

# Karl Rahner, Vatican II, and the Shape of the Church

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## Abstract

Karl Rahner had a pivotal influence on Vatican II during the preparatory phases, at the Council itself, and subsequent to the Council. This article asks how Rahner shaped the ecclesiology of the Council. It shows how many of the council's emphases bear the hallmark of Rahner: the church as *sacramentum mundi*, the importance of the local church, the issue of collegiality, the church of sinners, and the priority of the pastoral. It will be argued that Rahner's acute theological prescience in identifying issues facing the church into the future has been accurate and resonant with Pope Francis's current project of ecclesial reform.

## Keywords

church, ecclesiology, Pope Francis, Karl Rahner, Second Vatican Council

**K**arl Rahner has come to be regarded as a key player in the theological preparations and discussions before and during the Second Vatican Council. He was also pivotal in trying subsequently to promote what he saw as important orientations of the Council, particularly in the area of ecclesiology. However, regarding Rahner's "influence" at the Council, we should be wary of treating him in isolation. One looks in vain for a specific theological draft or *schema* drawn up solely by Rahner.<sup>1</sup>

1. Günther Wassilsowsky, "Kirchenlehrer der Moderne: Ekklesiologie," in *Der Denkweg Karl Rahners. Quellen-Entwicklungen-Perspektiven*, ed. Andreas Batlogg et al. (Mainz: Grünewald, 2003) 223–41 at 229.

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Rather, he was part of a network of theologians, one of hundreds of *periti* or theological advisers to the bishops at the Council. But what was to Rahner's advantage was that, first, he had become well known in the theological world through his numerous publications even prior to the Council, as five volumes of his *Schriften zur Theologie* (1954–62) had already been published; second, he had a great ability for teamwork<sup>2</sup> and theological collaboration, evident, for example, in the many theological encyclopedias, dictionaries, and handbooks he co-edited; and third, he had an excellent command of Latin, of neo-Scholastic theology in which he had been trained,<sup>3</sup> and of the wider theological tradition—both East and West.

The beginnings of his involvement, however, were more modest. The liturgical theologian, Joseph Jungmann, whom Rahner knew from Innsbruck, was one of the leaders of the liturgical renewal movement, the theme of the first and second sessions of the Council. While Jungmann was a member of the liturgical preparatory commission of the Council on the reform of the liturgy, including the use of the vernacular, Rahner had been working on the theme of the permanent diaconate and had made an important contribution in this regard.<sup>4</sup> Thus his work came to the attention of a number of bishops who were interested in the topic. Alongside this was his connection with Cardinal Franz König of Vienna dating back to at least 1937. It was König who invited Rahner to provide feedback on a number of other theological questions that were due for discussion at the Council and who would take him to the Council as his conciliar theologian.<sup>5</sup> These theological themes or *quaestiones theologicae* drafted for the

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2. Andreas R. Batlogg, "Karl Rahners Mitarbeit an den Konzilstexten," in *Vierzig Jahre II: Vatikanum. Zur Wirkungsgeschichte der Konzilstexte*, ed. Franz-Xaver Bischof and Stephan Leimgruber, 2nd ed. (Würzburg: Echter, 2005) 355–76 at 375.
  3. This meant his interventions often found resonance with more traditionally minded, scholastically trained, curial theologians who recognized how deeply rooted they were in the classical tradition, and Rahner even developed a reasonable working relationship with the leader of this "minority" group, Cardinal Ottaviani. For what follows see Herbert Vorgrimler, "Karl Rahner: The Theologian's Contribution," in *Vatican II: By Those Who Were There*, ed. Alberic Stacpoole (London: Chapman, 1986) 32–46.
  4. Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, eds., *Diaconia in Christo*, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 15/16 (Freiburg: Herder, 1962). See also Karl Rahner, "The Theology of the Restoration of the Diaconate," in *Later Writings*, trans. Karl-H. Kruger, TI 5 (1962: repr., London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966) 268–314, and Karl Heinz Neufeld, *Die Brüder Rahner: Eine Biographie*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 2004) 237–40. In preparation for the Council, Rahner was invited by the chairman of the commission on the sacraments to write a position paper on the topic. See *Acta et documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando*, Series II (Preparatoria), Vol. 3/1 (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1969) 508–11. For his plea to Cardinal König to support the renewal of the diaconate, specifically married deacons, see Karl Rahner, *Sämtliche Werke* (hereafter cited as *SW*), Vol. 21/1, *Das Zweite Vatikanum. Beiträge zum Konzil und seiner Interpretation*, ed. Günther Wassilowsky (Freiburg: Herder, 2013) 86–88.
  5. Franz Cardinal König, "My Conciliar Theologian," in *Encounters with Karl Rahner. Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him*, ed. and trans. Andreas R. Batlogg and Melvin E. Michalski, *Marquette Studies in Theology* 63 (Milwaukee: Marquette

Council fathers included: the sources of revelation, the moral order, the deposit of faith, and a new formula of profession of faith. Neither König nor the other bishops had a clear idea about how the theological discussions would play out at the Council. The draft themes also referred to prior “sources”: the Council of Trent, Vatican I, the encyclicals *Pascendi*, *Mediator Dei*, and *Humani Generis*, and the decree *Lamentabili*. The agenda appeared to be directed against perceived errors of the time—liberalism, rationalism, and modernism.<sup>6</sup> Nor did this official preparatory draft square with the tenor of Pope John XXIII’s famous opening address to the Council where he spoke about the need for renewal, of the Council as a “new Pentecost,” and of how the church should act by “making use of the medicine of mercy rather than severity.”<sup>7</sup>

Pope John XXIII appointed Rahner as consultor to the commission on the sacraments in March 1961 in preparation for the Council, but there had been difficulties with Rome in the years beforehand over some of Rahner’s writings. So although he was at the peak of his career as a theologian—he was 59 when the Council opened—Rahner had been “under observation” by Rome for some time. There had been controversy over a long article published in 1949, “The Many Masses and the One Sacrifice,” where he “raised a variety of questions about the relationship between the Masses celebrated by the church and the sacrifice of the cross they make present, about the ‘fruits of the Mass’ and the value of multiplying the number of Masses, and about the possibility of concelebration for priests.”<sup>8</sup> It was the question of concelebration that would prove problematic and Rahner was forbidden to discuss the issue in the future. He had also been refused permission to publish a manuscript on Mariology in the aftermath of the promulgation of the dogma of the Assumption of Mary by Pope Pius XII in 1950.<sup>9</sup> Further difficulties arose in relation to an article on the virginity of Mary,

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University, 2009) 45–56. Not that Rahner was initially enthusiastic about going to Rome and wondered whether he could be of any use at a Council. See also Franz Cardinal König, “Karl Rahners theologisches Denken im Vergleich mit ausgewählten Textstellen der dogmatischen Konstitution ‘Lumen Gentium,’” in *Glaube im Prozess. Christsein nach dem II. Vatikanum*, ed. Elmar Klinger and Klaus Wittstadt (Freiburg: Herder, 1984) 121–36 at 121.

6. But, as Yves Congar pointed out, if a Council was merely intended to reiterate prior teachings and condemn errors, there seemed little point in convening one. See Yves Congar, “Erinnerungen an eine Episode auf dem II. Vatikanischen Konzil,” *Glaube im Prozess*, 22–32.
7. In the context of guarding and teaching the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine Pope John XXIII stated that “the substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the formulation in which it is clothed is another.” Pope John XXIII, “*Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*: Opening Speech of the Second Vatican Council,” trans. Joseph Komonchak (Rome, October 11, 1962), <https://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/john-xxiii-opening-speech.pdf>.
8. William V. Dych, *Karl Rahner*, Outstanding Christian Thinkers (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992) 11. See Karl Rahner and Angelus Haussling, *The Celebration of the Eucharist* (London: Burns & Oates, 1968) 88–127.
9. Rahner tried to decipher the core meaning of this new dogma of Mary’s bodily assumption by showing how what happened to Mary will also happen to us—a total redemption

where Rahner tried to tease out the precise theological content of the doctrine.<sup>10</sup> Finally, in the period leading up to the Council, Rahner delivered an address at the Austrian “Catholic Day” in Salzburg on June 1, 1962. The title of the address, “Do Not Stifle the Spirit,” alluded to the temptation for the individual and for the church as a whole, including ecclesial authority, to be overly defensive, closed in on itself, and lagging “pitifully behind the times.”<sup>11</sup> Instead—and this would be a recurring theme of his even after the Council: Rahner would interpret Paul’s statement (1 Thess 5:19) not to block the Spirit as recognition of the permanent validity of the charismatic principle in the church and an “imperative for our own particular time, disconcerting, accusing, shocking us out of our complacency” and emboldening us to take risks, especially in ecumenical questions.<sup>12</sup> Almost immediately after this address, and without warning or reasons given, Rahner was informed via his Jesuit superiors that all his subsequent writings had to be submitted to a preliminary censorship in Rome. This was not entirely surprising given the censorious climate in the church at the time. Rahner was in good company: De Lubac, Congar, Chenu, and others were also viewed suspiciously by Rome. Fortunately for Rahner, he was able to enlist the support of three cardinals: Döpfner, König, and Frings, who were well disposed to him and who interceded on his behalf with the pope; he was also able to draw on his association with a group of lay academics and scientists from the *Paulusgesellschaft* who organized a petition on his behalf and sent it to the pope.<sup>13</sup>

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in body and soul, a new mode of being, whereby “our own reality itself is transformed and not simply replaced by another.” In highlighting the corporeality of the resurrection and Mary’s bodily assumption, Rahner moved beyond a conception of the afterlife merely in terms of the continued existence of the isolated soul. See his “The Interpretation of the Dogma of the Assumption,” in *God, Christ, Mary, and Grace*, trans. Cornelius Ernst, TI 1 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961; orig. 1954) 215–27 at 223.

