.

²² Pope John XXIII, *Motu Proprio Superno Dei nutu*, Promulgated June 5, 1960, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (hereafter, AAS) 52 (1960): 433–437 and ADA, 1/1, 93–96; Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, *History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 1:171.

²³ Angelo Lameri, *La “Pontificia Commissio de Sacra Liturgia Praeparatoria Concilii Vaticani II”: documenti, testi, verbali* (Rome: CLV-Edizioni liturgiche, 2013), 19; Lameri, “L’esordio dei lavori della ‘Pontificia Commissio de Sacra Liturgia praeparatoria Concilii Vaticani II,’” *Cristianesimo nella storia* 34 (2013): 131–159; Anni-

commission began its work on November 12, 1960 and produced three drafts.²⁴ The commission voted on the final draft on January 13, 1962. Cicognani signed the document on February 1, 1962, just four days before his death.²⁵ John XXIII then appointed Cardinal Arcadio Larraona, C.M.F. (1881–1973) as president.²⁶

On March 26, 1962, the schema (*Schema Constitutionis de Sacra Liturgia*) was submitted to the Central Commission, which debated the document until April 2.²⁷ This schema is notable for several reasons.²⁸ Inserted into the text were *declarations*, explanatory notes, for each part of the schema. These *declarationes* help us to understand the Council's intention with respect to the document at this point in its development. The first *declaratio* contains a number of important points that help us better understand the preface. First, the preface explicitly states that it is not the intention of the Council in this constitution to define anything dogmatically.²⁹ The *declaratio* notes that this phrase was included in order to satisfy those who did not want the Council to define anything dogmatically. It also stressed that, while it was primarily practical, it could not completely avoid theological issues. After all, one can hardly expect spiritual, pastoral, and apostolic fruit in the life of the Church from practical decisions that are not explicitly based on doctrinal foundations. Nevertheless, it states:

the intention of the Constitution is only to propose general norms and, as it were, to propose the highest *practical* principles. It is left to

bale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948–1975* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 14.

²⁴ Pierre Jounel, "Genèse et théologie de la Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*," *Ho theologos* 3 (1983): 5–22.

²⁵ Carlo Braga, "La Sacrosanctum Concilium nei lavori della Commissione Preparatoria," in *Costituzione liturgica "Sacrosanctum Concilium": Studi*, Biblioteca Ephemerides Liturgicae Subsidia 38, ed. Congregazione per il Culto Divino (Rome: CLV Edizioni Liturgiche, 1986), 25–68.

²⁶ Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II*, 2:107.

²⁷ This schema can be found in Commissio Centralis Praeparatoria Concilii Vaticani II, *Acta et documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando*. Series secunda (Rome: Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1960), II/2/3, 26–45 (hereafter ADP).

²⁸ The structure of the preparatory commission on the liturgy can be found in Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948–1975*, 15–16. Lameri, *La "Pontificia Commissio de Sacra Liturgia Praeparatoria Concilii Vaticani II,"* 54–55.

²⁹ "Quare Sacrosanctum Concilium, dum declarant se in praesenti Constitutione nihil velle dogmaticae definire, de fovenda tamen atque instauranda Liturgia quae sequuntur principia censet in mentem revocanda et practicas normas statuendas esse" (ADP II/2/3, 26).

the Holy See and to special commissions of experts selected from the entire world and established after the Council for this purpose, to put into action the individual specific elements.³⁰

Chapter 1, entitled *De principiis generalibus ads. liturgiam instaurandam atque fovendam*, contains five parts. In the first part, entitled *De natura sacrae liturgiae*, the nature of the liturgy is described in four articles divided into eight paragraphs. It was Giulio Bevilacqua, C.O. (1881–1965) who suggested that an initial chapter be inserted that reflected on the mystery of the liturgy in the Church.³¹ The attached *declaratio* explains that the initial four articles do not intend to give a “complete doctrine of the Sacred Liturgy”; “only those elements” are proposed that illustrate its true nature and its place in the activity of the Church. The *declaratio* further notes that this constitution only gives principles from which general practical norms should be drawn for the renewal and promotion of the sacred liturgy.³²

In the *relatio* that accompanied this schema, Cardinal Larraona explained that the writing of the constitution on the liturgy by the commission was guided by five criteria; of these five, only one is theological, which has as its aim to give a “theological foundation” for any change of practice.³³ Concerning the first chapter of the constitution, the cardinal explained that, given the practical end (*finem practicum*) of the constitution (i.e., the renewal of the liturgy), only the “theological principles” that are common to all parts of the liturgy are given.³⁴ He then referred to Pius XII’s *Mediator Dei* as a “theological summation” of all things liturgical, noting that it is precisely the principles contained in *Mediator Dei* and in subsequent magisterial documents that are “syntheti-

³⁰ “Mens huius Constitutionis est solum normas generales et veluti summa principia practica exponere. Relinquitur vero Sanctae Sedi et specialibus Commissionibus peritorum ex universo orbe eligendorum, post Concilium ad hoc instituendis, singula concreta executioni mandare” (ADP II/2/3, 27).

³¹ Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948–1975*, 17.

³² “In praecedentibus non universa doctrina de sacra liturgia, sed ea tantum elementa proponuntur quae ipsius veram naturam illustrent et locum determinant sive in actuositate ecclesiae sive in vita fidelium. Sunt enim principia e quibus normae generales practicae deducuntur ad sacram liturgiam instaurandam et fovendam” (ADP II/2/3, 29).

³³ ADP II/2/3, 49.

³⁴ “Haec sollicitudo determinandi essentialia principia, evidentius apparet in capite I constitutionis quod finem practicum sibi proponit, idest: semel agere de illis rebus, ideis vel conceptibus quae communia sunt omnibus partibus sacrae liturgiae” (ADP II/2/3, 50).

cally and integrally” treated in the first chapter of the proposed schema.³⁵ This is interesting for two reasons. First, the *relatio* showed that the text, as it was written, was understood to be in continuity with the teaching of Pius XII. This was made evident, for example, by the thirty-six references in the footnotes of chapter 1 to Pius XII’s works.³⁶ Second, the *relatio* also confirmed that the text was not intended to give a comprehensive theological account of the liturgy in the way that *Mediator Dei* had done.

The result of the discussion of the Central Preparatory Commission on the liturgical schema was that it required reworking. Thus, it was given to the sub-commission of the Central Commission for amendments. A revised schema was then prepared by the sub-commission and completed on May 9, 1962.³⁷ For our purposes, this schema modified, in a number of important respects, the original draft produced by the liturgical commission. First, a note was printed on the title page which read, “The intention of this Constitution is only to propose general norms and the higher principles regarding the general liturgical renewal, leaving to the Holy See to arrange for the carrying out of specific elements.”³⁸ Second, the sub-commission suppressed the explanatory *declarationes*.³⁹

By the middle of the summer of 1962, only the first seven schemata were considered ready, and as a result of this assessment, on July 13, 1962, John XXIII decreed that these first seven schemata, including the *Schema Constitutionis de Sacra Liturgia*, should be sent to all the Council fathers.⁴⁰

³⁵ ADP II/2/3, 50.

³⁶ Ibid., 43–46.

³⁷ Cassian Folsom, O. S. B., “The Hermeneutics of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: Development of a Method and its Application,” *Antiphon* 8.1 (2003): 3.

