

Tridentine Motivations of Pope John XXIII before and during Vatican II

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Abstract

Angelo Roncalli believed in the Church's potential, from Christ and the Holy Spirit, to become ever again rejuvenated. This came from his prolonged work editing the records of Metropolitan Archbishop Charles Borromeo's 1575 visitation of his own diocese of Bergamo. The visitation applied Trent's reform decrees and renewed a large diocese by imposing new standards of Catholic life. As Pope John XXIII, Roncalli wanted to promote such a Catholic rejuvenation through the Second Vatican Council, at which his objective of pastoral revitalization gradually took hold among the council members.

Keywords

Cesare Baronio, Charles Borromeo, church reform, Council of Trent, Gregorio Barbarigo, John XXIII, pastoral visitations, Second Vatican Council

It is common to see opposition between the style and content of the Council of Trent and the event and documents of the Second Vatican Council. The latter is often taken as ending the Counter Reformation era that Trent embodied in notable ways.¹ However, a careful review of the debates and documents of Vatican II shows that while this quite different council abstained from anathematizing any doctrines and reversed

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1. See, e.g., John W. O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University, 2012) 11.

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several practices mandated by Trent, it did not depart from any of Trent's doctrinal definitions, and that Trent's teaching even played some positive roles at Vatican II.²

But beyond the documents is the sometimes-slippery topic of Vatican II's aims and spirit, especially the impulses given it by its convener Pope John XXIII. Some light on the latter domain comes from the recent publication of excerpts from the diary of Roberto Tucci, who at the time of Vatican II headed the Jesuit editorial team of *La civiltà cattolica* in Rome. Tucci's texts include notes on the contents of nine personal audiences with John XXIII during the council years. The volume's editor begins his introduction by stating that John did not convene the council to be like previous councils that defined dogmas. Instead, it "should give new impulses and new dynamism to the church spiritually, pastorally, and in its missionary action, as did occur after the Council of Trent, which he [John XXIII] knew well and admired."³ From work on Tucci's interviews, it became clear that John wanted Vatican II to promote certain characteristics of the era introduced by the Council of Trent, an era about which he was well informed.

To develop this topic, the following pages present several marks that the Council of Trent made on Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli/John XXIII. These came both from Trent's decrees on church reform and from individuals who, after Trent concluded in December 1563, worked toward implementing its reform decrees in different locales. This trio of Tridentine decrees, implementers, and local impacts is, I believe, a helpful lens through which to perceive the motivations and objectives that John XXIII gave the Second Vatican Council as he convened and led it until his death on June 3, 1963. But before speaking of Vatican II, it is essential to visit some stations in Roncalli's life, in order to grasp the impact on him of the Tridentine reform.

Roncalli as Patriarch/Archbishop of Venice: Carrying Out Tridentine Pastoral Practices

On March 14, 1953, Cardinal Roncalli entered Venice as the newly appointed archbishop and patriarch. Less than a year later, he announced he was beginning

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2. Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Council of Trent at the Second Vatican Council," in *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations*, ed. Raymond F. Bulman and Frederick J. Parrella (New York: Oxford University, 2006) 61–80. In inaugurating Vatican II, John XXIII spoke of adherence to the Church's teaching at Trent and Vatican I as basic in the new council's penetration *amplius et altius* of the heritage and then for its contemporary reformulation of the same meaning in ways that would enlarge its influence on souls. See John XXIII, "Gaudet Mater Ecclesia" (October 11, 1962), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 54 (1962) 786–96, at 792.
 3. Giovanni Sale, ed., *Giovanni XXIII e la preparazione del concilio Vaticano II nei diari del direttore della "Civiltà cattolica"* (Milan: Jaca, 2012) 13 (all translations are mine unless otherwise noted). The volume gives Tucci's notes after his audiences with Pope John beginning in September 1959 and extending to February 1963. It also includes notes after 17 conversations with the Cardinals Secretary of State, Domenico Tardini and Amleto Cicognani. Added to these are notes on an exchange with the pope's personal secretary, Msgr. Loris Capovilla, and a reflection on the death of Cardinal Tardini in late July 1961.

visitations of parishes and other diocesan institutions to complete the unfinished visitation program of his predecessor. Shortly thereafter, Roncalli wrote this in his diary: “Pastoral visitation *in the spirit of the Council of Trent*, as shepherd and father (*pastor et pater*).”⁴ Two months into the visitation, he drafted a letter meant for Pope Pius XII, expressing gratitude for appointing him at the sunset of his life to pastoral care around the charming *laguna* of Venice, where he is meeting “beautiful souls, who are more precious than the marble, paintings, and mosaics” of the artistic heritage of the city. In the parishes he is noting defects and urgent needs, while evaluating persons and situations, and so coming to know the realities. He tries to improve them, while not imagining he can attain everything or even something immediately by the touch of a magic wand or by applying a whip.⁵ This was his acting “in the spirit of Trent,” as he understood it.

More than three years later, in early November 1957, Roncalli made his final parish visit, to San Lorenzo di Mestre. But he had already announced that the “conclusion and crown of the pastoral visitation” would be a three-day diocesan synod scheduled for late November 1957.

