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The Ghost of Modernism: Evocations of Anti-Modernist Doctrinal Documents at Vatican II

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Abstract

This article argues that Modernism was the pivotal "ghost" at Vatican II. Evocations of Modernism and anti-Modernist doctrinal documents on the council floor were numerous and often heated. Such evocations occurred in virtually every debate where the development of doctrine was at stake. The council majority's dismissal, indeed rejection, of the anti-Modernist paradigm constituted a kind of revolution of theological methodology. Understanding how anti-Modernist doctrinal documents were evoked at Vatican II sheds important light on the council and its achievements, compromises, and failures.

Keywords

Yves Congar, *Dei Verbum*, development of doctrine, ecclesiology, Modernism, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, religious liberty, Vatican II

The late John O'Malley's overview of the Second Vatican Council closes with the intriguing image of a crowd of ghosts "hauntingly present" in St. Peter's.[1] O'Malley's specters are not ideas, but highly consequential

1. John O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 293.

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individuals. These "ghosts" range from the pope most cited at Vatican II (Pius XII), to key theological sources like Möhler and Newman, to epoch-defining intellectuals like Darwin and Marx, to political villains like Mussolini and Hitler.[2] O'Malley's point was that Vatican II was not just a debate about the correct future path for the church in light of the new challenges of the modern world (*aggiornamento*) or a fresh reexamination of the sources of the Christian faith (biblical and patristic *ressourcement*). The conciliar event also saw the church wrestle with "movements and aspirations of more recent vintage."[3] In dealing constructively—for the most part—with these ghosts, Vatican II "both fulfilled and rejected the long nineteenth century."[4]

The numerous nineteenth- and twentieth-century ghosts O'Malley highlights have some conspicuous company, however, that stretches back into the eighteenth century and the Age of Enlightenment.[5] Jansenism, for example, was also a ghost at Vatican II. A number of scholars have used language similar to O'Malley's to describe, in general ways, how the legacy of past thinkers and ideas in church history have influenced or determined later debates.[6] While these are helpful generalities, for the purposes of Vatican II studies we can define a "ghost" more specifically: A ghost on the council floor was a phenomenon in the church's collective memory that influenced the drafting of the Vatican II texts and subsequent debate over them.[7]

Following this definition, I have argued that the 1786 Jansenist Synod of Pistoia, refracted through the papal bull *Auctorem Fidei* (which condemned eighty-five propositions attributed to that synod), was a ghost at Vatican II insofar as it impacted discussion in the *aula*, most significantly in the debate over episcopal collegiality.[8] It might seem that the memory of renegade Jansenists in eighteenth-century Tuscany would

2. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 293.
3. O'Malley, 293.
4. O'Malley, 293. Vatican II was also, and more immediately, an ecclesial response to the peculiarly momentous and tumultuous preceding half-century, which had seen two world wars, the rise of Fascism and Communism, the Great Depression, the Spanish Civil War, the Holocaust, the atomic bomb, a wave of decolonization, and the beginning of the Cold War. See Stephen Schloesser, "Against Forgetting: Memory, History, Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 67, no. 2 (2006): 279–319 https://doi.org/10.1177/004056390606700203.
5. Shaun Blanchard, "The Ghost of Pistoia: Evocations of *Auctorem Fidei* in the Debate over Episcopal Collegiality at Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2018): 60–85, https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563917744651.
6. One example is Francis Oakley, who sees the "ghost of Bellarmine" as the only survivor of the bitter ecclesiological wars that intermittently raged between conciliarists and papalists from the late Middle Ages to the First Vatican Council. See Oakley, *The Conciliarist Tradition: Constitutionalism in the Catholic Church, 1300–1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 216.
7. Blanchard, "The Ghost of Pistoia," 60–61.
8. Shaun Blanchard, *The Synod of Pistoia and Vatican II: Jansenism and the Struggle for Catholic Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

have been obscure.[9] However, the legacy of the *Pistorienses*, solemnly condemned in a lengthy papal bull in the wake of the French Revolution, was actually well known to the prelates in St. Peter's and their theological advisors, or *periti* ("experts"). They were drilled on the Denzinger handbook[10] and educated in an ultramontane "papal catechesis" that particularly emphasized the major interventions of the Roman Magisterium from 1789 to the present.[11] The shadow of long-dead Jansenist rebels, however, paled in comparison to the much more recent struggle over the phenomenon of Catholic Modernism, dubbed "the synthesis of all heresies" by Pope Pius X in the encyclical *Pascendi Domini Gregis* (1907).[12]