³⁸ “Huius Constitutionis mens est: tantum normas generales et ‘altiora principia, generalem liturgicam instaurationem respicientia’ (cf. *Joannes XXIII, Motu Proprio Rubricarum instructum diei 25 iulii 1960*) proponere, reliquendo Sanctae Sedi singulari executioni demandare.” Francisco Gil Hellín misleadingly attached the note to the prooemium (*Concilii Vaticani II synopsis in ordinem redigens schemata cum relationibus necnon patrum orationes atque animadversiones: Constitutio de sacra liturgia Sacrosanctum Concilium* [Vatican City: Libreria editrice vaticana, 2003], 6; hereafter, Gil Hellín, *Concili Vaticani II synopsis*).

³⁹ *Schemata constitutionum et decretorum de quibus disceptabitur in Concilii sessionibus*, Series prima (Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1962), 157–201. Gil Hellín, *Concili Vaticani II synopsis*, column I (pp. 6–395).

⁴⁰ *Schemata constitutionum et decretorum de quibus disceptabitur in Concilii sessionibus*, Series prima, 5. The first seven schemata can be found in *Schemata constitutionum et decretorum de quibus disceptabitur in Concilii sessionibus*, Series prima, 269–271. This volume contains: 1. *Schema Constitutionis dogmaticae de fontibus Revelationis*; 2. *Schema Constitutionis dogmaticae de deposito Fidei pure custodiendo*; 3. *Schema Constitutionis dogmaticae de ordine morali Christiano*; 4. *Schema Constitutionis dogmaticae de*

These first seven schemata were accompanied by a letter that asked the fathers to send in their initial evaluations with the aim of helping to establish the order of treatment for the schemata.⁴¹ There were a number of incisive critiques from various bishops, including Cardinal Josef Frings (1877–1978), whose opinion was written by Joseph Ratzinger.⁴² The four dogmatic constitutions were found wanting by the French, German, and Dutch bishops;⁴³ consequently, they could not be taken up immediately at the Council. Missionary bishops from the Netherlands decided that a commentary should be prepared, pointing out the weaknesses of the dogmatic constitutions. This commentary, composed by Edward Schillebeeckx (1914–2009), was eventually distributed to other Council fathers in mimeographed form.⁴⁴ While highly critical of the dogmatic constitutions, the commentary called the liturgical constitution “an admirable piece of work.”⁴⁵ As a result of the efforts of these Dutch bishops, a number of petitions were submitted to the Council presidency asking for a delay in the treatment of the dogmatic constitutions.⁴⁶

We should at this point note some things about the “character” and “contents” of the *Schema Constitutionis de Sacra Liturgia* sent to the Council fathers. First, the liturgical constitution is designated a simple constitution, unlike a number of the other schemata. One should recall that of

castitate, matrimonio, familia, et virginitate; 5. *Schema Constitutionis de Sacra Liturgia*; 6. *Schema Constitutionis de instrumentis communicationis socialis*; 7. *Schema Decreti de Ecclesiae unitate*.

⁴¹ Jared Wicks, S.J., “Pieter Smulders and *Dei Verbum*: 1. A Consultation on the Eve of Vatican II,” *Gregorianum* 82 (2001): 251–255. 174 letters commenting on the first schema are contained in the appendix of *Acta synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970) (hereafter AS).

⁴² Jared Wicks, S.J., “Six Texts by Prof. Joseph Ratzinger as *peritus* Before and During Vatican Council II,” *Gregorianum* 89, no. 2 (2007): 240–241.

⁴³ Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II*, 1:423–426.

⁴⁴ Jared Wicks, S.J., “Still More Light on Vatican Council II,” *Catholic Historical Review* 98 (2012): 495.

⁴⁵ This commentary is now in print in Volume 2 of Sebastian Tromp’s (1889–1975) secretary’s diary (Sebastian Tromp, S.J., *Konzilstagebuch mit Erläuterungen und Akten aus der Arbeit der Kommission für Glauben und Sitten, II. Vatikanisches Konzil*, ed. and annotated by Alexandra von Teuffenbach, 2/2 [1962–1963] [Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz, 2011], 986. Jan A. Brouwers, “Vatican II: Derniers Préparatifs et Première Session Activités Conciliaires en Coulisses,” in Étienne Fouilloux, *Vatican II Commence. . . : Approches Francophones* [Leuven: Bibliotheek van de Faculteit der godgeleerdheid, 1993]), 353–368.

⁴⁶ Ralph M. Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: The Unknown Council* (New York City: Hawthorn Books, 1967), 24.

the first seven schemata, the first four were designated “dogmatic constitutions,” while two of the remaining three were designated as constitutions, and the last a decree on Christian unity.⁴⁷ Later in 1962, John XXIII authorized the distribution of other schemata to the Council fathers, including the two doctrinal constitutions, *Schema constitutionis doctrinalis de ordine sociali* and the *Schema constitutionis doctrinalis de communitate gentium*. By 1963, the Council had dropped the category of “doctrinal constitutions.”⁴⁸ So from the very beginning the Council intended to distinguish, quite clearly, the theological function of the various schemata. Second, the content of the *Schema Constitutionis de Sacra Liturgia* is unlike that of the other “dogmatic constitutions.” The text does not attempt to offer a comprehensive explanation of the liturgy and in this way is unlike Pius XII’s *Mediator Dei*,⁴⁹ a point confirmed by the *relatio*.

Due to the defects of the more theological schemata, the Council presidents decided, with the approbation of John XXIII, to take up first the *Schema Constitutionis de Sacra Liturgia*, which was announced in the second general congregation on October 16, 1962.⁵⁰ This decision to take up the question of the liturgy before the other more controversial theological topics was later described by Benedict XVI as “an act of Providence.”⁵¹ The new president of the Liturgical Commission, Cardinal Larraona, presented a new, slightly modified text in the Council hall during the fourth general congregation on October 22, 1962.⁵² This was then examined by the Council fathers until the eighteenth general congregation on November 13, with 328 oral interventions by Council fathers.⁵³ The document was generally approved on November 14, 1962 by a vote of 2,162 affirmatives, 46 negatives, and 7 void.⁵⁴ Clearly, the Council fathers did not have fundamental problems with the direction of the liturgical renewal.

Although the Council fathers had generally approved the document,

⁴⁷ Folsom, “The Hermeneutics of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” 3.

⁴⁸ *Schemata constitutionum et decretorum de quibus disceptabitur in Concilii sessionibus*, Series tertia (Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1962), 283.

⁴⁹ Aidan Nichols, O.P., “A Tale of Two Documents: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Mediator Dei*,” *Antiphon* 5 (2000): 24.

⁵⁰ AS I/1, 214.

⁵¹ Benedict XVI, “To the Council with Enthusiasm and Hope,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, February 20, 2013, p. 9.

⁵² The text can be found in AS I/1, 262–303. Gil Hellín, *Concili Vaticani II synopsis*, col. II (pp. 6–305).

⁵³ Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948–1975*, 31.

⁵⁴ AS I/3, 55.

they thought that minor improvements were still needed. As a result of the fathers' input, the text was emended and then brought before them one chapter at a time, usually with an accompanying *relatio*. On November 19, 1962, an emended text of the preface was presented to the Council. The preface no longer included an affirmation that the liturgical constitution did not intend to define new doctrine.⁵⁵ The reason given for this omission was that the matter was sufficiently clear from the nature of the document itself, and therefore such a declaration was "superfluous."⁵⁶ This is not a small point. The danger of almost all magisterial reflections on theological matters is that they often have a type of "creeping infallibility"; however, in this case the Council did not even think such a consideration was worthy of a single explanatory sentence.