Roncalli’s official letter announcing the synod described its preparation with another Tridentine echo:

The priests are making themselves ready for this celebration, which reminds us of the era after the Council of Trent and of the fervor shown then by churchmen and laypeople animated to undertake a reestablishment [*un’instaurazione*] of Catholic life, which, thanks be to God, succeeded well, and so such an action still corresponds to the needs of modern times.

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4. Entry of February 28, 1954, in *Pace e vangelo: Agende del patriarca*, vol. 1, 1953–1955, ed. Enrico Galavotti (Bologna: Istituto per le scienze religiose, 2008) 229–30, emphasis added. During the parish visits, Roncalli had help in reviewing conditions in the parishes from Don Loris Capovilla and from the master of ceremonies of St. Mark’s Basilica. I cite here from the edition of the Roncalli diaries in seven volumes with ten parts (2003–2008). On this monumental work, see Frank J. Coppa, “The National Edition of the Diaries of Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli/Pope John XXIII: A Bibliographical Essay,” *Catholic Historical Review* 97 (2011) 81–89; and, in a convincing interpretative vein, Klaus Unterburger, “Die Überwindung von Ultramontanismus und Antimodernismus aus dem Geist der tridentinischen Seelsorge: Die kritische Edition der Tagebücher Papst Johannes XXIII. als Schlüsseldokument für die katholische Kirchengeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 136 (2011) cols. 1253–62.
 5. Letter composed April 18, 1954, but not sent, to Msgr. Giovanni Battista Montini, the *sostituto* in the Secretariat of State of the Roman Curia who had daily audiences with Pope Pius XII. Angelo G. Roncalli and Giovanni Battista Montini, *Lettere di fede e amicizia: Corrispondenza inedita (1925–1963)*, ed. Loris F. Capovilla and Marco Roncalli (Brescia: Istituto Paolo VI, 2013) 135–37. On his pastoral governance in Venice, Roncalli wrote earlier about following the rule, coming from Gregory the Great but also attributed to St. Bernard, that he as a young priest knew as a motto of the bishop of Bergamo, Giacomo M. Radini-Tedeschi, “*Omnia videre, multa dissimulare, pauca corrigere*” (diary entry of December 7, 1953, in *Pace e vangelo* 1:178).

Roncalli's presynod statement of 1957 indicated the purpose of the synod with a term that has become well known:

Have you not heard the word *aggiornamento* repeated many times? Here is our church, always young and ready to follow different changes in the circumstances of life, with the intention of adapting, correcting, improving, and arousing enthusiasm. In summary, this is the nature of the synod, this is its purpose.⁶

Thus, during Roncalli's five-year ministry in Venice, 1953 to 1958, he carried out a pastoral action that for him imitated Trent's mandated episcopal visitations of dioceses, and he followed the synodal practice on the local level that many post-Tridentine dioceses adopted as means of promulgating new norms to enliven Catholic life.⁷

The sources of Roncalli's mid-1950s references to the Tridentine reforms were two intensive exposures to outcomes of the Council of Trent that he had earlier in his life. One of these was documentary and of long duration, while the other was spiritual in nature through his favorite models of exemplary service in the Church during the Tridentine era.

Roncalli as Editor of the Records of Charles Borromeo's Visitation of Bergamo, 1575

After Roncalli's ordination to the priesthood for the diocese of Bergamo in 1904, he was appointed personal secretary to the new bishop, Giacomo M. Radini-Tedeschi, whom he served for a decade until the bishop died in 1914. Roncalli also taught church history in the seminary beginning in 1906. Early in these years, he visited in Milan the archive of the archdiocese in the Ambrosian Library, where he came upon 39 bound volumes of manuscripts concerning his own diocese in the post-Tridentine era. He came back several times to peruse them, enthused about "so many and such interesting documents regarding the church of Bergamo from the era marked by the renewal of its religious life after the Council of Trent. Here was evidence of the warm fervor of the Catholic Counter-Reformation." In volumes 6 and 7 of the collection, he found the records of the visitation of the diocese of Bergamo in 1575 by the Metropolitan Charles Borromeo, who came to Bergamo under a mandate by Pope Gregory XIII, bringing with him ten assistant visitators or inspectors. After Roncalli's discovery, Bishop

6. *Pace e vangelo: Agende del patriarca*, ed. Enrico Galavotti, vol. 2 (1956–1958) 503 n. 826.

7. Council of Trent, Session 24, Reform Decree, November 11, 1563, canon 3, on episcopal visitation of dioceses, published in Latin and English in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, S.J. (Washington: Georgetown University, 1990) 761–62. An older essay surveys the visitations and synods of Italian church provinces and dioceses in application of Trent's reforms. Giuseppe Alberigo, "Studi e problemi relativi all'applicazione del concilio di Trento in Italia (1945–1958)," *Rivista storica italiana* 70 (1958) 239–98, at 256–83. See also Silvio Ferrari, "I sinodi diocesani di Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli," *Cristianesimo nella storia* 9 (1988) 113–33.