10. Karl Rahner, “*Virginitas in Partu*,” in *More Recent Writings*, trans. Kevin Smyth, TI 4 (1960: repr., London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966) 134–62. In this article Rahner tries to avoid the danger of Docetism, on the one hand, while “preserving the truth of the real motherhood and birth,” on the other (140). For him, the topic brings out the mutual relationship between Scripture and tradition and the development of doctrine, themes taken up by *Dei Verbum* (November 18, 1965) 8 (hereafter cited in text as *DV*), [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html).
11. Karl Rahner, “Do Not Stifle the Spirit,” in *Further Theology of the Spiritual Life 1*, trans. David Bourke, TI 7 (1966: repr., London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971) 72–87 at 78.
12. *Ibid.* 81. He continues: “Those, therefore, who have the power to command in the Church must constantly bear in mind that not everything that takes place in the Church either is or should be the outcome of their own autocratic planning as though they belonged to a totalitarian regime. They must keep themselves constantly alive to the fact that when they permit movements ‘from below,’ this is no more than their duty” (85).
13. The *Paulusgesellschaft*, founded in Germany in 1955, was an international association for the promotion of dialogue between Christianity and society. It became known for its

Within a year the Holy Office had backtracked and Rahner was nominated a Council theologian or *peritus* in October 1962, accompanying Cardinal König to many of the commission sessions. As noted, Rahner was Cardinal König's personal theological adviser even prior to the Council. His criticisms of the preparatory draft texts (schemata) König had received from Rome reveal the new theological approach Rahner was expecting from the Council.<sup>14</sup> He complained that at no stage in the drafts was Scripture used as the foundation for theological thought; rather, it was adduced in a proof-text manner to prove a particular theological point. Just as weak, he maintained, was the engagement with the wider theological tradition. Reference was made only to recent encyclicals. Rahner was genuinely shocked with the demand by the draft *De Deposito Fidei* for clear doctrinal definitions on themes that were still "disputed questions," for example, on monogenism and limbo. He appealed to Cardinal König to do all in his power to oppose this doctrinaire tendency towards "definitions" which, he believed, reflected more the mentality of Vatican I.<sup>15</sup> Instead, Rahner was looking for a new kind of language, one which tried to identify and engage with people's faith struggles. He wanted the language of the Council to be more positive and encouraging—helping people rather than denouncing them.<sup>16</sup> Above all, his hope was that the Council would proclaim the "liberating consolation of the Gospel" in a

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dialogue with Marxism in an attempt to build bridges between East and West in Europe. It continues to support projects that unmask ideologies in religious systems and promote a more humane vision of society. For Rahner's difficulties with Roman authorities, including his "preliminary censorship," see Herbert Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner: An Introduction to his Life and Thought*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1986) 87–94 and 148–53.

14. For what follows, see Günther Wassilowsky, "Als die Kirche Weltkirche wurde. Karl Rahners Beitrag zum II. Vatikanischen Konzil und seiner Deutung," 24–27, Rahner Lecture 2012, ed. Andreas R. Batlogg and Albert Raffelt (Munich: Karl Rahner Archive, 2012), <http://www.freidok.uni-freiburg.de/volltexte/8551>. For Rahner's assessments (*Gutachten*) of the various drafts, see *SW*, 21/1, 37–214. A summary is available in Karl Rahner, *Sehnsucht nach dem geheimnisvollen Gott: Profil, Bilder, Texte*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (Herder: Freiburg, 1990) 95–165.
15. Karl Rahner, "Gutachten für Franz Kardinal König" (January 4, 1962), *SW* 21/1, 39. See also Gerald P. Fogarty, "The Council Gets Underway," in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997) 2:69–106 at 72–73 and 79.
16. Here Rahner was in line with the tenor of Pope John XXIII's opening address (see note 7) to the Council where he railed against those "who see only ruin and calamity in the present conditions of human society. . . . We must quite disagree with these prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster, as if the end of the world were at hand." For the theologians and bishops pushing for change, this address would serve as a touchstone for their efforts and indirectly "authorised in advance" (Komonchak) their severe critique of the preparatory texts. See Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Struggle for the Council during the Preparation of Vatican II (1960–1962)," in Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II*, 1:167–356 at 350.

dynamic and attractive way.<sup>17</sup> He succeeded, but not without a struggle, and one that began already with the pre-conciliar schemata. Finally, we see in these early criticisms of Rahner an overriding pastoral concern, which turned out to be one of the most important legacies of Vatican II.

## Rahner at the Council: Towards a Renewed Ecclesiology

The focal point of Rahner's influence on Vatican II was in ecclesiology. He was active in many of the subgroups of the theological commission which worked on the draft *De Ecclesia*. He wanted the Council to say something positive about the reintroduction of the permanent diaconate, and the Council ultimately decreed that the "diaconate in the future could be restored as a particular and permanent rank of the hierarchy."<sup>18</sup> He also argued for a greater integration of Mariology and ecclesiology. In the second session of the Council, he focused on the relationship between the pope and the College of Bishops, namely, on the theme of collegiality, and on the theological significance of the local church. He was involved in the discussions of the famous Schema XIII, on the relationship between the church and the world today, which culminated in *Gaudium et Spes*. Finally, he had a part in the discussions on the themes of revelation (including the sources of revelation and the issue of the so-called "material insufficiency" of Scripture) and on religious life. So we could say that through his work in the various commissions Rahner had an indirect influence on such Council texts as *Lumen Gentium*, *Dei Verbum*, *Gaudium et Spes*, and *Perfectae Caritatis*. We say "indirect" because only the bishops could speak in the Council Assembly and only they could vote. Nor did the *periti* determine the themes for discussion; they were more active "behind the scenes" drafting speeches and texts, thus developing and influencing theological opinion. As John O'Malley has pointed out, for many bishops the Council would be "an extended seminar in theology."<sup>19</sup> They tried to update themselves with

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17. Rahner, *Sehnsucht nach dem geheimnisvollen Gott* 110. What shocked Rahner was that many of the schemata (including "De Deposito Fidei," "De Fontibus Revelationis," and "De Ordine Morali Christiano") reflected an out-of-date, fearful, and overly defensive theology which would not connect with Christians of today, many of whom, were struggling with questions of faith and belief. There were few new ideas or creative pastoral proposals, only a repetition of well-worn dogmatic truths (*Selbstverständlichkeiten*) that were not in dispute (122–23). He was more favorable, however, in his assessment of the schemata on the missions and the mass media (124–28).
  18. *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964) 29 (hereafter cited in text as *LG*), [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html). Rahner drafted Cardinal Döpfner's intervention on the diaconate on October 7, 1963. See *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II* (hereafter cited as *AS*), Vol. II, Part II, (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1972) 82–89 and Vorgrimmler, *Understanding Karl Rahner* 175. Over 70 percent of the Council fathers would vote for the restoration of the diaconate in principle in the straw vote of October 30, 1963. See also note 4.
  19. John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2008) 126.

the latest theological developments and here too Rahner played an important role. During the first two sessions he held at least twenty-three public lectures on various topics connected with the Council. Without such opportunities for discussion and exchange it is hard to see how Vatican II could have been such a learning process for so many of its participants.