This lack of concern for how the liturgical constitution would be interpreted doctrinally is in striking contrast to the development of the *Constitutio Dogmatica de Ecclesia*, known by its incipit *Lumen Gentium*. The Council fathers were repeatedly concerned with the authoritative status of the contents of the two dogmatic constitutions. The third schema on the constitution on the Church, sent to the fathers in July 1964, removed the term "dogmatic" as a modifier of "constitution" in the title.⁵⁷ Despite the fact that the term dogmatic was removed from the title, the *relatio generalis* that accompanied this third schema on September 15, 1964 explained the difference between a dogmatic constitution, such as that on the Church, and a simple constitution, such as that on the sacred liturgy. This *relatio* clarified that the constitution on the liturgy is concerned with "practical applications" and is "rarely concerned with the exposition of doctrine," whereas dogmatic constitutions are concerned with doctrinal synthesis. This difference, the *relatio* noted, entails that greater care must be given to the wording of dogmatic constitutions. It was suggested, for example, that a new procedure be adopted for *Lumen Gentium* so that the proper care could be devoted to doctrinal issues, requiring votes on particular formulations, even in some cases single sentences.⁵⁸ Calling this

⁵⁵ Ibid., 114–115.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 120; Gil Hellín, *Constitutio de sacra liturgia, Sacrosanctum concilium*, 14.

⁵⁷ AS III, 3/1, 158; AS, Indices 76; Francisco Gil Hellín, *Constitutio dogmatica de ecclesia: Concilii Vaticani II synopsis in ordinem redigens schemata cum relationibus necnon patrum orationes atque animadversiones* (Vatican City: Libr. Ed. Vaticana, 1995), 3. (Gil Hellín, *Constitutio dogmatica de ecclesia, Lumen gentium*.)

⁵⁸ "Attendere autem velitis, venerabiles Patres, ad differentiam, quo intercedit inter dogmaticam constitutionem de Ecclesia et constitutiones quae, uti constitutio de Sacra Liturgia, ad practicas applicationes, ceterum in luce doctrinae, venire

constitution dogmatic, given that it contained no definitive declarations of revealed truth, caused some difficulty for a number of Council fathers. Therefore, in the 123rd general congregation on November 16, 1964, a *notificatio* was issued explaining that only those things that were expressly intended as infallible were infallible. The notification was clear that everything else *Lumen Gentium* proposes “as the teaching of the supreme magisterium of the Church” is to be acknowledged and accepted by each and every member of the faithful according to the mind of the Council.⁵⁹ The term dogmatic, however, was reinserted into the title and it was promulgated as *Constitutio Dogmatica de Ecclesia* in the 3rd session on November 21, 1964.⁶⁰

On November 29, 1962, an emended text of the liturgical constitution’s chapter 1 was presented to the fathers. The *relatio*, given by Joseph Albertus Martin (1931–1990), the bishop of Québec, Canada, noted that the views of the fathers were quite diverse on the number of modifications they thought necessary. One father claimed that “it would be difficult to produce better,” while others found it lacking in its doctrinal explanations, desiring that the doctrinal expressions of Pius XII’s *Mediator Dei* be adopted. Martin stated that the necessary doctrinal corrections would be made, but he rejected any notion that the text should be fundamentally altered. He then went on to explain that *Mediator Dei* and the liturgical constitution were simply two different genres: in an encyclical letter one would find a complete doctrinal exposition, while in a conciliar constitution one should expect to find doctrinal matters explained concisely.⁶¹

The practical orientation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was confirmed by an article written by Cipriano Vagaggini, O.S.B. (1909–1999), which appeared in *L’Osservatore Romano* at the end of the first session in 1962. Vagaggini, a consultor to the preparatory liturgical commission and then *peritus* to the Council,⁶² summarized the work accomplished in the first session on the *Schema Constitutionis de Sacra Liturgia* and asserted that

intendunt. Hucusque revera votationes propositae sunt, saltem generatim, circa concretas et summe practicas decisiones, rarius circa ipsam doctrinae expositionem. Ubi autem de nostra schemate de ecclesia agitur, in quaestione versantur doctrinales syntheses, quae aegre ac non sine incommodis dividerentur” (AS III/1, 180).

⁵⁹ AS III/8, 10.

⁶⁰ AS III/8, 784. Gil Hellín, *Constitutio dogmatica de ecclesia, Lumen gentium*, 3.

⁶¹ AS I/3, 702.

⁶² A. Lameri, La “Pontificia Commissio de Sacra Liturgia Praeparatoria Concilii Vaticani II,” 54. AS Indices, 949.

this schema is neither a theological nor a pastoral treatise on the liturgy. Instead, its purpose is to establish general principles in order to renew and foster the liturgy, and any theological or pastoral issues are only discussed in order to frame the practical nature of the document.⁶³ Vagaggini makes clear that the liturgical constitution was a largely practical document designed to “translate” the liturgical renewal “into the practical life of the Church.”⁶⁴ This is precisely the genius of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, as it ultimately applies to the concrete historical reality of the Church a series of applications that flow from general principles.

In the time between the first and second period of the Council, Pope John XXIII died and Pope Paul VI was elected. The new Pope opened the second period of the Council on September 29, 1963 with a remarkable and beautiful address lasting sixty-two minutes.⁶⁵ Pope Paul’s primary concern for the second session was ecclesiological, not liturgical. He identified four “principal aims” of the Council: (1) Developing the notion of the Church, (2) Renewing the Church, (3) Restoring unity, and (4) Promoting the Church’s dialogue with the world.⁶⁶ Paul was therefore quite clear that:

the main theme of this second session of the Ecumenical Council will be the Church. A thorough investigation must be made into her inner nature, with a view to defining this in human terms, as far as possible. It must be a definition that will give a deeper understanding of the Church’s actual, fundamental constitution, and show more clearly her diversified, salvific mission.⁶⁷

⁶³ Cipriano Vagaggini, O. S. B., “I principi generali della riforma liturgica approvati dal Concilio,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, December 8, 1962, p. 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 5. Immediately after the Council, Vagaggini reconfirmed the basic “practical” aim of the liturgical constitution and made it clear that the constitution did not wish “at all, either in fact or merely in resume, a complete theology of the liturgy.” It is important to note that he affirmed that the constitution did not attempt to do this even in “resume” (Vagaggini, “Fundamental Ideas of the Constitution,” in *The Liturgy of Vatican II: A Symposium*, ed. Guilherme Barauna, English edition ed. Jovian Lang [Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1966], 97–98).

⁶⁵ For the length of the speech, see National Catholic Welfare Conference and Floyd Anderson, *Council Daybook, Vatican II, Session 1 & 2* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1965), 141.

⁶⁶ AS II/1, 188–189.