Radini made it a diocesan project of Bergamo to publish the *acta* of this apostolic visitation in homage to Borromeo on the third centenary in 1910 of his canonization.⁸

The publication project gained the approval of the prefect of the Ambrosiana, Msgr. Achille Ratti (the future Pope Pius XI), who had the pages of volumes 6 and 7 unbound and photographed. Soon, however, what was projected as a work by a commission of Bergamo's seminary professors devolved upon Roncalli alone. He trained some seminarians to transcribe the Latin texts of relevant correspondence, reports (*verbali*) on churches, parish life, clergy, and other institutions, and ordinances (*decreti*) of reform issued by Borromeo. The work advanced from its beginning in 1910, with some parts being printed but not published. However, in 1914 the project came to a halt because of the death of Bishop Radini and the outbreak of World War I in which Roncalli served in the Italian army as a military hospital chaplain.

The publication project remained suspended for 20 years during which Roncalli had several assignments: first, three years as seminary spiritual director and animator of a Catholic women's association in Bergamo (1918–1920), then over four years operating from Rome as national organizer of the Italian office to coordinate support for the missions (1921–1925), and finally nine years outside Italy after his consecration as bishop and missioning as apostolic visitor and then delegate to the scattered Catholic minority in Bulgaria (1925–1934). He returned to the editorial work after his transfer to Turkey in late 1934, with residence in Istanbul, as apostolic delegate to the Catholics of both Turkey and Greece. By then he had an assistant working on the visitation edition, the Bergamo priest Don Pietro Forno. Three parts of the edition, *The Acts of the Apostolic Visitation by St. Charles Borromeo in Bergamo in 1575*, came out in 1936, 1937, and 1938, but Don Forno died, and World War II intervened. The last two parts came out in 1946 and 1959.⁹

The documents of the publication seem at first glance immersed in externals. At each of the nearly 250 parishes and outlying chapels of the diocese, the inspection reports covered topics such as the condition of the built fabric of the church and its windows, the solidity of the tabernacle, whether there is a monstrance for Eucharistic exposition, the positioning of side altars, whether there is a confessional, whether the baptismal and marriage registers are kept up, whether the pastor lives nearby, whether he preaches and gives classes in Christian doctrine, and whether the parish cemetery is maintained and protected by a wall against wandering animals. In many

8. This information and the cited text are from Roncalli's introduction, composed in Istanbul in April 1936, to the first published volume: Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, ed., *Gli atti della visita apostolica di S. Carlo Borromeo a Bergamo (1575)*, 2 vols. in 5 (Florence: Olschki, 1936–1957) 1/1: xxix–xlvi, at xxix–xxiii. The work has been studied comprehensively by Max Vodola in his “John XXIII, Vatican II, and the Genesis of *aggiornamento*: A Contextual Analysis of Angelo Roncalli's Works on San Carlo Borromeo in Relation to Late Twentieth Century Church Reform” (Ph.D. dissertation, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, 2010).

9. Although the final volume bore the date of 1957, it was published in 1959, when its editor was Pope. He regularly spoke of it as his fifty-year project and task.

of the subsequent ordinances, Borromeo ordered parishes to have a proper confessional installed within 30 days and to establish within two months a school of Christian doctrine governed by statutes modeled on those of the schools of the archdiocese of Milan.

The 1936 introduction by Roncalli to the first published part gave the historical context of the records he was publishing. But he found the practical aspects of the visitation imbued with a profound spiritual dimension in its activation and direction of pastoral zeal. It was an era in which one central event stood out.

The Council of Trent offered the spectacle of a vigorous renewal of Catholic life . . . [in] a period of mysterious and fruitful rejuvenation and, what seemed still more marvelous, of efforts by the most remarkable individuals of the Church to implement the new legislation. The pastoral ardor burning in them drove them to realize as perfectly as possible the conciliar mandates aimed at the perfection and spiritual elevation of the clergy and people. . . . [It was] a time of potent reawakening of energies that has no equal in any other period of church history.

This reawakening became manifest in the provincial councils and synods . . . among which those of the Province of Milan remained classic examples of applying and implementing the Tridentine legislation in an entire region. But it was above all evident in the pastoral visitations by bishops of their own dioceses and in the apostolic visitations carried out with higher authority under a direct mandate of the Pope.¹⁰

This account of the post-Tridentine era in Roncalli's native Lombardy stresses the Church's potential to become ever again rejuvenated, which was a centerpiece of Roncalli's theological vision of the church's nature and life. This he held dear and loved to articulate on occasions all through his lifetime, for example, in preaching on Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost; in interpreting major figures and events of church history; and in October 1958, just before he and the other cardinals entered the conclave to elect the successor of Pope Pius XII. At that moment, Roncalli expressed his hopes of what the new pope, whoever he may be, would bring to the Church. This should be "not a solution of continuity, but instead of progress in pursuing the youthfulness of holy Church, whose mission is always to lead souls to the divine heights of realizing the Gospel and sanctifying human life in view of eternal life."¹¹ After his election as Pope John XXIII, he undertook to promote such a rejuvenation, similar to

10. Roncalli, ed., *Gli atti della visita* 1/1: xxiv. An "apostolic" visitation by papal mandate would include examining and, in cases, laying down corrections of the ministry of the diocesan bishop, whereas this was not foreseen in an episcopal visitation of the bishop's own diocese.