At the beginning of the Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, the church, for the first time at an official doctrinal level, was referred to as a "sacrament": "The Church is in Christ as a sacrament or instrumental sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humanity" (LG 1).<sup>20</sup> Behind this new definition of church was, first, the rejection by the Council fathers of the draft schema, "De Ecclesia," and, second, the decision by the German-speaking bishops to draw up a completely new text on the church.<sup>21</sup>

Between December 1962 and February 1963 four drafts of what Günther Wassilowsky calls the "German Schema" were drawn up. The key people involved in composing the first draft were Karl Rahner, Otto Semmelroth, Alois Grillmeier, and Rahner's friend, Hermann Volk, Bishop of Mainz. In the preparation of subsequent drafts further important contributors included Cardinal Julius Döpfner, Joseph Ratzinger, Rudolf Schnackenburg, and Michael Schmaus. To these were added the "international" voices of Belgian theologians, Gérard Phillips and Edward Schillebeeckx, the French Dominican, Yves Congar, and the Dutch Jesuit, Piet Smulders. The end result was a text approved by the entire German-Austrian Bishops' Conference and presented to the Council. Its central idea was the church as the fundamental, universal, and eschatological sacrament of salvation for the world.<sup>22</sup> Although there were other schemata on the church presented to the Council, and although those of the Belgian theologian Gérard Phillips (*peritus* to Cardinal Suenens) were ultimately more influential, Wassilowsky has

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20. For Rahner, this statement that the church is the sacrament of salvation of the *world* is the most striking aspect of the Constitution and represented a significant change from a pessimistic and exclusive pre-conciliar understanding of the church as "the small barque on which alone people are saved . . . from the *massa damnata*." Karl Rahner, *The Christian of the Future* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967) 82.
  21. Prior to this decision, Rahner, in collaboration with his Jesuit confrere Otto Semmelroth, drew up some critical observations on the original "De Ecclesia" schema, "Animadversiones de Schemate 'De Ecclesia'" (SW 21/1, 298–339). His criticisms, many of which would later be echoed by senior German-speaking bishops (including Döpfner and König) at the Council, included: the schema resembled a *dissertatio scholastica*, lacked a pastoral character and an ecumenical spirit, used scriptural references only as *dicta probantia* to defend the ecclesiology of recent encyclicals, and did not take into account the wider teaching of Scripture and tradition. The schema, moreover, was too "conceptual and deductive," failed to take seriously the reality of sin in the church, and was overly reliant on the image of the church as the "body of Christ" to the neglect of other images, e.g. the church as the people of God. For a comprehensive discussion, see Günther Wassilowsky, *Universales Heilssakrament Kirche. Karl Rahners Beitrag zur Ekklesiologie des II. Vatikanums*, Innsbrucker theologische Studien 59 (Innsbruck-Wien: Tyrolia, 2001) 192–276.
  22. For the text of the final draft of the German Schema, see *AS*, Vol. I, Part IV, 608–39.

shown that Phillips took over a number of ideas from the German schema, including the notion of the church as the universal sacrament of salvation, and the opening words of its introduction: “*Lumen gentium*.”<sup>23</sup>

Behind this “sacramental” description of the church in the German schema is, first, the Greek term *mystērion* (Lat. *mysterium*) found in some Old Latin versions of the Bible and translated as *sacramentum*, and, second, Augustine’s definition of sacrament as the visible form of invisible grace (*visibilis forma invisibilis gratiae*). The *mystērion* is the “mystery of the kingdom of God” (Mark 4:11), God’s eternal, hidden plan of salvation (1 Cor 2:1, 7) revealed in Christ (1 Cor 1:23–24) and fulfilled in the church (Eph 5:32). The preface (*Prooemium*) of the schema maintained that since the church “understands itself as truly the sacrament of the intimate unity of all humanity with itself and with God, the origin and goal of all, it wants to proclaim its own essence to the faithful and to the whole world with a greater urgency, not to increase its honor before all, but so that it can be more faithful in its mission to the world and connect more easily with the faith of the people.”<sup>24</sup> There is a universalizing of perspective here: for the first time a draft conciliar text is addressed not only to the *filiī ecclesiae* but to all humanity. This perspective would find expression in the final texts of the Council, for example, in the designation of the church as the “light of the world” (*LG* 1), and the “close link between the church and the whole human family” mentioned in the preface to *Gaudium et Spes*.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, Augustine’s definition of sacrament, when applied to the church, meant going beyond a merely juridical model to argue that the essence of the church is not confined to the visible. In the schema Rahner and his colleagues wanted to show how the “invisible,” namely, God’s grace or plan, takes historical and concrete form primarily in Christ and subsequently in the church, which is “at the same time the *fruit* and an active *medium* of salvation.”<sup>26</sup> According to Wassilowsky this stress on the sacramentality of the church would have wider ecumenical implications at the Council. It prepared the shift from the exclusive “*est*” to the more open “*subsistit*” in *Lumen Gentium* 8. The church of Christ would no longer be exclusively identified with the Catholic Church; there are elements of the *ecclesia Christi* to be found in other Christian communities.<sup>27</sup> Further, the schema’s use of a variety of biblical

23. Wassilowsky, *Universales Heilssakrament Kirche* 277–356. Wassilowsky notes (295n45) that in the German schema the church is not presented as an independent source of light but reflects only what it has received from God through Christ.

24. *AS* I/IV, 610, translation mine.

25. For Rahner’s reflections on how the church has become universal in the 20th century, a product of globalization as it were, where there is no longer an “outside,” since the church (unlike in the medieval period) is no longer limited “to one area of history and civilization,” but part “of a unified world history,” see his *Free Speech in the Church* (1953: repr., New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959) 80–106, esp. 82 and 95.

26. “. . . Simul est *fructus* salutis et *medium* activum.” *AS* I/IV, 614, Translation mine. This notion would later find expression in the terms “*signum et instrumentum*” of *LG* 1.

27. Wassilowsky, “Als die Kirche Weltkirche wurde. Karl Rahners Beitrag zum II. Vatikanischen Konzil und seiner Deutung” 28.



images to ground its ecclesiology goes beyond the proof-text approach to Scripture, is more ecumenically sensitive, and would be reflected in the final conciliar text itself (*LG* 6–7).

Alongside the sacramentality of the church, the German schema contains a number of other Rahner-inspired theological convictions which would permeate many of the Council documents. The first is what Rahner terms God's universal salvific will. Prior to treating membership and ministries in the church, the schema starts out from a soteriological perspective (*Ecclesia in oeconomia salutis divina*) expressed in trinitarian terms. God the Father invites all to share in the divine life. God's universal salvific will in turn grounds the universal meaning of the Incarnation and the universal mission of the church. Rahner wanted the church to be less preoccupied with itself, less defensive, and to see its *raison d'être* in terms of service to the world.<sup>28</sup> Gone are the church–world dualisms expressed in terms of the sacred versus the profane. God's grace is ubiquitous and also at work outside the church.

The key contribution, therefore, of the German-speaking Bishops' schema (and of Rahner and his colleagues who drafted it) was the now commonly accepted notion of the sacramentality of the church. The church, with its message of grace, is the *sacramentum* of salvation for the world.<sup>29</sup> To trace the complicated development of how the draft was received in the Council and how it would be superseded by the Philips schema would take us beyond the scope of this article.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, the key

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28. "John XXIII wanted a conversation; he did not want to aggressively defend the faith. He wanted to open up the windows. The Roman Catholic Church in Europe . . . was defensive: afraid of the sciences, afraid of the Protestants, afraid of modern movements, of the historical method, the struggle with the liberals and so on. The church somehow limped along; she lagged behind recent developments. This was the situation in which Fr. Rahner began his theological career. His work met with approval in circles that were ready for reform. As a matter of fact he did what the pope had expressed in his metaphor, open windows. He did not respond with anxiety and defensiveness." Franz Cardinal König, "My Conciliar Theologian" 49.
29. Aside from its opening paragraph, the term is found in *LG* 9 (Chapter 2: "The People of God") and 48 (Chapter 7: "The Eschatological Character of the Pilgrim Church and its Union with the Heavenly Church"), where the church is explicitly described as "the universal sacrament of salvation." See also Karl Rahner, "The New Image of the Church," *Writings of 1965–1967 II*, trans. David Bourke, *TI* 10 (1967: repr., London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972) 12–15.
30. See Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Initial Debate about the Church," in *Vatican II Commence . . . Approches Francophones*, ed. Étienne Fouilloux (Leuven: Bibliothek van de Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid, 1993) 329–52, and Wassilowsky, *Universales Heilssakrament Kirche* 357–90. Phillips's draft was in effect a compromise—attempting to salvage as much as possible from the original schema while expressing these elements "in a more biblical and pastoral style" (349). This reflected the plan of Cardinal Suenens who wanted the council to center on a single theme, the church. The Germans, on the other hand, wanted to *substitute* many of the schemata prepared by the Preparatory Theological Commission with those of Rahner, Ratzinger, Daniélou, etc. Congar considered this a "rather naïve" strategy that had little chance of success. He was correct while

concerns of Rahner and the German bishops that the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church have a strong pastoral and soteriological thrust, be ecumenically sensitive, biblically grounded, and not be restricted to its juridical or mystical dimensions would subsequently find expression in the Constitution's final form.