⁶⁷ “Putamus hoc auspiciato fore, ut Spiritus veritatis in hoc Oecumenico Concilio sacris Ordinibus Ecclesiae docentis radiantiorum lucem afferat, et evidentiorum proponat doctrinam de eiusdem Ecclesiae natura; atque perinde contingat, ut quasi Sponsa Christi in Ipso imaginem suam inquirat, et in Ipso, flagrantissimo

He continued for two-and-a-half pages to discuss the proposed Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

In contrast, Pope Paul VI only mentioned the liturgical constitution twice in passing. Both instances occur in his discussion of “the renewal of the Church,” thereby clearly indicating that the liturgical constitution was seen as only part of a much wider concern for this renewal of the Church. In the first instance, Paul noted that the rejuvenation of “the regulations by which her . . . liturgical forms are governed” is evidence of “a new spring” in the Church.⁶⁸ In the second instance, the Pope hoped that the discussion on the liturgy would be brought to a successful end.⁶⁹ What is remarkable is that there was no discussion of any of those themes that are of such concern to the proponents of the new view of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Indeed, when the renewed importance of “the study of divine truth” was mentioned, it was not in connection to the liturgical constitution.⁷⁰ The Pope then returned to the ecclesiological theme of the restoration of Christian unity. This is hardly evidence for the deep theological nature of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, at least relative to the future *Lumen Gentium*.

In the second period, the treatment of the liturgical constitution reopened on October 8, 1963, in the 43rd congregation, with voting on the emendations to chapter two.⁷¹ After resolving the final issues, the Council promulgated the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy in the third public session on December 4, 1963. Cardinal Pericle Felici (1911–1982), the secretary of the Council, instructed the fathers on the voting procedure, and after the vote he announced the tally: 2,147 affirmatives and 4 negatives.⁷² This document received a nearly unanimous consent, accepted even by the more conservative prelates, such as Archbishop

mota amore, studeat propriam detegere formam, pulchritudinem scilicet, quam Ipse vult in Ecclesia sua elucentem.

“Hanc ob rem argumentum princeps, quod in hac altera sessione Oecumenici Concilii proponetur, ad Ecclesiam ipsam spectabit. Cuius propterea intima natura penitus indagabitur, ut, pro humana fandi facultate, eius definitio idcirco exhibeatur, ut vera et primaria constitutio Ecclesiae altius ediscatur et eius multiplex salvificumque mandatum clarius patescat” (AS II/1, 190. English translation found in *The Pope Speaks* 9 [1963]: 132).

⁶⁸ AS II/1, 192.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 193.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 192.

⁷¹ AS II/2, 275.

⁷² AS II/6, 407.

Marcel Lefebvre (1905–1991).⁷³ Cardinal Felici then explained that the norms promulgated in the new constitution would not have the force of law until the first Sunday of Lent (*Quadragesima*), February 16, 1964.⁷⁴ Pope Paul VI solemnly approved and promulgated the constitution. This was “greeted by endlessly prolonged applause.”⁷⁵

After the promulgation of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, now better known by its incipit, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Pope Paul VI delivered an address to the Council fathers in which he thanked them for their work and summed up the results of the second period. The portion of this summary dedicated to the liturgical constitution consisted of a mere four paragraphs, expressing a pastoral concern for the revision of the liturgy.⁷⁶ It is striking that in this address is not a single word about any of the most salient theological themes of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, usually identified as being: the Paschal Mystery, active participation of the laity, an expanded use of Scripture, inculturation, and balancing the conservation of Tradition and legitimate progress. The only two aspects mentioned in this regard were the simplification of rites and the use of the vernacular. Nor was there a discussion of any of the themes proposed by the new theory on *Sacrosanctum Concilium* about the theological priority of the liturgical constitution: Eucharistic ecclesiology, the centrality of Scripture, *Ressourcement*, or collegiality of bishops. This is not to argue that these elements are not present, but it is safe to say that they were not viewed as an important contribution made by the liturgical constitution as such. Toward the end of his address, Paul VI spent almost as much time discussing the question of the episcopacy⁷⁷ as he did the liturgical constitution itself. Nor did he indicate that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* contributed to this question. Moreover, if one contrasts this address with his address after the promulgation of *Lumen Gentium* in the third period, then one immediately sees their relative theological importance.⁷⁸ There, Paul VI reflected

⁷³ Ottaviani, Browne and Archbishop Lefebvre, for example, voted for *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (AS II/6, 441, 441, 443). At this time, Lefebvre also clearly recognized the need for the reform of the liturgy (Marcel Lefebvre, *Open Letter to Confused Catholics* [Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, 1987], 106). On Lefebvre, also see Aime Georges Martimore, “But What is the Mass of Pius V?” *L’Osservatore Romano*, September 16, 1976, p. 11.

⁷⁴ AS II/6, 408.

⁷⁵ Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948–1975*, 37. AS II/6, 409.

⁷⁶ AS II/6, 565–566.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 567.

⁷⁸ AS III/8, 910–917. It is interesting to compare this to Pope Paul VI’s remarkable allocution after the promulgation of *Lumen Gentium*, where he specifically talked

on the theological insights of *Lumen Gentium* for seven pages, identifying many of the salient points in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: the Church as mystery, the biblical nature of the Church's doctrine, and episcopal collegiality.

The Promulgated Text of *Constitutio de Sacra Liturgia*

As stated earlier, the Second Vatican Council adopted an approach similar to its immediate predecessor, the First Vatican Council, in distinguishing between different types of constitutions.⁷⁹ The Council chose wisely and purposely to make *Sacrosanctum Concilium* a constitution that was to deal with “the renewal and fostering of the liturgy.”⁸⁰ The Council did three significant things to show that the two dogmatic constitutions have more theological weight than the other two constitutions.

First, the Council deliberately gave less theological authority to *Sacrosanctum Concilium* by assigning it the status of a simple constitution, in contrast to *Lumen Gentium* and *Dei Verbum*, which it made “dogmatic

about the theology of *Lumen Gentium*. Paul VI stated, “Augetur autem laetitia nostra si extremo hoc tempore Concilii Sessionis, cuius finem facturi sumus, obiter in memoriam revocamus argumenta, de quibus est disceptatum ac denique constitutum: pertractata est enim doctrina de Ecclesia atque exposita: ita opus Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani primi est completum, quod pertinent ad doctrinam; exploratum est mysterium Ecclesiae et consilium divinum de primariis eius institutis.”

⁷⁹ Shortly after the close of Vatican Council II, Umberto Betti argued that, concerning *Lumen Gentium*, “Avant tout, il s’agit d’une Constitution dogmatique. Ce qui importe, ce n’est pas la denomination de Constitution—qui aurait pu aussi bien être remplacée par d’autres, comme Décret, Bulle, etc., mais la qualification de ‘dogmatique’. Celle-ci indique que le magistère universel a pour tâche comme tel de proposer la doctrine contenue dans la Constitution” (“Qualification théologique de la Constitution,” in *L’Église de Vatican II* [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967], 2:214–15). Ratzinger argued that Betti had raised “most of the Council’s declarations practically (though not technically) to the status of dogmas” (“Announcements and Prefatory Notes of Explanation,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. H. Vorgrimler [New York: Herder and Herder, 1967], 1:2990).

⁸⁰ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (hereafter, SC), §1. There have been a number of translations of “*instaurandam et fovendam*,” such as, “reform and promotion of the liturgy.” A number of these translations are misleading, as pointed out by Pamela Jackson (“Theology of the Liturgy,” in Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering, *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 120). SC never used the terms “*reformatio*” or “*reformare*”; instead, the Council used various forms of *instaurare* eighteen times (http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm).

constitutions.” This concern to distinguish between constitutions was maintained through all four periods, beginning in the preparatory period and continuing with frequent deliberation over the titles of all four constitutions throughout the discussion period.⁸¹ This distinction received final approbation when the Council promulgated all four constitutions, including their titles: *Constitutio Dogmatica de Ecclesia*, *Constitutio Dogmatica de Divina Revelation*, *Constitutio Pastoralis de Ecclesia in Mundo Huius Temporis*, and *Constitutio de Sacra Liturgia*. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* remained at the level of a constitution. One suspects that the reason some theologians and historians fail to recognize the constitutions’s relative theological authority is the current habit of calling the constitutions not by their proper titles, but by their incipits.