11. Cited here is Roncalli's letter about his prayer before the conclave, sent from Rome on October 16, 1958, the second day of preconclave congregations, to the rector of the Seminary of Venice (*Pace e vangelo* 2:754 n. 756). Roncalli's diaries published in the Italian national edition contain at least 20 passages from 1903 to 1960 on the Church's perennial youthfulness.

what followed Trent, by making it a central objective of the Second Vatican Council that he convened.

Of particular interest on the western side of the Atlantic is the fact that the earliest known occasion on which Roncalli wrote about ecclesial youthfulness was a notebook entry in which he copied parts of an address given in Rome in March 1900 by Bishop John Lancaster Spalding of Peoria. Roncalli wrote out extracts exuding Spalding's optimism about the "better things . . . before us, not behind us," about the new times that require new persons, and about the ancient faith that requires, "if it is to be held vitally, [that] we celebrate it with an energy that is wholly youthful."¹² In the last days of Leo XIII, a circle of thinkers in Rome was fascinated by "the Americanists," like Cardinal James Gibbons and Bishops John Ireland and John Lancaster Spalding; Roncalli, then in his early twenties, shared, at least for a moment, that fascination with these leaders of the young church across the Atlantic.¹³

The Spiritual Impact on Roncalli by Models of Church Service in the Tridentine Era

The writings of Angelo Roncalli attest to the spiritual impact on him of the ideals and labors of three individuals of the post-Tridentine era—one a historian (Cesare Baronio) and two episcopal implementers of Trent's reforms (Carlo Borromeo and Gregorio Barbarigo).

Cesare Baronio

A year after beginning to teach church history in the seminary of Bergamo, Roncalli gave the inaugural lecture of the academic year 1907–1908 on Cardinal Cesare Baronio, a disciple of Philip Neri in the Oratory of Rome; the lecture came out the next year in a journal and was republished in 1961.¹⁴ Baronio was the author-compiler of twelve volumes of the *Annales ecclesiastici* (1588–1607), an account of the first twelve centuries of the church's history.

In his lecture, Roncalli presented Baronio, in his resoluteness and self-effacing dedication, as emblematic of this time of Catholic renewal. He gave to the church of

12. *Giornale dell'anima: Soliloqui, note e diari spirituali*, ed. and ann. Alberto Melloni. Edizione nazionale dei diari di Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli—Giovanni XXIII 1 (Bologna: Istituto per le scienze religiose, 2003) 213–14 n. 25, citing the Spalding excerpt to further illustrate Roncalli's notes during his retreat of December 1903, before his diaconate ordination.

13. Spalding had lectured at the Church of the Gesù in Rome from a text translated and published in Italian later that year in the journal *Rassegna nazionale*. The original came out as "Education and the Future of Religion," in Spalding's collection of essays, *Religion, Agnosticism, and Education* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1902) 147–92.

14. Angelo Roncalli, "Il cardinale Cesare Baronio," *La scuola cattolica* 36 (1908) 3–29, republished separately as *Il cardinale Cesare Baronio* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1961).

his era an essential element, namely, a well-documented and cogently argued church-historical exposition. A generation earlier, the Lutherans of Magdeburg had produced their history of the church down to 1400, featuring the suppression of pure New Testament Christianity by floods of papally sanctioned abuses, with only scattered witnesses to the truth (*testes veritatis*) in the pre-Reformation centuries. Many Catholics felt disarmed and humiliated, but Baronio stepped into the breach to show that in the field of history the Catholic cause was not lost. He did this by going beyond mere chronicling to offer vast documentation and incisive argumentation. In a characteristic image, Roncalli had Baronio recomposing the dry bones of texts and facts, clothing them, and making them sing the harmonies of a glorious past “through which the Church was continuing its perennial song of youth and life.”¹⁵

Baronio was relevant in the first decade of the 20th century, which for Roncalli was a troubled time because of historicist and Modernist currents of deconstructive higher criticism. Catholics have to meet this challenge, as Baronio did in his time, with well-grounded historical scholarship, already promoted by Pope Leo XIII, and they must show no fear of the results of historical studies. Baronio remained present to Roncalli, and in 1925 his episcopal motto, *Obedientia et pax*, came from Baronio’s motto as cardinal.

Charles Borromeo

In admiring and striving to imitate St. Charles Borromeo, Angelo Roncalli joined vast numbers of Italian priests and especially bishops, who revered Borromeo during his lifetime and long after his death in 1584.¹⁶ But as church historian and editor of the records of Borromeo’s visitation of Bergamo in 1575, Roncalli had his own perspective on the man he once called a “colossus of *pastoral* sanctity.”¹⁷

In introducing the first part of the records of the visitation, Roncalli wrote in 1936 of Borromeo as “the teacher of bishops,” who both instructed on and exemplified episcopal

15. Roncalli, *Il cardinale Cesare Baronio* 42.

16. See Giuseppe Alberigo, “Carlo Borromeo come modello di vescovo nella chiesa post-tridentina,” *Revista storica italiana* 79 (1967) 1031–52; and Alberto Melloni, “History, Pastorate, and Theology: The Impact of Carlo Borromeo upon A. G. Roncalli/Pope John XXIII,” in *San Carlo Borromeo: Catholic Reform and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. John M. Headley and John B. Tomaro (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1988) 277–99. It is indicative that Hubert Jedin’s classic essay on the ideal bishop of the Catholic Reform concludes with Borromeo and even inserts the shrewd remarks of a contemporary on what *not* to imitate in his life and ministry. Hubert Jedin, “Das Bischofsideal der katholischen Reformation,” originally 1942, reprinted in Jedin’s *Kirche des Glaubens—Kirche der Geschichte: Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Vorträge*, 2 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1966) 2:75–117.