As far as Rahner's contribution to the *Gaudium et Spes* is concerned there are his, mainly negative, comments on an earlier draft of the schema "De Ecclesia in Mundo Hujus Temporis" and these have been well documented elsewhere.<sup>31</sup> First, he lamented its lack of a fundamental theology or "theological gnoseology" to ground the church's knowledge of particular issues. Second, there was insufficient attention given to the interaction between the order of creation and the order of redemption (nature and grace). The inner worldly significance of human activity was neglected in favor of its religious and moral significance. Third, the draft lacked a profound theology of sin and a theology of the cross. It was tainted with an ideology of a better world that could be brought about through human will; instead, it needed to indicate the legitimate "Christian pessimism" that Christians should profess before the world.<sup>32</sup> This relates to a fourth point, namely, the eschatological tension or antagonism that exists between the powers of evil and the disciples of Christ which can never be resolved this side of history. Finally, the schema lacked a Christian anthropology which should be its foundation. Our supernatural vocation needed to be stressed from the outset. There was no "key idea," for example, the human person as *imago Dei*, driving the document.

Rahner favored instead an inductive ("from below") methodology, moving from anthropology to Christology. Here he believed he was somewhat at odds with his fellow progressives (e.g. Congar and Ratzinger) at the Council,<sup>33</sup> though it should be said

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at the same time accusing himself of being "too tolerant" of many of the original schemata from the Central Commission. Yves Congar, *My Journal of the Council*, trans. Mary John Ronayne, M. C. Boulding, and Denis Minns (Dublin: Dominican, 2012) 144–45.

31. Thomas F. O'Meara, "Karl Rahner's 'Remarks on the Schema *De Ecclesia in Mundo Hujus Temporis*,'" in the Draft of May 28, 1965," *Philosophy & Theology* 20 (2008) 331–39, doi:10.5840/philtheol2008201/216. I am grateful to Prof. O'Meara for providing me with a copy of Rahner's comments. See also Brandon Peterson, "Critical Voices: The Reactions of Rahner and Ratzinger to 'Schema XIII' (*Gaudium et Spes*)," *Modern Theology* 31 (2015) 1–26, doi: 10.1111/moth.12109; Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Redaction and Reception of *Gaudium et Spes*: Tensions within the Majority at Vatican II," <https://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/jak-views-of-gaudium-et-spes.pdf>.
32. Karl Rahner, "Remarks on the Schema 'De Ecclesia in Mundo Hujus Temporis'" 3. Later Rahner would express similar sentiments: "Although I took part in the elaboration of *Gaudium et Spes* at the Council, I would not deny its undertone is too euphoric in its evaluation of humanity and the human condition." Karl Rahner, "Christian Pessimism," in *Humane Society and the Church of Tomorrow*, TI 22, trans. Joseph Donceel (1984: repr., London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1991) 155–62 at 157–58.
33. "I find that these [Daniélou, Congar, Ratzinger, Schillebeeckx] still do not realize clearly enough how little, e.g. a Christology 'from above,' which simply begins with the declaration that God has become man, can be understood today. Of course, one can hardly expect that another way of thinking will already make a mark on the schemata of the Council, but I do not find it explicitly enough among the progressive theologians themselves." Karl Rahner, "Appendix," in Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner* 141–84 at 158.

that these were also opposed to any deductive methodology starting from abstract principles. Ratzinger, for example, had voiced similar criticisms to Rahner of an earlier draft,<sup>34</sup> including its excessive confidence in technological progress and a downplaying of the centrality of the cross. The division, moreover, ran somewhat along linguistic lines: editorial responsibility for the 1965 “Ariccia” draft was in French hands, and French-speaking theologians (e.g. Chenu and Congar) were generally more positive in their assessment than their German-speaking counterparts.<sup>35</sup>

## Other Ecclesiological and Theological Themes

We also find a number of other ecclesiological and theological concerns of Rahner reflected to varying degrees in the final texts of the Council. These include: the relationship between the episcopacy and the primacy (the issue of collegiality), the importance of the local church, the theme of the church of sinners, the relationship between Scripture and tradition, and Mariology.

Rahner reflected on the relationship between the episcopate and the primacy prior to, during and after the Council. At the outset of the Council and at a time when there was not yet a constitution on the church we find him reflecting on how to reconcile a “monarchical” understanding of the church (and the papacy) with the fact that the episcopate is itself of divine right.<sup>36</sup> It is clear in their contribution to the debate on what the Council might say about the hierarchy that Rahner (and his co-authors Joseph Ratzinger and Gustave Martelet) wanted to see the structure of leadership in the church expressed in both the primacy and the episcopal college.<sup>37</sup> Rahner tried to shift the emphasis away from the church conceived as a “perfect society,” with the pope envisaged as a kind of absolute monarch, to a more collegial vision of a united episcopate with and under the pope. While he conceded that it was not always possible to have “a

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34. This is referred to as the “Zurich” text, taking its name from meetings in Zurich, February 1–3, 1964. Charles Moeller, in his extended commentary on the history of the Constitution, refers to it as “Interim Text B.” See his “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: History of the Constitution,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 5:1–77 at 27.
35. And as Komonchak and others have noted, the plurality of theological methods and styles that flourished after the Council is already reflected in the reactions to the various drafts. See his survey of the different reactions of, Chenu (a Thomist with an optimistic and realized eschatology), Ratzinger (an Augustinian epistemology and more at home in the world of Scriptures, the Fathers, and St. Bonaventure), and Dossetti (more prophetic and evangelical). Komonchak, “The Redaction and Reception of *Gaudium et Spes*” *passim*.
36. Karl Rahner, “The Episcopate and the Primacy,” in Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy* (Freiburg: Herder, 1962) 11–36. See also *LG* 20, where the Council speaks of the bishops as successors of the apostles “*ex divina institutione*.”
37. Karl Rahner, Gustave Martelet, and Joseph Ratzinger, “De Primatu et Collegio Episcoporum in Regimine Totius Ecclesiae,” *SW* 21/1:341–42. The text is dated October 1963, that is at the beginning of the second period of the Council and the debate on the church, and includes pointers about how to deal with possible objections to their proposed teaching on collegiality (342–44).

clear-cut demarcation of the respective powers of pope and bishop,” his concern was “the danger of over-centralization in the Church.”<sup>38</sup> He considered the teaching on the episcopacy, that is on the collegial structure of the church, to be the most important section of *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>39</sup> In other words, the church is episcopal in its constitution: the pope possesses plenary power precisely as head of the college of bishops.<sup>40</sup> The corollary of this is that the bishop, though subject to the pope, is not a mere functionary without responsibility of his own, but, as successor to the Apostles, is a true shepherd called to feed and guide the flock entrusted to him.<sup>41</sup> In effect, Rahner wanted the Council to bring out the intrinsic unity between the monarchical and collegial aspects of the church, where there exists a “harmony”—inspired by the Spirit—between the pope and the college of bishops.<sup>42</sup> Behind his views on collegiality was the church’s

38. Rahner, “The Episcopate and the Primacy” 33, 36.

39. Karl Rahner, “Pastoral-Theological Observations on Episcopacy in the Teaching of Vatican II,” in *Concerning Vatican Council II*, trans. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger, TI 6 (1965: repr., London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969) 361–68 at 361. While the doctrine of the primacy was associated with Vatican I, Rahner acknowledged that this council also implicitly included the teaching on the authority of the episcopal college. See his commentary on *Lumen Gentium*, nn18–27 in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (London: Burns & Oates, 1967) 1:105n10.

40. Rahner was aware of how this statement could be misconstrued as a denigration of “the Roman Pontiff’s plenitude of power,” as the “Preliminary Explanatory Note” to *Lumen Gentium* put it. His point is that there are not two subjects of supreme power in the church: “*There is only one subject endowed with supreme power in the Church: the college of bishops assembled under the pope as its head. But there are two modes in which this supreme college may act: a ‘collegiate act’ properly so-called, and the act of the pope as head of the college. . . . The pope acts as head of the college whenever he makes use of his primatial power,*” a power entrusted to him not by the college of bishops but by Christ. Karl Rahner, “On the Relationship between the Pope and the College of Bishops,” in *Writings of 1965–1967 II* 50–70 at 55 and 64, italics original.

41. “He cannot therefore consider himself to be the mere recipient and executor of commands received from higher quarters. He has an independent duty and responsibility which he cannot simply shirk. He would therefore not be fulfilling his office fully, if he regarded himself as the mere executive organ of universal ecclesiastical laws or of initiatives emanating from Rome.” Rahner, “Pastoral-Theological Observations on Episcopacy in the Teaching of Vatican II,” in *Concerning Vatican Council II* 362–63. Rahner eschewed any kind of paternalism in the exercise of authority which he believed reflected a too hasty recourse to one’s formal authority and led to poor decisions. Writing towards the end of the Council, and preempting recent moves by Pope Francis, he suggested “a consultative board around the pope . . . drawn from the universal episcopate [would be] a good constitutional concrete expression of the theological unity of pope and universal episcopate in the government of the Church.” Rahner, “The Episcopal Office,” in *Concerning Vatican Council II* 313–60 at 359.