Second, in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* the Council refrained from employing a “manner of speaking” that would invest its particular theological claims with an increased theological authority. The Council nowhere used terms such as *docemus/docet* or *declaramus/declarat* with respect to its theological claims.⁸² The dogmatic or doctrinal character of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is not primarily derived from the Council itself, but rather from the authority of other councils that are cited, such as Trent. This is in contrast to the two dogmatic constitutions, in which such language is repeatedly employed. Thus, *Lumen Gentium*, on five occasions, states that it “teaches” certain doctrines. The Council, for example, stated that “this Sacred Council wishes to turn its attention firstly to the Catholic faithful. Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, it teaches (*docet*) that the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation.”⁸³ In perhaps its most significant doctrinal teaching, the Council finally resolved the issue of whether episcopal consecration was an ordination when it declared: “The Sacred Council teaches that by episcopal

⁸¹ Christian D. Washburn, “The Theological Priority of *Lumen gentium* and *Dei Verbum* for the Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” *The Thomist* 78 (2014): 107–134.

⁸² The Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* used this language only once. “Sacra Synodus, recolens ea quae Concilium Vaticanum Primum docuit, declarat ‘duplicem esse ordinem cognitionis’ distinctum, nempe fidei et rationis, nec sane Ecclesiam vetare ne ‘humanarum artium et disciplinarum culturae... in suo quaque ambitu propriis utantur principiis et propria methodo’; quare ‘iustam hanc libertatem agnoscens’, cultus humani et praesertim scientiarum legitimam autonomiam affirmat” (§59).

⁸³ LG, §14. See also §§18, 20, 21, and 67.

consecration the fullness of the sacrament of Orders is conferred.”⁸⁴

Third, the varying theological weight of the constitutions is also evident in a difference, both qualitative and quantitative, between the “subject matter treated”—the contents—of the various constitutions. Of course, in texts that are more theological or doctrinal, one would expect to see a greater treatment of theological sources. With respect to quantity, in *Lumen Gentium* there are 304 references to Scripture, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* has only 33, *Gaudium et Spes* has 157, and *Dei Verbum* has 15. *Lumen Gentium* has 62 references to the Fathers, whereas *Sacrosanctum Concilium* has 8, *Gaudium et Spes* has 8, and *Dei Verbum* has 13. *Lumen Gentium* has 110 references to papal documents; *Sacrosanctum Concilium* has zero; *Gaudium et Spes* has 133; and *Dei Verbum* has 11. *Lumen Gentium* has 31 references to ecumenical councils; *Sacrosanctum Concilium* has 4; *Gaudium et Spes* has 24; and *Dei Verbum* has 10. While *Dei Verbum* does not seem to compare favorably, it must be remembered that it is less than half the length of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and about one-sixth the length of the other two constitutions.⁸⁵ With respect to the qualitative difference, we may note that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* only references the Council of Trent, 3 of which references are from doctrinal decrees and 1 from a disciplinary decree; in *Dei Verbum*, all 7 references to councils are from the dogmatic constitution *Dei Filius* of Vatican I. Of *Gaudium et Spes*’s 24 references to councils, 20 are to other documents of Vatican II, of which 17 come from the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*.

Moreover, the contents are different in a qualitative respect. The two dogmatic constitutions give relatively full theological expositions. In contrast, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* do not offer sustained theological reflections. It must be remembered that the Council did not intend, in the pastoral constitution, to treat its matters technically

⁸⁴ LG, §21. Jean Galot has written that this is “the most significant advance in the doctrinal teaching of Vatican II” in his *The Theology of the Priesthood* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), 183. See also Aidan Nichols, O.P., *Holy Order: Apostolic Priesthood from the New Testament to the Second Vatican Council* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1991), 132, and Christian D. Washburn, “St. Robert Bellarmine’s Theology of the Sacrament of Ordination,” *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 19 (2012): 1–18. On other significant doctrinal developments at the Council, see Jared Wicks, S.J., “Vatican II in 1964: Major Doctrinal Advances, But Also Fissures on Addressing the Modern World,” *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 20 (2013): 4–19.

⁸⁵ LG has 25,509 words; DV has 3,374; SC has 8,066; and *Gaudium et Spes* has 24,030. These word counts are to the Latin text and are not inclusive of title, notes, or signatures.

or comprehensively, since the audience was “the whole of humanity” and its contents had to be understood even by non-believers.⁸⁶ Likewise, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, as noted above, was intended to give only general theological principles as support for practical directives.

This is made clear in the introduction of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, where the Council specifies its purpose. It does not claim to be *the* theological key to understanding the other conciliar documents. Its stated aim is important but modest: the “renewal and fostering of the liturgy.”⁸⁷ The liturgical constitution does not intend to give a comprehensive account of the liturgy, as repeatedly explained in the various *relationes*; rather, it gives sound but brief theological principles on which the practical norms for the renewal of the liturgy could depend. While these reforms are to be conducted in conformity with “sound tradition,” it is not the task of the liturgical constitution to restate the contents of this sound tradition.⁸⁸ This is why most of the text is devoted to matters of the prudential or disciplinary order. This is in contrast to the initial articles of *Lumen Gentium* and *Dei Verbum*, both of which assert at the beginning that they intend to give true doctrine in accord with previous councils. Thus the Council states in *Lumen Gentium* that it intends “to unfold more fully” the nature and mission of the Church, “following faithfully the teaching of previous councils.”⁸⁹ In *Dei Verbum* the Council states that it intends “to set forth authentic doctrine on divine revelation and how it is handed on,” following “the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council.”⁹⁰ So the Council sees the two dogmatic constitutions as teaching authentic doctrine in a way that is in continuity with previous dogmatic decrees and constitutions.

⁸⁶ AS III/5, 146; *Gaudium et Spes*, §2.

⁸⁷ SC, §1.

⁸⁸ Ibid., §4.

⁸⁹ “Cum autem Ecclesia sit in Christo veluti sacramentum seu signum et instrumentum intimae cum Deo unionis totiusque generis humani unitatis, naturam missionemque suam universalem, praecedentium Conciliorum argumento instans, pressius fidelibus suis et mundo universo declarare intendit. Condiciones huius temporis huic Ecclesiae officio urgentiorem vim addunt, ut nempe homines cuncti, variis hodie vinculis socialibus, technicis, culturalibus arctius coniuncti, plenam etiam unitatem in Christo consequantur” (LG, §1).

⁹⁰ “Propterea, Conciliorum Tridentini et Vaticani I inhaerens vestigiis, genuinam de divina revelatione ac de eius transmissione doctrinam proponere intendit, ut salutis praeconio mundus universus audiendo credat, credendo speret, sperando amet” (DV, §1).

Chapter 1 part 1 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is the most theological part of the text. When one compares this part to the rest of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, one notices a striking difference in the theological content. There are twenty-four references to Scripture in these eight articles (5–12), while there are a mere nine references to Scripture in the other 125 articles combined. There are two references to the Fathers in these eight articles, while there are a mere six references to Fathers in the other 125 articles combined. There are two references to councils in these eight articles, while there are a mere two references to councils in the other 125 articles combined. So, clearly, these initial articles are more theological compared to the others.