17. From an article by Roncalli on Borromeo in Bergamo’s *La vita diocesana*, November 4, 1909, cited by Melloni, “History, Pastorate, and Theology” 279, emphasis added. Roncalli instinctively stressed the pastoral side of St. Charles, while omitting his rigorous asceticism.

life and service at a high level in the decades after Trent. The *acta* now coming out to document Borromeo's activity in Bergamo will, Roncalli claims, show Trent's reform mandates being applied in detail and will reveal Borromeo as a zealous pastor devoting his intelligence and practical sense to grasp situations and give admonitions and directives full of pastoral wisdom. Borromeo acted in Bergamo, with dignity and resolve, to restore Christian life across the variegated span of its forms of expression. The visitation *acta* permitted Roncalli to contemplate "apostolic and pastoral wisdom" in action, which he clearly aspired to have as marks of his own pastoral service.

In the records of the visitation, he [Borromeo] himself appears, alive and operative. He is here . . . as one whom his contemporaries encountered and venerated for his high level of intelligence as a man of government who sees everything and gets to the point, along with the noble, elevated heart of a bishop and a saint. He emerges from these pages in his full stature, and with him a whole world comes alive around him. The documents make known his collaborators. We hear the voices of the clergy and the people, of men and women of every social class, who receive him, who present themselves to him, to whom he gives admonitions and directives. . . . This is the Christian people that remains the same, always quite sensitive to holiness when it passes in their midst. More than the directives laid down by councils and synods, the records of the visitation give the correct and authentic tone of this act of apostolic and pastoral wisdom, which Borromeo knew how to combine with his inner religious fervor. He had the exquisite art of providing for everything with the proper means to bring ordered results, perfect organization, and doing this calmly in spite of certain oppositions he had to deal with, but which he met with great dignity and goodness.¹⁸

Over two decades later, Angelo Roncalli was elected pope on October 28, 1958, and was pleased to schedule his coronation mass on November 4, the day of the liturgical memorial of St. Charles. His homily first expanded on the image of Christ the Good Shepherd, which would be his ideal as pope. He then devoted three paragraphs to Borromeo, whom he had long venerated. St. Charles lived in a time when the Church suffered a weakening of its vigor and had to gain new energy. In such an era, St. Charles worked for restoration, especially by promoting observance of the decrees of the Council of Trent. He is rightly called *Magister Episcoporum*, and he manifested admirably "episcopal sanctity."¹⁹ Such was John XXIII's emphatic attachment to the great pastoral figure of Charles Borromeo.

Gregorio Barbarigo

A third Tridentine figure dear to Roncalli was the 17th-century Venetian patrician Gregorio Barbarigo, who was bishop for seven years in Bergamo and then 33 years in Padua until he died in 1697. Barbarigo had been beatified in 1761, and John XXIII

18. *Gli atti della visita* 1/1:xxxvi–xxxvii.

19. Pope John XXIII, "Homily at the Solemn Pontifical Mass of His Coronation," in *Discorsi, messaggi, colloqui del Santo Padre Giovanni XXIII*, 6 vols.; vol. 1, *Primo anno del pontificato: 28 ottobre 1958–28 ottobre 1959* (Vatican City: Vatican Polyglot, 1960) 13–14.

canonized him two centuries later in 1960, after having for many years held him among his personal patrons and protectors.²⁰ A particular attraction lay in Barbarigo's six-year visitation of the diocese of Bergamo. In a letter of October 1960, Pope John even suggested to the bishop of Bergamo that a publication of the *acta* of Barbarigo's episcopal visitation could make possible a fascinating comparison with the apostolic visitation by Borromeo nearly a century earlier, but nothing came of this.²¹

At Barbarigo's canonization mass in May 1960, Pope John said that the new saint would now radiate into the universal church a divine ray of light from his "pastoral holiness" (*santità pastorale*), which aids people toward salvation and extends the Lord's kingdom. Barbarigo, John pointed out, imitated Borromeo, by ongoing application of the Tridentine norms in governing his dioceses. He was also modern, in having gained knowledge at a good 17th-century level of physics and mathematics and even of Oriental languages. But under these externals were Barbarigo's holiness of priestly virtues and flaming charity toward his people as their father and shepherd (*pater et pastor*).²²