42. The “Preliminary Explanatory Note” to *Lumen Gentium* used the phrase “hierarchical communion” between the bishops and their head and maintained, “Everywhere it is a question of *union* of the bishops *with their head*, and it is never a question of the bishops acting *independently* of the pope.” *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, vol. 2, *Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990) 900.

mission to the world (Matt 28:18ff.), a mission entrusted both to Peter (Matt 16:18) and to the apostolic college (Matt 18:18) and exercised in the threefold exercise of teaching, sanctifying, and governing.<sup>43</sup>

Rahner was aware of course that the episcopacy united with the pope does not exhaust the nature of the church. During the conciliar discussions there was criticism of what was considered a one-sided emphasis on the church universal to the neglect of the local, that is to the church as it actually exists in the concrete.<sup>44</sup> He called this the tensive relationship “between the *theoretical* and the *real* structures of the Church.”<sup>45</sup> He saw it exemplified in the council’s teaching on the episcopacy where “the whole official action of the Church in the transmission of truth and grace is concentrated in him [the bishop]” whereas in reality, the real care of souls is carried out by priests in the parish.<sup>46</sup> In a letter to Herbert Vorgrimler in October 1963, Rahner refers to a draft that he and Hans Küng prepared on this theme, namely, the importance of the local church, which was delivered in a speech to the Council by the Auxiliary Bishop of Fulda, Edward Schick, on behalf of the German-speaking and Scandinavian bishops.<sup>47</sup> In his address Schick (and Rahner behind him) urged the fathers not to let their high regard for the episcopacy “neglect or undervalue the local Church and the priesthood.”<sup>48</sup> Following Paul and his use of the term *ekklēsia* to designate not so much the universal church but the Christian community of some city, for example Corinth (1 Cor 1:2), or even a community of Christians gathered at home to celebrate the Eucharist (Rom 16:5), Rahner’s point is that the parish or community of Christians gathered together around the altar (*Altargemeinschaft*) is not merely an administrative division but an authentic representation and manifestation of the universal church, where Christ is truly present. *Lumen Gentium* 26 would subsequently acknowledge these concerns,

43. Rahner et al., “De Primatu et Collegio Episcoporum,” *SW* 21/1,340. See also *LG* n21.

44. If Vatican II marks the beginning of a move away from a universalist ecclesiology towards an ecclesiology of communion and a theological appreciation of local or particular churches, these different ecclesiologies were not integrated at the Council, and the relationship between the local churches and the universal church has been debated ever since. See, for example, Hervé Legrand, “Les évêques, les Églises locales et l’Église entire. Évolutions institutionnelles depuis Vatican II et chantiers actuels de recherche,” *Revue de Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 85 (2001) 461–509, doi:10.3917/rspt.853.0461; Joseph A. Komonchak, “The Local Church and the Church Catholic: The Contemporary Theological Problematic,” *The Jurist* 52 (1992) 416–47; Kilian McDonnell, “The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: The Universal Church and Local Churches,” *Theological Studies* 63 (2002) 227–50, doi:10.1177/004056390206300201.

45. Rahner, “Pastoral-Theological Observations on Episcopacy in the Teaching of Vatican II,” in *Concerning Vatican Council II* 366.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner* 175.

48. For an English version of Schick’s address, see Yves Congar, Hans Küng, and Daniel O’Hanlon, eds., *Council Speeches of Vatican II* (London and New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964) 22–24. For the Latin version, see *AS* Vol. II, Part II, 396–99. For the similarity between Rahner’s original draft and *Lumen Gentium* 26, see Wassilowsky, “Als die Kirche Weltkirche wurde” 34–37.

stating that “In these communities [*Altargemeinschaften*], although frequently small and poor, or dispersed, Christ is present by whose power the one, holy catholic and apostolic church is gathered together.” Nevertheless, Rahner, in his commentary on *Lumen Gentium* 26, maintained that “the other approach [the emphasis on the episcopacy and the universal church] was more or less imposed on the Council by the traditional theology” but yet, as a result of his and Schick’s intervention, the second approach was not excluded.<sup>49</sup>

Against a backdrop of the council’s image of the church as a pilgrim community (*LG* 7), Rahner also developed the concept of the sinful church or the church of sinners, a theme though present in *Lumen Gentium* and in the Decree on Ecumenism, was treated with a certain “reserve” by the Council.<sup>50</sup> At one level Rahner was reacting to Vatican I’s *Dei Filius* and its exaltation of the church’s “eminent holiness, and inexhaustible fruitfulness in everything that is good” (*DS* 3013). But at another level he claimed that “a Church of sinners is itself a piece of the Church’s consciousness of her faith.”<sup>51</sup> Pace the various heresies from Donatism to Jansenism and their idealistic conceptions of the church, it is not only the justified person but also the sinner who belongs to the church, albeit not in the full sense.<sup>52</sup> The church does not just stand over against sinners as an institution of salvation; “she is the community of these sinners.”<sup>53</sup> In this context Rahner referred to a speech at the Council by the Austrian bishop, Stephen László, who spoke of a “penitent Church,” “a communion of sinners” always in need of God’s mercy, and who encouraged the Council not to be silent about sin in

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49. “One can start with the concrete community, where the word of Christ is preached and his saving death is proclaimed in the Eucharist, where, therefore, Christ himself is present in the word and the sacrament . . . and which is, therefore, Church in the true sense of the word.” Rahner, “The Hierarchical Structure of the Church, with Special Reference to the Episcopate,” in Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* 1:216. While Rahner acknowledged that the council did not definitively resolve the relationship between primacy and collegiality, he “concluded that the relationship between the Pope and the bishops remained too strongly weighted in favour of the central authority.” Richard Lennan, “Ecclesiology and Ecumenism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, ed. Declan Marmion and Mary E. Hines (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005) 128–43 at 138.
50. Karl Rahner, “The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II,” in *Concerning Vatican Council II* 281–88 at 281.
51. Karl Rahner, “The Church of Sinners,” in *Concerning Vatican Council II* 253–69 at 255.
52. Rahner distinguishes between the church as a visible sign of grace and as a reality filled with grace and thus “between a (merely) ‘valid’ and a ‘fruitful’ membership of the church. The sinner has the first kind of membership . . . but not the second.” Rahner, “The Church of Sinners” 259. In a similar vein *LG* 14, following Augustine, distinguished between a “heartfelt” (*corde*) and merely “corporal” (*corpore*) membership of the church.
53. Rahner, “The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II” 291. The church “must regard these sinners as a part of herself, as her members” (284), “containing sinners in its own bosom” as *LG* 8 puts it. The church is “in a certain sense the subject of the guilt of her members” (286).

the church, even in its hierarchy.<sup>54</sup> Of course sin is a fundamental contradiction of what the church is and is called to be, namely, the manifestation of God's grace and holiness in the world. Rahner also acknowledged the frequent references to the "holy Church," the "holy people of God," and the "holy priesthood" in *Lumen Gentium* 5, 10, 12, and 26. The holiness of the church, therefore, is not on a par with its sinfulness but, because of God's grace, it constantly triumphs over sin. Nevertheless the Council would acknowledge that the church is "always in need of purification and unceasingly pursues penance and renewal" (*LG* 8).

Rahner's "indirect" influence on the Council can also be felt in its Decree on Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes*) and in its Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*). In both texts there is the emphasis on God's universal salvific will (Rahner's *Heilsoptimismus*), the universal scope of grace (the overcoming of the nature-supernature scheme) and, consequently, a more positive evaluation of non-Christian religions.<sup>55</sup> Already in 1961 Rahner was advocating an "open Catholicism" in the context of the pluralism of religions where "today everybody is the next-door neighbor and spiritual neighbor of everyone else in the world" and where there is now "one history of the world, and in this one history both the Christians and the non-Christians live in one and the same situation and face each other in dialogue."<sup>56</sup> He explored how to reconcile the conviction that Christianity represents "the absolute religion, intended for all" with the thesis "that there are supernatural, grace-filled elements in non-Christian religions,"<sup>57</sup> a thesis grounded in God's universal salvific will. Throughout the drafting process and the discussions that led to *Ad Gentes* the Council fathers had to grapple with such foundational issues, namely, a reappraisal of the understanding of mission, the justification of missionary activity, and how to evaluate non-Christian religions.<sup>58</sup> While the Council did not neatly resolve

54. Ibid. 280n24. For László's speech, "Sin in the Holy Church of God," see *Council Speeches of Vatican II* 29–31. Rahner rightly notes the influence of Hans Küng here, whose work prior to the council had drawn attention to this theme. See his *The Council and Reunion* (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961) 34–52. Another influential voice prior to and during the council on renewal in the church was Yves Congar. See his "Comment l'Église sainte doit se renouveler sans cesse," in *Sainte Église*, Unam Sanctam 41 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1963) 131–54.

55. For God's universal salvific will, see *Ad Gentes* (December 7, 1965) 7, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_ad-gentes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html); for the elements of truth to be found in other religions, see *Nostra Aetate* (October 28, 1965) 2 (hereafter cited in text as *NA*), [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html). The council employed the traditional terms supernatural/natural sparingly, 14 times in total.