Chapter 2, on the Eucharist, contains only three articles (47, 48, 49) which are theological. Again, the Council does not employ terms such as *docemus* or *declaramus* to assert an increased theological authority of a particular proposition, and there are no citations from Scripture and only two references to the Fathers. One would have expected, at least in a dogmatic constitution, citations from *loci classici*, such as the Last Supper narratives or John 6, as well as citations from the main doctrinal elements, such as the Council of Trent, but these, too, are absent. Instead of extensive theological argumentation, there is a relatively simple explanation of the Eucharist. Articles 50–58 largely contain directives guiding the liturgical renewal of the Mass. In this section there is one citation from Scripture and a reference to Trent, but here we are simply told that “the dogmatic principles” on communion laid down by Trent “remain intact.”⁹¹ Moreover, although this section flows from the basic theological principles set forth by the Council for the renewal of the liturgy, it remains on the level of mere directives. Thus the Council has simple directives such as: “The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly” and “In Masses which are celebrated with the people, a suitable place may be allotted to their mother tongue.” As I have shown elsewhere, the remaining chapters show a similar pattern.⁹² It must be stated

⁹¹ SC, §54.

⁹² Christian D. Washburn, “The Theological Priority of *Lumen gentium* and *Dei Verbum* for the Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” *The Thomist* 78 (2014): 128–129. This becomes even more obvious when one quantifies this proportion: 2,025 words in the Latin text are devoted to the theology of the liturgy, while 5,664 words are devoted to a consideration of the renewal of the liturgy, which means that only 26% of the text is devoted to a theological discussion of the liturgy. One could object here that no Christian theologian would allow the same argument to be made about the New Testament in relation to the Hebrew Bible, or of the Gospels to the rest of the New Testament. This is not

that this is not a criticism of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*; rather, the point is that the Council knew precisely what it wanted and therefore chose judiciously the genre of a simple constitution over a dogmatic constitution in order to obtain its goals.

Sacrosanctum Concilium's Eucharistic and Juridical Ecclesiology

One of the central arguments about the importance of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is that it is the “ecclesiological core”⁹³ of the Council and that its “profound Eucharistic ecclesiology” is a good balance to *Lumen Gentium's* juridical ecclesiology.⁹⁴ This type of argument is necessary for the proponents of the new theory, since they have to justify why the liturgical constitution has a theological priority. There are two basic problems with this claim.

First, it is difficult to see how *Sacrosanctum Concilium* represents the ecclesiological core of the Council. No doubt there are a number of important ecclesiological themes in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, such as Eucharistic ecclesiology, the participation of the laity in the life of the Church, or the decentralization of decision-making concerning liturgical renewal. With respect to its material object, the theology of the liturgical constitution is deep, since the themes it develops are in themselves great mysteries; but if what is intended is the formal treatment of these theological themes, then *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is not deep. Moreover, its Eucharistic ecclesiology is really an *implicit* ecclesiology, not a formal treatment of it. In chapter 1, the Council makes the famous statement, “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed.”⁹⁵ This is a statement about all liturgical acts, not simply about

a good objection for the following reasons. First, there is a profound difference between SC and the Bible. In the case of the Scripture, *all* of Scripture is inspired by God, whereas no part of a council's texts is inspired unless it is quoting from Scripture. Second, documents of the Church often have of necessity to deal with matters that are merely contingent.

⁹³ Faggioli, *True Reform*, 73; O'Collins, “Hermeneutical Key,” 71; Faggioli, *The Legacy of Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 2015); Giuseppe Dossetti, *Per una “chiesa eucaristica”: Rilettura della portata dottrinale della Costituzione liturgica del Vaticano I; Lezioni del 1965*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Giuseppe Ruggieri (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002).

⁹⁴ Faggioli, “*Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the Meaning of Vatican II,” 450, 452; Faggioli, *True Reform*, 6, 15, 17, 85, 86 (Faggioli's thesis is indebted to Dossetti's *Per una “chiesa eucaristica”*). Alberto Melloni, ed., *Giuseppe Dossetti: Studies on an Italian Catholic Reformer* (Zurich: LIT, 2008). O'Collins does not appear to follow this aspect of Faggioli's thesis (“Hermeneutical Key,” 88).

⁹⁵ SC, §10.

the Eucharist. Later in chapter 1, the liturgical constitution notes that the liturgical life of the diocese is “centered around the bishop” and that “the pre-eminent manifestation of the Church consists in the full active participation of all God’s holy people in these liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in a single prayer, at one altar, at which there presides the bishop surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers.”⁹⁶ In chapter 2’s treatment of the Eucharist, precisely where one would expect to encounter this Eucharistic ecclesiology, there is almost no reference to the Church. The text states only that Christ “entrusted to his church a memorial of his death and resurrection.”⁹⁷ The rest of the chapter is devoted to the issue of the renewal of the liturgy. Elsewhere in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, one does find hints of a Eucharistic ecclesiology, but given this rather limited formal treatment, it would be a stretch to call the document’s Eucharistic ecclesiology either ‘profound’ (with respect to its formal treatment) or the adequate grounds for constructing a Eucharistic ecclesiology. Instead, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*’s Eucharistic ecclesiology should be seen as indicating a general direction which would be taken up in *Lumen Gentium*.

In contrast, it is *Lumen Gentium* that develops more fully this theme that was first taken up in the liturgical constitution.⁹⁸ Thus, the importance of the Eucharist is brought out clearly in the dogmatic constitution. Whereas the liturgical constitution calls the “liturgy” the summit, *Lumen Gentium* explicitly affirms that the Eucharistic sacrifice is “the source and summit of the Christian life.”⁹⁹ Moreover, the Council was able to offer a rich explanation of one of the ways in which the Eucharist as such helps to build the Church:

By communicating His Spirit, Christ made His brothers, called together from all nations, mystically the components of His own Body. In that Body the life of Christ is poured into the believers who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ who suffered and was glorified. Through Baptism we are formed in the likeness of Christ: “For in one Spirit we were all

⁹⁶ Ibid., §41.

⁹⁷ Ibid., §47.

⁹⁸ The relative importance of *LG* and *SC* for a Eucharistic ecclesiology is confirmed by John Paul II’s Encyclical on the Eucharist in its relationship to the Church *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Promulgated April 17, 2003 (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003). *LG* is mentioned fifteen times, while *SC* is mentioned twice.

⁹⁹ *LG*, §11.

baptized into one body.” In this sacred rite a oneness with Christ’s death and resurrection is both symbolized and brought about: “For we were buried with Him by means of Baptism into death”; and if “we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be so in the likeness of His resurrection also.” Really partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another. “Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread.” In this way all of us are made members of His Body, “but severally members one of another.”¹⁰⁰

The Council later affirmed that “especially in the Eucharist, which he [the bishop] offers or causes to be offered” is that “by which the Church continually lives and grows.”¹⁰¹ Perhaps most importantly, *Lumen Gentium* also situates this Eucharistic ecclesiology more clearly in relation to and interwoven with other important ecclesiological elements such as the People of God, the Body of Christ, and a communion ecclesiology. Nevertheless, O’Collins is correct that even in *Lumen Gentium* a Eucharistic ecclesiology is hardly emphasized.¹⁰²

The second problem with this particular argument for the new theory is that it is difficult to see how *Lumen Gentium* can be characterized as a “juridical ecclesiology.” It is true that the original draft of the constitution on the Church was exceedingly juridical, and as such was repeatedly criticized by the Council fathers; however, Gérard Philips (1899–1972) helped formulate subsequent drafts that situated the more theologically juridical elements within the broader theological context. As Wicks writes, “Philips saw his drafting work as the promotion at a fundamental level of an ecclesiology of *communio*, while moderating the presence of juridical elements that are, however, necessary for affirming a real episcopal authority in the Church and for combining episcopal collegiality with the legacy of Vatican Council I on papal primacy.”¹⁰³ This movement away from a more juridical ecclesiology is confirmed by an important structural change in the draft of the constitution on the Church. On July 4, 1963, Cardinal Leo Jozef Suenens (1904–1996) presented to the meet-

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., §7.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., §26.