The most neuralgic specters haunting the council floor were not the ghosts of people, but of ideas: the memories of reformist agendas the Catholic Church had rejected in the past, including Protestantism, Jansenism, and Modernism. Protestantism was in a complicated category of its own for several reasons. While the Reformation was a (traumatic) historical memory, Protestantism was a present reality. The demands of modern pluralistic and tolerant states and the increasingly official Catholic commitment to ecumenism made Vatican II's engagement with Protestantism sui generis. Because of the council's explicitly "ecumenical turn,"[13] Catholics were far less likely to dismiss Protestant doctrinal positions as errors fit only for condemnation, or Protestant-sounding language merely as a bugbear to be avoided. On the other hand, Jansenism and Modernism were remembered as internal rebels and fifth columns, and were subject to no such irenic reevaluation. Long used as slurs within the church, the memories of rebellious and dreary Jansenists or arrogant and heretical Modernists could be weaponized: dredged up to tar a contemporary opponent. The term Modernist in particular was a lightning rod, since some Catholics believed Modernism was a theological and ideological virus that had been checked but never really contained,

9. As emphasized recently by John McGreevy, the obscurity of the Synod of Pistoia and related Enlightenment-era reform movements in the Catholic world is testament to the remarkable rise and consequent hegemony of ultramontanism in the post-1789 world. See McGreevy, *Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2022), 12, 22, 26–27, 36, 75.
10. Then, as now, the Denzinger doctrinal handbook (first edition: 1854) prints all the condemnations of *Auctorem Fidei*, with an abridged introduction. See *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43rd edition, originally compiled by Heinrich Denzinger; revised, enlarged, and, in collaboration with Helmut Hoping, edited by Peter Hünermann for the original bilingual edition; and edited by Robert Fastiggi and Anne Englund Nash for the English edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), §§2600–2696 (old numbering: 1500–1596).
11. Pietro Stella, ed., *Il Giansenismo in Italia II/ I: La bolla* Auctorem Fidei *(1794) nella storia dell'Ultramontanismo; Saggio introduttivo e documenti* (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1995), v.
12. Pope Pius X's famous characterization of Modernism (*omnium haereseon conlectum*) appears in §39 of *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (September 8, 1907), https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_19070908_pascendi-dominici-gregis.html.
13. Jared Wicks, *Investigating Vatican II: Its Theologians, Ecumenical Turn, and Biblical Commitment* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018).

much less defeated. They imagined many reformist Catholics were more or less reviving Modernism under new names and forms.[14]

This article is a companion to my prior examination of the ghost of Jansenism at Vatican II. Anti-Jansenist doctrinal documents were rarely evoked at Vatican II, although the bull *Auctorem Fidei* was consequential in a few key moments of debate. Evocations of Modernism and anti-Modernist doctrinal documents, on the other hand, were numerous, often heated, and involved virtually every debate at the council where the development of doctrine or discipline was at stake. This included discussions of the liturgy, divine revelation, biblical criticism, and the "freedom" of scholars in the church, as well as ecclesiological topics such as episcopal collegiality, the relationship between church and state, religious liberty, the role of the laity, and the entire complex of church-world issues ultimately dealt with in *Gaudium et Spes*.

The concept of a doctrinal document's "controlling function" can also help us analyze the significance of evocations of particular magisterial texts in conciliar debates. A document's "controlling function" refers to a past doctrinal pronouncement that continues to frame Catholic debate by setting boundaries of discussion.[15] For example, no council father at Vatican II challenged the infallibility of the pope because the judgment of Vatican I's *Pastor Aeternus* (1870) was considered definitive and thus had a very strong controlling function in discussions of the papacy. On the other hand, the condemnation of the proposition that Bible-reading was "for all" in Pope Clement XI's anti-Jansenist bull *Unigenitus* (1713) did not exert a controlling function at Vatican II, and so those voting in favor of *Dei Verbum* felt free to assert virtually the opposite position.[16]

A study of the "ghost of Modernism" at Vatican II requires that we reckon with the centrality of an anti-Modernist theological paradigm for some of the council fathers, as well as with the desire by many to leave behind or even repudiate such a framework. We must also examine the controlling function of the main anti-Modernist doctrinal documents—chiefly a trio from the pontificate of Pius X: the aforementioned 1907 encyclical *Pascendi*, the Holy Office's syllabus of Modernist errors called *Lamentabili* (1907), and the anti-Modernist oath (often cited as *Sacrorum Antistitum*, a 1910 *motu proprio* of Pius X), which was still required of ordinands when the council convened.[17]