56. Karl Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," in *Later Writings* 115–34 at 121.

57. Ibid. 118, 121.

58. Peter Hünerman, "The Final Weeks of the Council," in Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II* 5:427–51.

them, Rahner attempted to work out the theological implications of the newness of the council's teachings by distinguishing between transcendental and categorial atheism/theism, developing the concept of "implicit" (or anonymous) Christianity, and a reappraisal of the traditional theology of mission.<sup>59</sup> It was not a question of him replacing explicit faith with a purely natural or metaphysical knowledge of God but of working out the implications for missionary activity of the coextensive relationship between transcendent and historical revelation.<sup>60</sup>

Regarding the theme of the sources of revelation, Rahner was unhappy with the schema "De Fontibus Revelationis." He complained the draft was too long, lacked a pastoral dimension, an ecumenical spirit, and was not theologically nuanced.<sup>61</sup> Specifically he highlighted the infelicitous description of "two sources" of revelation. He wanted to see more clearly stated that Scripture as the inspired word of God was the *norma non normata* for the church's teaching office.<sup>62</sup>

While the phrase itself did not appear in the final text of *Dei Verbum*, the insistence that "this teaching function is not above the word of God but stands at its service" (DV 10) reflected Rahner's position. Scripture and tradition are not two sources of revelation but "two modes of transmission of the one truth emanating from the one source."<sup>63</sup> His fear was that if Scripture and tradition were presented as "two tributaries flowing in a parallel manner"<sup>64</sup> new dogmas might be arbitrarily introduced into

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59. In the light of the council's teaching Rahner probed the possibility of a non-culpable atheism based on his distinction between our "subjective transcendentality" (where God is truly present) and its "categorial objectification in concepts and sentences" to show that a person's "innocent atheism by no means destroys a really fundamental relationship with God." Karl Rahner, "Atheism and Implicit Christianity," in *Further Theology of the Spiritual Life 2*, trans. Graham Harrison, TI 9 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972, orig. 1967) 145–64 at 156, 157.
60. Karl Rahner, "Anonymous and Explicit Faith," in *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology*, trans. David Morland, TI 16 (1975: repr., London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979) 52–59 at 53, 58. "The Christian message aims to make real, explicit Christians, and is hence not simply the indoctrination form outside of some hitherto unknown fact. It is the awakening of something which is really already existent through grace and is already experienced, even if it is not the object of explicit reflection." Karl Rahner, "Religious Feeling Inside and Outside the Church," in *Jesus, Man, and the Church*, trans. Margaret Kohl, TI 17 (1975: repr., London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981) 228–42 at 231.
61. Karl Rahner, "Disquisitio Brevis De Schemate 'De Fontibus Revelationis,'" *SW* 21/1:237–61. For the draft presented to the Council fathers, see *AS*, I/III, 14–26. The "defensive character of the schema" was similarly criticized by leading members of the Central Preparatory Commission including Cardinals König, Döpfner, and Bea. See Komonchak, "The Struggle for the Council," 306.
62. Karl Rahner, "Scripture and Theology," in *Concerning Vatican Council II* 89–97.
63. Rahner, "Disquisitio Brevis De Schemate 'De Fontibus Revelationis,'" *SW* 21/1:237–61 at 248.
64. Karl Rahner, "Scripture and Tradition," in *Concerning Vatican Council II* 98–112 at 103. This was a lecture given at the Catholic Academy of Bavaria in Munich on February 10, 1963, that is, between the first and second sessions of the Council and immediately after the Council's rejection of "De Fontibus Revelationis," which wanted to copper fasten the notion of the material insufficiency of Scripture vis-à-vis tradition.



the church. In short, he wanted the Council to leave the question open as an ongoing *quaestio disputata*.

In the first weeks of the Council (October 1962) Rahner, with the collaboration of Joseph Ratzinger, drafted an alternative schema to the official “De Fontibus Revelationis.”<sup>65</sup> With the support of Cardinals Frings, König, Suenens, and others, this draft was circulated widely among various bishops’ conferences. Though the text itself quickly disappeared, it showed that the Council could not only reject pre-prepared schemata but draw up its own texts from scratch as it were, and Rahner regarded *Lumen Gentium* and *Dei Verbum* as examples of completely new creations of the Council itself.<sup>66</sup>

Rahner’s renewal of the theology of revelation reflected his method of incorporating both transcendental and historical reflection. The human person is both “the essence of an unlimited transcendentality,”<sup>67</sup> and at the same time “apprehends him or herself as inescapably anchored in *history*.”<sup>68</sup> This unity in tension, however, between universal, transcendental revelation and its historical or categorical mediation and culmination in Jesus Christ was, in his view, insufficiently treated in *Dei Verbum*.<sup>69</sup>

Rahner had long been interested in the topic of Mariology, although he was not directly involved in the drawing up of the various drafts of what would become chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium*. His major work on the Assumption that he had hoped would coincide with the promulgation of the dogma in 1950 was not published in his lifetime due to the objections of Roman and Jesuit censors.<sup>70</sup> As far as the tensions between the so-called Marian maximalists and minimalists at Vatican II were concerned, Rahner

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65. Karl Rahner (in collaboration with Joseph Ratzinger), “De Revelatione Dei,” *SW* 21/1: 217–36. The draft takes as its anthropological starting point the divine calling of the human person, a vocation to communion with God. A second chapter traces God’s hidden presence throughout history, including the various religions, and shows how the history of salvation in the Old Testament is a preparation for the gospel. The third chapter has a Christocentric focus: all the truths of revelation and in the church’s proclamation reflect the one living truth, Jesus Christ, who is what he reveals. This chapter also reiterates Rahner’s position on the reciprocal relationship between Scripture, tradition, and church.
66. “Interview mit Karl Rahner über seine Mitarbeit am Entstehen der Offenbarungskonstitution,” *SW* 21/2:1038–1045 at 1038. Rahner was trying to overcome “the sterile antithesis of immanentism and extrinsicism,” overcoming a purely extrinsic conception of revelation, while avoiding an immanentism that posited an exigency for the supernatural in the subject itself. Karl Rahner, “Observations on the Concept of Revelation,” in Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition* (London: Burns and Oates, 1966) 12–13.
67. Karl Rahner, *Christian at the Crossroads* (London: Burns and Oates, 1975) 14.
68. Karl Rahner, “Reflections on Methodology in Theology,” in *Confrontations I*, trans. D. Bourke, *TI* 11 (1970: repr., London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974) 68–114 at 88.
69. Karl Rahner, “On the ‘History of Revelation’ according to the Second Vatican Council,” in *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology* 191–98.
70. For the background, see Regina Pacis Meyer, “Die Assumptio-Arbeit und ihr Hintergrund,” in *SW*, vol. 9, *Maria, Mutter des Herrn. Mariologische Studien* (Freiburg: Herder, 2004) xii–li.

advocated a middle way. He viewed the Marian movement as a work of the Spirit and a challenge to the more reserved Western European theologians. At the same time he was aware of the ecumenical challenges facing any conciliar statement on Mary, particularly when it came to the question of endorsing titles that had become popular in Catholic piety, for example Mary as mediatrix or co-redemptrix. He did not believe the council's Mariology could simply comprise a synthesis of all the Marian encyclicals of the last 100 years.<sup>71</sup> Rather, Rahner wanted the Council to avoid ecumenical difficulties by underlining the unique mediatorship of Christ while acknowledging the preeminent role of Mary in the economy of salvation.<sup>72</sup> That the Council followed a middle path, was ecumenically sensitive, and avoided new definitions or rash conclusions from Scripture testifies to his "indirect" influence in the Mariology of the Council.

### Conclusion: The Council—A New Beginning

Rahner viewed the Council as a "process of the collective finding of the truth" (*kollektive Wahrheitsfindung*).<sup>73</sup> This involved dialogue and collaboration not just among the *periti* themselves but also between theologians and bishops in the various commissions and through formal and informal contacts inside and outside the Council. What struck him was the atmosphere of freedom and openness in which the business of the Council was conducted.<sup>74</sup> Not that he was politically naïve. From the beginning of the

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71. Karl Rahner, "Zur Konizliaren Mariologie," *SW* 9:465–79 at 467. For Rahner's Mariology see his *Mary, Mother of the Lord: Theological Meditations*, trans. W. J. O'Hara (Freiburg: Herder, 1964).

72. This plea was endorsed in *LG* 62 in its relativizing of the term "mediatrix." "The Blessed Virgin is invoked by the titles of advocate, benefactress, helper and mediatrix. This, however, must be understood in such a way that it takes away nothing from the dignity and power of Christ the one mediator, and adds nothing to this." For a discussion of the background to the Council's "compromise text" demonstrating that the issue was not so much devotional or pastoral but theological, see Alberto Melloni, "The Beginning of the Second Period: The Great Debate on the Church," in Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II* 3:95–98; and Evangelista Vilanova, "The Intercession (1963–1964)," in Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II* 3:367–72 and 425–28.