To conclude this section on Trent's formative influence on Roncalli/Pope John, we have the introduction he composed for the fifth and final part of the published *acta* of the reforming visitation of Bergamo under Bishop Charles Borromeo. Roncalli wrote the short preface 80 days before he was elected pope; in the text he alluded once more to his characteristic ecclesiology of the church-in-history with its potential for rejuvenating developments. Referring to the five volumes with their documentary record from 1575, he wrote:

From the complex whole and from the particular points of these papers, a final impression springs forth, namely, a fact about the Catholic Church throughout all the variations of persons and eras of history. It did have times of defective adherence to its principles, when it gave in to compromises in accord with our weakened human nature and was in danger of decline and weakened resistance. But it has as well always looked toward its own renewal and toward recapturing its youthfulness, enlivened by a holy passion for authentic spiritual advancement. This positive reality of the church, as enlightened by evangelical truth and seeking superior values, gives to souls and to whole peoples guidance and encouragement for living and acting well.²³

Thus Roncalli wrote in August 1958. Six months later, as Pope John XXIII, he will announce that he intends to convene a synod of the diocese of Rome and an

20. See *Giornale dell'anima* 298, on the occasion of Roncalli's episcopal ordination in 1925, and 465 n. 33, recalling Barbarigo among the saints and blessed, to whom his godfather Xaverio taught him as a young boy to turn for help and protection.

21. Letter of October 24, 1960, to Bergamo's Bishop Giuseppe Piazzi, cited by Alberto Melloni, in *Papa Giovanni: Un Cristiano e il suo concilio* (Turin: Einaudi, 2009) 112 n. 113.

22. Pope John XXIII, "Homily during the Canonization of St. Gregorio Barbarigo, May 26, 1960," in *Scritti, messaggi, colloqui*, vol. 2, *Il Secondo anno del pontificato: 28 ottobre 1959–28 ottobre 1960* (Vatican City: Vatican Polyglot, 1961) 335–65, at 360–62.

23. Roncalli, ed., *Gli atti della visita* II/3:v, completed at Sotto il Monte, August 5, 1958.

ecumenical council of the whole church. The objectives of both were present for Roncalli already in the Borromean *acta*: recapturing ecclesial youthfulness, correcting substandard practice, giving the impetus of evangelical truth toward superior values, and helping souls with guidance and encouragement for living well. All these sprang from an idealized vision of Trent's reforms and their impact when they were applied by bishops like Charles Borromeo and Gregorio Barbarigo.

Pope John XXIII Giving Vatican II Its Objectives

In 1960, ten days before Pentecost, Pope John canonized Gregorio Barbarigo and underscored his pastoral holiness. Pentecost 1960, then, became a major date for Vatican II. On that day John established ten preparatory commissions, two secretariats, and a central preparatory commission, to work on draft texts that could come before Vatican II for deliberation, revision, further amendment, approval, and promulgation.

It is a commonplace of Vatican II history that as these preparatory bodies took shape, with their cardinal presidents, secretaries, members, and consultors, only a few of them were ready to pursue the objective of a renewing impact upon the Catholic Church and the world beyond. Still, there were pockets of orientation toward renewal—for example, in the Preparatory commissions on Liturgical Worship and on the Lay Apostolate. A particular ferment enlivened the newly created Secretariat for Promoting the Unity of Christians. But the other eight commissions, especially the Preparatory Theological Commission, were marked by narrow horizons, by desires to confirm recent papal encyclicals and current canon law, and by suspicion regarding the currents of renewal of Catholic thought that had been flowing during the middle decades of the 20th century—in the biblical, liturgical, patristic, pastoral, and ecumenical fields.

From 1960 to 1962, Pope John spoke on several occasions in ways contrasting with much of the document preparation going on in the preconciliar commissions. He spoke of a church-wide rejuvenation that he hoped would result from the coming council—recalling what followed the Council of Trent. In this he was setting the stage for a major early drama at Vatican II.

On three occasions, Pope John gave ordered accounts of his aims for the council, while hoping that these would take hold among future leaders and members of the council:

1. At Christmas 1961, John formally convened Vatican II to meet in 1962. He notes the existence of crises in society, in which “distrustful souls see only darkness burdening the face of the earth,” but he reaffirms his trust in Christ “who has not abandoned the world that he redeemed.”²⁴ Where there is spiritual poverty in the world, this contrasts with the vibrant vitality of the Church of Christ. (John wants the future participants in the council to think well of themselves and of their potential for good.) The

24. Constitution *Humanae salutis*, convening the council during the new year 1962, citing from *Council Day Book Vatican II: Sessions 1 and 2*, ed. Floyd Anderson (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1965) 6–9 (Latin original in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 54 [1962] 5–13).

coming council will promote the sanctification of church members and articulate revealed truth. It will turn to the problems and worries of the world, concerned to heighten in people a proper sense of their human dignity, to reaffirm the moral order and Catholic social doctrine, and so to benefit family life, education, and civil society. John wants his own optimistic ideals, based in his view of history, to inspire the council. But, as 1962 began, John knew of hardly any church leaders around the world who were embracing his high expectations for the coming council.

2. A month before Vatican II opened Pope John spoke on the radio about the council.²⁵ Seven draft documents were by then in the hands of the council's members, and John had studied the texts. He states the common expectation that the council will concern itself with the Church's vitality within by presenting the light of its doctrine and the sanctifying power of grace.