¹⁰² O’Collins, “Hermeneutical Key,” 71.

¹⁰³ Jared Wicks, S.J., “More Light on Vatican Council II,” 79. See also Maximilian Heinrich Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology: Fundamentals of Ecclesiology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2007), 62, 74, and 446.

ing of the Coordinating Commission the newly completed chapter 3 (*De populo Dei, et speciatim de laicis*) and chapter 4 (*De vocatione ad sanctitatem in ecclesia*).¹⁰⁴ Suenens, at the suggestion of Albert Prignon made immediately prior to the July 4 meeting of the Coordinating Commission,¹⁰⁵ also added a new chapter (*De populo Dei in genere*) between chapter 1 (*De mysterio*) and chapter 2 (*De structura hierarchica*). He proposed that the commission approve the new texts¹⁰⁶ so that the draft could go out to the fathers for treatment in Period II.¹⁰⁷ Cardinal Suenen's proposal was crucial for the development of the document, since it reflected a structural change to the schema in the direction of a broader ecclesiological consideration and not simply a series of textual changes within the same framework.

The success of Philips's and others' efforts is confirmed by a brief examination of the flow and content of the final schema of *Lumen Gentium*. Chapter 1 does not begin with a juridical ecclesiology. Rather, it begins with a profound and extended discussion of the Trinitarian nature of the Church (articles 1–4). It then moves to a discussion of the mystery of the Church, drawing deeply on biblical images, such as a sheepfold, a field, a building, a vine, etc. Finally, chapter one culminates in article 8's "powerful analogy" whereby the Church is compared to the Incarnate Word. Chapter 2 ("On the People of God") then situates and subordinates the hierarchy within the context of the entire people of God. Chapter 3 takes up the issue of the hierarchy. While juridical in many parts, the chapter is introduced by the development of biblical themes concerning Our Lord's founding and guiding of the hierarchy. Even the magisterium's teaching authority is understood as part of the bishops' duty as "heralds of the faith." It would be equally difficult to argue that the remaining five chapters are primarily concerned with juridical considerations.

When one compares *Sacrosanctum Concilium* to *Lumen Gentium*, one discovers just how juridical the liturgical constitution is.¹⁰⁸ It is appro-

¹⁰⁴ ASV/1, 574–92.

¹⁰⁵ Mathijs Lamberigts, "The Role of Cardinal Léon-Joseph Suenens at Vatican II," in Doris Donnelly, *The Belgian Contribution to the Second Vatican Council: International Research Conference at Mechelen, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve (September 12–16, 2005)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 103.

¹⁰⁶ ASV/1, 594.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 635.

¹⁰⁸ If one takes the adjective "juridical" in its normal sense, "of or relating to judicial proceedings and the administration of the law," then SC is far more concerned with the juridical than is LG; indeed, the liturgical constitution is often merely

priate here to make an important distinction between merely juridical considerations and juridical theology.¹⁰⁹ The merely juridical is any matter pertaining to law that is not explained theologically, whereas any type of juridical theology, including ecclesiology, treats of any matter pertaining to law from a theological perspective, that is, of God, and of creatures insofar as they are related to God. One of the most striking things about *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is that much of the document has God neither as its formal object nor its material object, by reason of which it is not even a juridical theology but merely juridical. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* repeatedly has merely juridical directives, such as: “Translations from the Latin text into the mother tongue intended for use in the liturgy must be approved by the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority.”¹¹⁰ Moreover, the liturgical constitution refers ten times to the necessity of the competent authority’s oversight of the liturgical renewal.¹¹¹ The term “law” appears nineteen times in the text, and the term “regulation” appears five times, so it is difficult to argue that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is not, at least in a significant way, a juridical text.

A comparison of chapter 3 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* to chapter 3 of *Lumen Gentium* clearly shows that the former is significantly more juridical than the latter. To be sure, there are a number of merely juridical elements in *Lumen Gentium*: for example, its call for the restoration of the

juridical, and not even a juridical theology. As long as law is taken seriously, of course, theology can never be without a juridical component. One should recall that the only two times that the term “church” appears in the Gospels is where Christ is giving to Peter and the apostles the juridical powers to bind and loose. Moreover, theologians should recall that Christ himself was a law-giver. See Trent: “Si quis dixerit, Christum Iesum a Deo hominibus datum fuisse ut redemptorem, cui fidant, non etiam ut legislatorem, cui odiant: anathema sit” (Tanner, 2:680).

¹⁰⁹ It is probably useful to be clear about what is intended by the term “theological.” While the material object of theology includes God and a multitude of creatures, the proper formal object of theology is God, and creatures, including ecclesiological ones, are included within the material object only in so far as they are related to God. In this vein, Ratzinger has written, “Right now I want to state my basic thesis: the Second Vatican Council clearly wanted to speak of the Church within the discourse on God, to subordinate the discourse on the Church to the discourse on God and to offer an ecclesiology that would be theological in a true sense” (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on The Church, Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, September 19, 2001, p. 5).

¹¹⁰ SC §34.

¹¹¹ Ibid., §§22.2, 36.3, 36.4, 39, 40.1, 44, 63.b, 77, 101.2, 120.

permanent diaconate.¹¹² These merely juridical considerations, however, are rarely elaborated. One might object that *Lumen Gentium* engages in juridical ecclesiology when it treats of papal infallibility or papal supremacy; but, in both cases, these doctrines are situated in the broader ecclesiology of *communio*. Contrast this with *Sacrosanctum Concilium*'s chapter 3 ("On the Sacraments and Sacramentals"). The theological meat of the chapter lies in the first three articles (59–61), while the remaining nineteen are, for the most part, merely juridical considerations. Thus article 63 is a lengthy discussion on the use of the vernacular, which by itself is almost as long as the entire theological discussion of the chapter. The remaining articles are all concerned with the renewal of the individual rites of sacraments and sacramentals. The Council calls for a restoration of the catechumenate (64–65), a revision of baptism (66–70), the revision of the rite of confirmation (71), the revision of penance (72), the revision of extreme unction (73–75), the revision of the ordination rite (76), the revision of the marriage rite (77–78), the revision of sacraments and sacramentals (79), the revision of the rite of consecration of virgins (80), and a revision of funeral rites (81). These articles all suggest a theological claim, but it is left unexplored. In article 76, for example, we are simply instructed that:

Both the ceremonies and texts of the ordination rites are to be revised. The address given by the bishop at the beginning of each ordination or consecration may be in the mother tongue. When a bishop is consecrated, the laying of hands may be done by all the bishops present.

While these calls for the revision of the various rites are grounded in theological principles, in themselves they are not theological properly speaking.