73. Karl Rahner, "A Small Fragment 'On the Collective Finding of Truth,'" in *Concerning Vatican Council II* 82–88.

74. "It was a Council in freedom and love. The Council . . . explored the growing understanding in faith of the dogmas of the Church while remaining equally loyal to the already accepted faith of the Church. . . . The truly miraculous and astonishing thing about this Council was that genuine unanimity was reached in freedom. Common declarations and common agreement were achieved. It is not just to be assumed that this sort of unanimity can be expected in the present day. One can easily get the impression nowadays that freedom has caused, at least in the field of theology, discord, and that only by the show of authority can one make any appreciable advances in thought or activity. But the Council demonstrated that with the grace of God this is not necessarily so." Karl Rahner, *The Church after the Council* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966) 13–14.

second session he realized that the outright rejection of official draft texts was no longer feasible and he devoted himself instead to textual improvements (*Textverbesserungen*), describing his contribution as a theological service to the Council.<sup>75</sup> In a letter from Rome to his brother Hugo in the autumn of 1963 he noted how there was no one at the Council who had an overview of all that was happening or who could be said to be driving the agenda, not even the moderators.<sup>76</sup> Yet, to his surprise, it was the “synodal-collegial principle” that won out at the Council, a Council that “marked the decisive beginning of the *aggiornamento*” required of the church, its self-understanding and mission *ad extra*.<sup>77</sup> Thus the Council became “the life-long theme” of Rahner as he enthusiastically promoted ecclesial and theological renewal.<sup>78</sup> His fear was that “the Council’s inner call to the church [would] be smothered and the Council rendered ‘harmless.’”<sup>79</sup> But as a Council of the world church, it retains a permanent significance.<sup>80</sup> We have seen something of how Rahner helped the Council engage with key ecclesiological themes (e.g. the relationship between primacy and collegiality, the importance of the local church, etc.), issues which the Council left largely unresolved.<sup>81</sup> Above all, the church at Vatican II attempted to forge a new relationship with the world, engaging humanity “through acceptance and solidarity, through dialogue and cooperation,” a pastoral Council, “orientated neither toward dogma nor toward theological controversy.”<sup>82</sup> The church, as a mystery or sacrament

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75. As the council was primarily an assembly of bishops, they were free to accept, reject, amend, or rewrite any texts drafted for them, while the two-thirds majority required for decisions ensured compromise solutions had to be found. See Andreas R. Batlogg and Nikolaus Klein, “Kollektive Wahrheitsfindung auf dem Zweiten Vatikanum. Zu einer Momentaufnahme von Karl Rahner, SJ,” *Stimmen der Zeit* 9 (2012) 579–589 at 582. See also Rahner, “Die Zweite Konzilsperiode,” *SW* 1:408–411.
76. *Ibid.* 594.
77. Rahner, *The Church after the Council* 19.
78. Karl Lehmann, “Hinführung,” in Karl Rahner, *Das Konzil—ein neuer Beginn*, ed. Andreas R. Batlogg and Albert Raffelt (Freiburg: Herder, 2012) 9–20 at 16.
79. Karl Rahner, “The Second Vatican Council’s Challenge to Theology,” in *Writings of 1965–1967 I*, trans. Graham Harrison, TI 9 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972) 3–27 at 3. However, he became increasingly frustrated in the post-conciliar era at what he regarded as a retrenchment and an increased centralization, where the new openings envisaged by the Council were being undermined.
80. See Karl Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” in *Concern for the Church*, trans. Edward Quinn, TI 20 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981; orig. 1980) 77–89, and “The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council,” in *Concern for the Church* 90–102.
81. For a comprehensive list of these themes, see Rahner, “The Second Vatican Council’s Challenge to Theology,” in *Writings of 1965–1967 I* 14–17.
82. Karl Rahner and Adolf Darlap, “Vatican Councils. Vatican II,” *SW* 21/2, 1057. For Rahner’s reflections on the nature of a pastoral constitution as a kind of “instruction,” “summons,” or exhortation of God to the church, see his “On the Theological Problems Entailed in a ‘Pastoral Constitution,’” in *Writings of 1965–1967 II* 293–317.

of salvation existing in a diaspora situation in a pluralistic society, will continue to offer a message of grace to the world all the while acknowledging that this grace is also at work beyond its sacramental mediation.<sup>83</sup> Such “salvation optimism” (*Heilsoptimismus*) was not intended by Rahner or by the Council as a form of cheap grace or “ecclesiological relativism” but is another unresolved conciliar tension between the “optimism with regard to salvation and the inalienable duty of Christians to be missionaries of the gospel.”<sup>84</sup>

What is striking is Rahner’s prescience in that many of the themes we have discussed (including the synodal-collegial principle in the church, the church of sinners, the importance of the local church, and the priority of the pastoral) still retain their relevance. Indeed, much work has been done in developing diaconate programs, especially in the English-speaking world. Notable too is how many of Rahner’s emphases resonate with those of his fellow Jesuit, Pope Francis, including a friendlier approach to secular culture, an emphasis on collegiality and decentralization, and a more pastoral vision of the church.<sup>85</sup>

Pope Francis highlighted the role of pastoral discernment at the recent Synod on the Family.<sup>86</sup> From his remarks at the conclusion of the first session of the synod in 2014

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83. *LG* 16; *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965) 22, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).

84. Rahner, “The New Image of the Church,” in *Writings of 1965–1967 II* 3–29 at 19. “The Catholic must think of and experience the Church as the ‘vanguard,’ the sacramental sign, the manifestation in history of a grace of salvation which takes effect far beyond the confines of the ‘visible’ Church as sociologically definable . . . [While] the Christian hopes for salvation for others also . . . he possesses a grace of which those others are deprived—are *still* deprived, precisely the grace namely of belonging to the Church *corpore* and not merely *corde*” (16–17, 19).

85. For Francis, while Vatican II was “a beautiful work of the Holy Spirit,” the temptation is to either ignore its reforms or build a monument to it rather than fully live its teachings. See “Pope: 2nd Vatican Council, Work of Holy Spirit but Some Want to Turn Back the Clock,” *Vatican Radio*, April 16, 2013, <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-2nd-vatican-council-work-of-holy-spirit-but-s>. See also his *The Church of Mercy* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2014) 24–47. On decentralization of the church and strengthening episcopal conferences, see Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013) 16, 32 (hereafter cited in text as *EG*), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html).

86. For Francis, discernment “is an instrument of struggle in order to know the Lord and follow him more closely . . . to hear the things of God . . . [and] takes time.” Antonio Spadaro, “Interview with Pope Francis,” August 19, 2013, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130921\\_intervista-spadaro.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130921_intervista-spadaro.html). Rahner also explored how discernment, following the rules of Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises*, can apply not just to individuals but to groups within the church, “a decision making process, a discernment of spirits in which the community as such reaches a decision and makes the Church a reality.” Karl Rahner, “Modern Piety

we see how seriously he regards the process of a genuinely collective discernment of spirits. He spoke of “moments of consolation and grace,” particularly from the testimony of families and their married life, alongside “moments of desolations, of tensions and temptations.”<sup>87</sup> In chapter 8 (“Accompanying, Discerning and Integrating Weakness”) of the apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, he refers several times to the need for “pastoral discernment” in situations where the ideal of Christian marriage is not or is no longer a reality.<sup>88</sup> Like Rahner, Francis is prepared to leave certain questions open. He wants, on the one hand, to avoid the twin dangers of compromising “the demands of the Gospel” or giving the impression “that the Church maintains a double standard,” but, on the other, he encourages a “gradualness in pastoral care,” “a responsible personal and pastoral discernment of particular cases,” while recognizing there are no easy solutions. Both are advocating the kind of mentality or spirit that might prevail in the church and towards those outside it: “a pastoral discernment filled with merciful love, which is ever ready to understand, forgive, accompany, hope, and above all integrate.”<sup>89</sup>

From Pope Francis’s pastoral perspective, it is not a question of transmitting “a multitude of doctrines” but of focusing “on the essentials,” on what is “most beautiful” and appealing at “the heart of the Gospel . . . the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ” (*EG* 35–36).<sup>90</sup> His is a contextual theology, a theology “out of the pastoral,”

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and the Experience of Retreats,” in *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology* 135–55 at 151. See also Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, trans. William J. O’Hara, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 12 (1958; repr., London: Burns and Oates, 1964) 84–170. Communal discernment is the process of discovery of God’s plan for a community; it comprises contemplative insight or what Rahner, following Ignatius, calls “existential knowledge,” a gracious gift of God, and presupposes the community in question will have the right disposition (openness to the Spirit) to receive this gift.