But John then spoke expansively on issues outside the Church, about human aspirations that would find their echo in the council: issues of the family, work, peace within nations, education, culture, social duties, and the freedom that corresponds to human dignity. This longer portion of the address featured topics not in the draft texts already sent to the council members. The contrast was striking and had to raise the question whether John did not have serious reservations about the first draft texts. His heart seemed directed to reaching out in solidarity to embrace the wider world of the human family.

3. Then, as Vatican II opened, Pope John gave his famous inaugural address of October 11, 1962.²⁶ One objective of the assembly, he said, is to enhance Catholic teaching with a view to the penetration of souls. Truth can be reformulated. The council should undertake this, and in doing so, it should act as a magisterium that is especially pastoral in nature (*cuius indoles praesertim pastoralis est*). During the council's first working period in 1962, this little definition came to have notable influence on the assembly of council members. Many of them began to think and act as a preeminently pastoral magisterium, leading them to demand revised draft documents corresponding to pastoral objectives—in doctrine formulated in a manner capable of deepening personal adherence and in decrees orienting church members to dedicated service as a leaven for good in the world.

One month into the council's work, on November 14, 1962, 98 percent of the members voted for the basic acceptance of a draft calling for a wide-ranging liturgical renewal. This text would be the basis of their work, in spite of objections voiced by prominent individuals in the previous three weeks of debate. Next on the agenda was the Theological Commission's draft text on the word of God and its transmission in

25. Address of September 11, 1962, in *Council Day Book Vatican II: Sessions 1 and 2* 18–21 (Italian original in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 54 [1962] 678–85).

26. The original Latin text is in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 14 (1962) 786–95; an English translation, with useful section headings, is given in *Council Day Book Vatican II: Sessions 1 and 2* 25–29. I revised and corrected the translation for inclusion in my *Doing Theology* (New York: Paulist, 2009) 141–51.

tradition and Scripture. In four days of debate on this text Pope John's pastoral aim of renewal began to function forcefully as a criterion of critical judgment on the work of the Preparatory Theological Commission.²⁷

For example, Cardinal Josef Frings (Cologne) said that the tone of the prepared text was that of a professor defending theses. It lacks that "pastoral note with which the Holy Father ardently wants Council statements to be imbued." Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger (Montréal) said that fear of errors underlay the text, making it dissonant with "the spirit of positive renewal desired by the Pope in this Council." Cardinal Augustin Bea (Unity Secretariat) charged that with this text the council would be failing in its work to give Catholic teaching a fresh expression to affect souls, for as the pope said, our magisterium is "especially pastoral."²⁸ Similar appeals to Pope John's statement of the council's aims were heard in the following days. Of 88 speakers on the schema, 32 declared the text unsatisfactory—a little over one-third (36%). But the critics had a weighty argument, since 18 of them appealed to Pope John's pastoral objective as a main reason for setting aside the draft. When a motion was made on November 20 to remove the text from the agenda, 62 percent agreed, showing that the appeals to the pope's objectives were taking hold in the minds of many council members.

On November 21, 1962, Pope John removed from the immediate agenda the prepared text on tradition and Scripture as sources of revelation. For its revision he ordered the Theological Commission to cooperate with the Unity Secretariat of Cardinal Bea in preparing a revision that would better serve the pastoral aims then taking hold in the council.²⁹ One reason for including the Bea Secretariat was the existence of its own attractive text on the renewing power of the word of God in the life of the Church, which the Central Preparatory Commission had approved June 20, 1962, but which in November was not yet in the hands of the council members.³⁰

As Vatican II's first period ended, John laid down guidelines that the commissions were to follow in recasting their texts—in the activity aptly named Vatican II's "second preparation." To give the commissions their criteria of revision, John's mandate

27. I recount the interventions of November 14–19 in greater detail in "Vatican II Taking Hold of Its (and Pope John's) Council Goals, September 1962–May 1963," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 19 (2012) 172–86, at 180–83.

28. Second Vatican Council, *Acta Synodalia* (henceforth AS) I/3, 34 (Frings), 41 (Léger), and 49 (Bea). But at the end, Archbishop Morcillo Gonzalez spoke for 47 Spanish bishops who judged *De fontibus* acceptable as a foundation for the council's work (AS I/3, 59–62), as had Cardinals Ernesto Ruffini (Palermo), Giuseppe Siri (Genoa), and Fernando Quiroga y Palacios (Compostella) earlier (AS I/3, 37–38, 38–39, 39–41).

29. AS I/3, 259.

30. I treated the Secretariat's draft text, *De verbo Dei: Schema Decreti Pastoralis*, in "Scripture Reading Urged *vehementer* (DV No. 25): Background and Development," *Theological Studies* 74 (September 2013) 555–80, at 560–64, offering as well the text in English at 573–77.

cited a portion of his opening discourse, centered on the council's preeminently pastoral teaching office.³¹ The second preparation in the first half of 1963 turned out 14 revised texts, and with them Vatican II was on the way toward realizing to a considerable extent the aims John XXIII had set before it. By June 1963 the council members received by mail twelve revised schemas of constitutions or decrees, that is, on seminaries, Catholic schools, priestly ministry, the lay apostolate, bishops and diocesan governance, the pastoral care of souls, religious life, the Eastern Catholic Churches, divine revelation, the church (two chapters on its mystery and hierarchy), ecumenism, and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Two further schemas went out in August on the sacrament of marriage and on the Church in further chapters on the laity and religious.³² Struggles and drama remained, but by appropriating John's pastoral objective, Vatican II was overcoming its faulty first preparation and turning decisively toward being a pastoral council of *aggiornamento*.