Finally, I do not think that to say that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is merely juridical in many places is to criticize the liturgical constitution; it is simply to recognize the practical nature of a simple constitution. In fact, this was one of the strengths of the text: the Council prudently selected the type of document that was, in large part, juridical, so that the Church could undertake the important task of renewing the liturgy in an orderly way.

¹¹² "It pertains to the competent territorial bodies of bishops, of one kind or another, with the approval of the Supreme Pontiff, to decide whether and where it is opportune for such deacons to be established for the care of souls" (*LG*, §29).

***Sacrosanctum Concilium* as a Key**

We are now in a position to reflect on the way, if any, in which the liturgical constitution can be said to be *a* key to the Council. The proponents of this new theory are often imprecise in identifying the exact way in which *Sacrosanctum Concilium* should be seen as key to understanding the Council as a whole. In what way can it be said to be “a key”?¹¹³ No one can doubt that in terms of understanding the Council, all the documents are in some respect *a* key. To be a key is to be, by analogy, something that unlocks something else. In this sense, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is *a* key, since understanding it helps one to understand the Council better. But, of course, this is true of all sixteen documents of the Council in varying degrees. While *Sacrosanctum Concilium* cannot be said to be *the* key to the Council theologically, there are four important ways that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* can be said to be *a* key to both the Council and the reform of the Church. To this extent, the proponents of the new theory have quite correctly sensed the greatness of the liturgical constitution.

First, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is a key to the Council insofar as it is a constitution. The Council chose wisely and purposely to make it a constitution to deal with “the renewal and fostering of the liturgy.” This choice was natural, since constitutions are reserved for only the most important disciplinary acts of the Church, and there are few acts in the life of the Church that are as important as the renewal of the liturgy. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is, then, a crucial key in understanding the decrees and declarations of the Council. This was a point affirmed in 1985, on the twentieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, by the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, which proposed six norms for the interpretation of the Council.¹¹⁴ Among these norms were the propositions that each Council document must be interpreted in the context of all the other Council documents,¹¹⁵ with the four constitutions as “the interpretative key” to the other twelve documents.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Faggioli, *True Reform*, 19.

¹¹⁴ For the 1985 Synod of Bishops, see Xavier Rynne, *John Paul's Extraordinary Synod: A Collegial Achievement* (Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1986); Giuseppe Alberigo, James H. Provost, and Marcus Lefebure, *Synod 1985, An Evaluation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986); Peter Hebblethwaite, *Synod Extraordinary: The Inside Story of the Rome Synod, November–December 1985* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986); and Johannes Baptist Metz, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Philip Hillyer, *World Catechism or Inculturation?* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989).

¹¹⁵ “The Final Report: Synod of Bishops,” *Origins* 15 (Dec. 19, 1985): 445; Avery Dulles, “Vatican II: The Myth and the Reality,” *America* 188, no. 6 (February 24, 2003): 7–11.

¹¹⁶ Avery Dulles, “Vatican II: the Myth and the Reality,” 9.

Second, one of the main goals of the Council was the renewal of the life of the Church. As John Paul II has noted, “a very close and organic bond exists between the renewal of the liturgy and the renewal of the whole life of the Church. The Church not only acts but also expresses herself in the liturgy, lives by the liturgy and draws from the liturgy the strength for her life.”¹¹⁷ The Pope then concluded that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is “in a certain sense, the measure and the condition for putting into effect the teaching of that Council which we wish to accept with profound faith, convinced as we are that by means of this Council the Holy Spirit ‘has spoken to the Church’ the truths and given the indications for carrying out her mission among the people of today and tomorrow.”¹¹⁸ So, one of the principal ways that one renews the life of the Church is through a liturgical renewal. Ultimately, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* becomes a key inasmuch as the renewal with which it is concerned touches the life of the faithful in the most important way.

Third, in so far as *Sacrosanctum Concilium* deals with the renewal of the Church’s liturgy (an *ad intra* transformation), it is the prerequisite for entering into fruitful dialogue with the world (evangelization), the outward missionary life of the Church (an *ad extra* transformation). There can be no credible or effective dialogue, no invitation to fuller communion with Christ, without the witness of holiness. The inner renewal with which *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is concerned is the principle by which the Church’s very nature as “universal sacrament of salvation” may be realized.

Fourth, as Cardinal Ratzinger has argued: “the fact that it [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy] was placed at the beginning was basically due to pragmatic motives. But retrospectively, it must be said that it has a deeper meaning within the structure of the Council: adoration comes first. Therefore, God comes first. . . . As the second text of the Council, the Constitution on the Church should be considered as inwardly connected with the text on the liturgy. The Church is guided by prayer, by the mission of glorifying God. By its nature, ecclesiology is connected with the liturgy.”¹¹⁹ Indeed, the liturgy is the generative source of the

¹¹⁷ John Paul II, Letter *Dominicae Cenae*, February 24, 1980, §13, at https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1980/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19800224_dominicae-cenae.html.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church, Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, September 19, 2001, p. 5; Christopher Ruddy, “‘In the end is my beginning’: *Lumen Gentium* and the Priority of Doxology,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 79 (2014): 144–64.

very being of the Church as a mystical extension of Christ. The first and most proper activity of this Church, moreover, is prayer: adoration, the sacrifice of praise, and the sacrifice of thanksgiving are her specifically identifying actions.

Conclusion

If one asserts that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is not only a key as the chronological starting-point but also a key as “the theological starting-point” for the teaching and reforms of Vatican II, then such a claim becomes deeply problematic. Of course, everyone would agree that it is *the* “chronological” starting-point, since it was the first document to be approved by the Council. But what does it mean to say that it is the “theological starting-point”? This is never quite explained by the proponents of this new theory. There are two ways in which *Sacrosanctum Concilium* could be said to be the theological starting-point. First, one could affirm such a starting-point in the sense that this was the first document of the Council to touch upon several theological themes that were important and reappeared in other documents. While the liturgical constitution anticipatorily touched upon the theme of Eucharistic ecclesiology, for example, this aspect of the constitution was theologically inchoate. One suspects, however, that the proponents of the new theory intend quite a bit more than this. Second, one could affirm that it is the theological starting-point in the sense that the matter treated by *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is weightier than that of other conciliar documents, and/or that its treatment is of great developed profundity, and/or that it directly exercised a theological influence on the other documents. As we have shown, this does not seem to be the case for three reasons. First, although as a constitution it is weightier theologically than both the decrees and declarations of the Council, it is, nevertheless, less weighty theologically than the two dogmatic constitutions. The Council’s mind is clear from its deliberate designation of *Lumen Gentium* and *Dei Verbum* as dogmatic constitutions, their use of more authoritative language, and their theological and doctrinal contents. Second, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, as a simple constitution, was decidedly practical and only attempted to provide general theological principles that could direct a renewal of the liturgy. This cannot be considered a defect of the liturgical constitution; rather, the Council fathers understood correctly what was required for the liturgical reform: not another *Mediator Dei* that developed a rich and complete doctrine, but a constitution that would put the renewal into motion. Third, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* had little direct theological influ-

ence on subsequent documents for their theological themes. Therefore, the Council chose wisely and purposely to make it a constitution that was to deal with “the renewal and fostering of the liturgy.” This choice was natural, since constitutions are reserved for only the most important disciplinary acts of the Church, and there are few acts in the life of the Church that are as important as the renewal of the liturgy. N&V