87. Such temptations range from the “hostile inflexibility” of the traditionalists closed within the letter of the law to the “deceptive mercy” of the progressives that wants to bind “the wounds without first curing them and treating them.” Pope Francis, “Concluding Discourse at the Extraordinary Synod on the Family” (Rome, October 18, 2014), [http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/10/18/pope\\_francis\\_speech\\_at\\_the\\_conclusion\\_of\\_the\\_synod/1108944](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/10/18/pope_francis_speech_at_the_conclusion_of_the_synod/1108944).
88. Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (April 8, 2016) 293, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20160319\\_amoris-laetitia\\_en.pdf](https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf).
89. *Ibid.* 300–2, 312. The question for Francis, however, is whether this *aporia* between the ideal and the reality can ever admit of a resolution, even a pastoral one, if there is not a more explicit acknowledgement of the presence of God’s grace in what are termed “irregular” situations.
90. As Walter Kasper puts it, Pope Francis wants to “convince the people of the beauty of faith”; he “talks a lot about the gospel but noticeably little about the church’s doctrine.” Walter Kasper, *Pope Francis’ Revolution of Tenderness and Love: Theological and Pastoral Perspectives*, trans. William Madges (New York: Paulist, 2015) 29 and 28. For Rahner’s formulation of brief creedal statements, see the “Epilogue” of his *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William Dych (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978) 448–60.

listening to the people's wisdom or sense of faith, where reality takes precedence over idea (EG 231–33).<sup>91</sup> It is “a theology of the people” (*teología del pueblo*), that particular form of Argentinian liberation theology, characterized not by a Marxist social analysis but by an analysis of culture, including popular piety, literature, and the arts.

For Rahner and Francis, personal conversion, a discipleship of service of the poor, and structural reform go hand in hand rather than being played off against one another.<sup>92</sup> Rahner described the Christian of the future as a mystic—someone whose faith decision will be rooted in a personal experience of God even when the societal supports for Christianity have disappeared—the church of the diaspora or little flock,<sup>93</sup> while, at the same time, teasing out possibilities for structural change in the church—calling, for example, for the “deliberative and not merely consultative collaboration of the people in the decisions of the institutional Church.”<sup>94</sup> Further, the principle of autonomy for regional churches or “the pluralism of Churches within the one Church” highlighted for him the importance of the bishop's role in empowering the voice and effective participation of the laity.<sup>95</sup> Ecclesial reform for Francis and for Rahner is linked to a *style* or temperament—again inspired by the Council—where it becomes possible

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91. For the important influence of Lucio Gera on Pope Francis's theology, see Margit Eckholt, “. . . Bei mir erwächst die Theologie aus der Pastoral.’ Lucio Gera—ein ‘Lehrer in Theologie’ von Papst Franziskus,” *Stimmen der Zeit* 3 (2014) 157–72. For Rahner's commitment to a “practical theology of the Church” see Franz Xaver Arnold, Karl Rahner, Viktor Schurr, and Leonhard M. Weber, eds., *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie: Praktische Theologie der Kirche in ihrer Gegenwart*, 5 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1962–1972).
  92. For Rahner's reflections on “radical discipleship” lived “on the fringe of society and the church,” see his “Ignatius of Loyola Speaks to a Modern Jesuit,” in *Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Rosaleen Ockenden (London: Collins, 1978) 21–29. For his influence on liberation theology, especially on Ignacio Ellacuría, see Jon Sobrino, “Gedanken über Karl Rahner aus Lateinamerika,” *Stimmen der Zeit* 1 (2004) 43–56. “In Vatican II, the issue of ‘reform’ is very close to the idea of ‘conversion,’ and is expressed with the concepts of *renovatio*, *purificatio*, *reformatio*, *instauratio*, *mutatio*, *acomodatio*, *aptatio*, and *evolutio*. *Renovatio* and *renovare* are the words most frequently used, and are a symptom of the fact that Vatican II sought ‘reform’ both in the structural-institutional and the spiritual sense.” Massimo Faggioli, *Pope Francis: Tradition in Transition* (New York: Paulist, 2015) 49–50, following Ormond Rush, “Ecclesial Conversion after Vatican II: Renewing ‘The Face of the Church’ to Reflect ‘the Genuine Face of God,’” *Theological Studies* 74 (2013) 785–803, doi:10.1177/004056391307400401. For the use of these words see the index in *Die Dokumente des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils. Zweisprachige Studienausgabe*, ed. Peter Hünermann (Freiburg: Herder, 2012).
  93. Karl Rahner, “The Spirituality of the Church of the Future,” in *Concern for the Church* 143–53 at 149–50. See also *The Christian of the Future* 78–81.
  94. Karl Rahner, “Structural Change in the Church of the Future,” in *Concern for the Church* 115–32 at 124. The two other issues Rahner mentions in this article are the question whether the seat of primacy in the church has to remain in Rome, and the urgent task of ecumenism (127).
  95. Karl Rahner, “On the Theology of a ‘Pastoral Synod,’” in *Ecclesiology, Questions in the Church, The Church in the World*, trans. David Bourke, TI 14 (1972: repr., London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975) 116–31 at 119.

to speak of a declericalized, serving, caring church, preaching morality without moralizing, being open to secular society, boldly giving concrete directives for public life without always declaring these to be permanently valid dogma or part of the unchanging content of natural law, socially critical without seeking to dictate to secular society or restrict its autonomy.<sup>96</sup>

The only “tutorism” admissible in the church is a “tutorism of daring” (*Tutorismus des Wagnisses*): we must have the courage to take risks.<sup>97</sup>

Rahner did not regard the *aggiornamento* undertaken by the church at the Council as a way of making it “more attractive to, and comfortable for, the world.”<sup>98</sup> Rather, it was a way of preparing the church to be a more effective witness to the mystery of a God who is “close to us, saving, loving and forgiving,”<sup>99</sup> and who overcomes the sin and tragedies of human existence. This meant focusing on the core of Christian faith—“the real self-communication of God to creation in God’s innermost reality and glory.”<sup>100</sup> Rahner was characteristically modest about his own contribution to the Council.<sup>101</sup> Ultimately, he believed the true significance of the Council would be in how it was received, in the “history of its effects” (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). In a somewhat depressing image, he likened the efforts of the Council to extracting radium from pitchblende: “One must refine a ton of ore to recover 0.14 gram of radium, yet it is worth the effort . . . so that in our hearts . . . there can be extracted a tiny bit of the radium of faith, hope and charity.”<sup>102</sup> The Council was only a beginning,

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96. Rahner, “Structural Change in the Church of the Future,” in *Concern for the Church* 126. See also his *The Shape of the Church to Come*, trans. Edward Quinn (London: SPCK, 1974). See also O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II?* 43–52 and Richard R. Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis and the Renewal of Catholicism* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2015) 115–58.

97. Rahner, “Do Not Stifle the Spirit,” in *Further Theology of the Spiritual Life 1* 72–87 at 81. For his part, Pope Francis speaks of a church without frontiers “in which no one is seen as useless, out of place or disposable” as well as the challenge “to go out to the frontiers” rather than remaining in the self-enclosed world of the “laboratory.” Pope Francis, “Message of His Holiness Pope Francis For the 101st World Day of Migrants and Refugees” (Rome, September 3, 2014), [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140903\\_world-migrants-day-2015.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20140903_world-migrants-day-2015.html). See also Spadaro, “Interview with Pope Francis.”

98. Rahner, *The Church after the Council* 27.

99. Rahner, *The Christian of the Future* 99.

100. Karl Rahner, “Experiences of a Catholic Theologian,” trans. Declan Marmion and Gesa Thiessen in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner* 207–310 at 301.

101. In a letter to Herbert Vorgrimler (April 27, 1964), he described his work in the commissions as trying to ensure “that the worst does not happen and that small points of contact are put into the schemata for a later theology. That’s not much, yet it’s a great deal.” Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner* 182.

102. Rahner, *The Church after the Council* 30–31 (translation altered). Rahner continues, “Every subtle theology, every dogma, every Church law, . . . every institution, every bureau and all its powers, every holy liturgy and every brave mission has as its only goal: faith, hope, and love towards God and neighbour” (31).

a service to the church, as it “seeks to be the guide of humanity into the mystery of God.”<sup>103</sup>

### Author Biography

Declan Marmion holds an STD from the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. He is Professor of Systematic theology at St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth, Ireland where he currently serves as Dean of theology and Editor of the *Irish Theological Quarterly*. Among his publications are: *An Introduction to the Trinity* (Cambridge University, 2010) and *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner* (Cambridge University, 2005). Forthcoming in 2017 is *Remembering the Reformation: Martin Luther and Catholic Theology* (Fortress).

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103. Rahner, *The Christian of the Future* 101. “The most important thing about Vatican II is not the letter of the decrees, which in any case have to be translated by us all into life and action. It is the spirit, the deepest tendencies, perspectives and meaning of what happened that really matter and which will remain operative. They may perhaps be submerged again for the time being by a contrary wave of caution, fear of one’s own courage, terror of false conclusions which people may like to draw. . . . But the real seeds of a new outlook and strength to understand and endure the imminent future in a Christian way have been sown in the field of the Church. God himself will provide the climate in which this crop will grow—the future historical situation of the Church which he, as Lord of history, will bring about” (100–1).