Conclusion: Two Remarks

Because Trent's reform decrees had a broad impact on the local churches that he knew well, Angelo Roncalli saw Trent as a model for the Catholic Church even in the mid-20th century. To realize this, he had to contest a notion of the Church's teaching office focused wholly on doctrinal correctness and the exclusion of error. The pastoral dimension of the teaching's formative influence had to be present all through the process of doctrinal formulation. Moreover, to make Vatican II a comprehensive council, it imitated Trent by adding to doctrinal clarifications, especially those of the Constitution on the Liturgy and the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, a broad program of renewed practice on the local level of worship, ministerial service, and moral and spiritual instruction—especially in its several “implementing decrees” on the roles of service within the ecclesial body of God's people.³³

31. AS I/1, 96–98, with a partial English translation in *Council Day Book Vatican II: Sessions 1 and 2* 114.

32. Jan Grootaers gives an ample narrative in “The Drama Continues between the Acts: the ‘Second Preparation’ and Its Opponents,” in *History of Vatican II*, 5 vols., ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997) 2:359–514. Grootaers's reference to “opponents” indicates resistance to the new directions, especially in certain council commissions in which influential members held doggedly to the drafts of the pre-conciliar preparation.

33. *Sacrosanctum concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, besides its profound content, has in itself the structure of a doctrinal clarification oriented to reform (chap. 1) followed by “implementing decrees” of that reform (chaps. 2–7). It is in this respect a miniature version of a large block of the council's documentary production, made up of *Lumen gentium*, the Constitution on the Church, and the several decrees aiming at implementation in the ecclesial areas of ecumenical action, missionary activity, episcopal ministry, formation of and service by priests, renewal of religious life, and the lay apostolate.

Finally, Vatican II was much too large an undertaking to be adequately explained under one rubric or by a single finality. Besides being a council of pastoral *aggiornamento*, as Pope John oriented it, the council also became a doctrinal council of ecclesiology, expressing in fresh ways the Church's self-definition and its relation to different "others." This orientation was inevitable, and above all it was intended to remedy Vatican I's one-sided legacy on papal primacy isolated from the episcopate and to harvest the rich growth of theology concerning the Church from 1920 to 1960.³⁴ Further, Vatican II became, in its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, in its Decree on Ecumenism, and in its Declarations on Religious Liberty and Non-Christian Religions, the organ issuing what Joseph Ratzinger astutely called a "counter-syllabus" to the tradition introduced by Pope Pius IX's "Syllabus" of the errors of the modern age (1864).³⁵ These further achievements belong to the essence of Vatican II, but along with these it still retained and pursued the Roncallian aim that is stated first in no. 1 of the council's first document, on the Catholic liturgy, namely, "to impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian lives of the faithful."³⁶ Angelo Roncalli called this "rejuvenation," a reality he found foreshadowed in the post-Tridentine era.

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34. Examples of this reflection are Romano Guardini, *The Catholic and the Church* (1922; London: Sheed & Ward, 1935); Émile Mersch, *The Whole Christ* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1938), and *Theology of the Mystical Body* (1936; St. Louis: Herder, 1951); Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (1938; London: Burns & Oates, 1950), and *The Splendor of the Church* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1956); Otto Semmelroth, *Die Kirche als Ursakrament* (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1955); and Lucien Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul* (1942; New York: Herder & Herder, 1959).
35. The "counter-syllabus" reversed the negativity about modern culture and political life expressed by Pope Pius IX; by the preface added to Vatican I's Constitution on the Catholic Faith (1870, see *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* 804–5); and by many popular accounts of modern cultural and intellectual history from a Catholic perspective. In this view, decline proceeded step by step downward through rejections of the Church (Protestants), of Christ (critical Enlightenment), and of God (19th century, e.g., Marx, Nietzsche), leaving outside the Church a confusing chaos about answers to life's major questions. Vatican II selectively received developments of the modern age and indicated ways of integrating them into the Catholic vision of faith and human life. See Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987) 381, to which my text above adds the Decree on Ecumenism, which formally changes long-held attitudes while implementing practically *Lumen gentium*, nos. 8 and 15.
36. The especially invigorating or rejuvenating passages of the Vatican II corpus are *Sacrosanctum concilium* nos. 5–19; *Lumen gentium*, chap. 5, "The Universal Call to Holiness"; *Dei verbum*, especially chaps. 1 and 6; and *Gaudium et spes*, all through part 1, particularly in its "Christological credo" (no. 10, para. 2) and its remarkable passages interweaving Christology with the believer's self-understanding and vocation in nos. 22, 32, 38, and 45.

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