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14. For example, the great Dominican Scholastic Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange's 1946 attack on the *nouvelle théologie* was titled "The New Theology: Where Is It Going?" The answer, ominously, was back to Modernism. See Garrigou-Lagrange's "La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?," *Angelicum* 23, 3/4 (1946): 126–45. Such high-profile rebukes helped lead to Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Humani Generis* (1950), which was widely interpreted as a negative judgment on the *nouvelle théologie* project.
15. Blanchard, "The Ghost of Pistoia," 68n32.
16. For the relevant condemnation, *Unigenitus* 80, see Denzinger-Hünermann 2480. For a discussion of this complex test case see Blanchard, *The Synod of Pistoia and Vatican II*, 191–95.
17. Scholarship on Modernism is vast. For an excellent introduction see Claus Arnold, *Kleine Geschichte des Modernismus* (Herder: Freiburg im Breisgau, 2007). Arnold includes a helpful timeline (pp. 144–46) and a topical, annotated bibliography (pp. 147–57). Still central to the study of Modernism and the development of Catholic theology is Hubert Wolf, ed., *Antimodernismus und Modernismus in der Katholischen Kirche: Beiträge zum Theologiegeschichtlichen Vorfeld des II. Vatikanums* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1998).

Development of doctrine, by its very nature, raises unresolved or difficult chapters from the church's past. In this article, I will argue that Modernism was *the* critical doctrinal ghost at the council. I proceed chronologically, charting and analyzing evocations of Modernism throughout the four sessions of Vatican II, from October 1962 to December 1965. An article of this length, however, must prioritize conceptual clarity and the analysis of a limited number of representative moments over an (impossible) attempt at exhaustiveness. Additionally, the article will mostly restrict itself to public interventions, spoken or written, during Vatican II's sessions themselves. I can only occasionally reference the preparatory periods, the intersessions, or the myriad other avenues for tracking the twists and turns of the council and its numerous participants and onlookers (letters, diaries, accounts of conversations and lectures given outside the *aula*, press reports, etc.). A full study of this topic would of course demand a monograph of considerable length.

My contention is that unlike Protestants (who were honored guests at a council committed to ecumenism) and Jansenists (who were extinct), the ghost of Modernism was particularly neuralgic since some members of the council minority believed Modernism *was* a concrete contemporary reality and feared it had successfully infiltrated the church. Indeed, the crucial year for the Modernist crisis—1907, when *Pascendi* and *Lamentabili* were published—was a mere fifty-five years from the opening of the Second Vatican Council, recent enough for some council fathers to remember. The seminary education and ecclesiastical careers of all the Catholics gathered in St. Peter's had been shaped in some way by anti-Modernism, and the anti-Modernist oath was obligatory upon ordination to the priesthood.

Much of the majority bloc, on the other hand, saw the term "Modernist" functioning mainly as a baseless slur, or as a red herring weaponized in the attempt to shut down necessary conversations around church reform.[18] The majority's desire to leave behind the anti-Modernist paradigm was ultimately successful. The victory of *ressourcement* over the status quo can be illustrated rather poignantly through tracking evocations of the anti-Modernist doctrinal documents and analyzing their controlling function. Understanding the legacy of Modernism and how anti-Modernist doctrinal documents were evoked at Vatican II sheds important light on the council and its achievements, compromises, and failures.

"A Modernism Which Is Already Dead Is Slain yet Again": The Chain of Errors and the Anti-Modernist Worldview of the Council Minority

On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, many Catholic prelates and theologians still held an anti-Modernist theological paradigm, including some in key ecclesiastical

18. The numerical descriptors "minority" and "majority" are preferable to ideological labels like "conservative" or "progressive." While these preferred terms are ultimately heuristic tools, they do refer to something quantifiable—how groups of council fathers voted. Majority council fathers and *periti* generally supported the principles of *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement*. The minority typically opposed deviations from the status quo in style or substance. These camps were fluid, changing in make-up and emphasis as the council progressed and different issues were debated.

positions in Rome. Such a paradigm, however, was by no means hegemonic around the Catholic world. Especially since the 1940s, a new pluralism had emerged in Catholic theology.[19] The *nouvelle théologie*, in particular, represented a challenge to an anti-Modernist paradigm that was neo-Scholastic in methodology, integralist in politics, triumphalist in apologetics, and ecclesiologically ultramontane.[20] Many Catholics, with a variety of motivations and coming from diverse contexts, wished to either abandon or modify these positions. Practically speaking, this required refusing to allow the anti-Modernist paradigm to norm theological discourse and church teaching. Instead, these reformist Catholics advocated *ressourcement* methodology: They were open to ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, and they wanted to rethink the relationship between the pope and the bishops, the clergy and the laity, and the church and the world. They eschewed triumphalism, wished to abandon integralism, and often supported democratic politics and more scholarly freedom within the church. The anti-Modernist paradigm found a home in Vatican II's minority bloc, while a reformist perspective appealed to many who formed the council's majority. In sum, anti-Modernism was the regnant ideological paradigm for the council minority, and it was not for the council majority. When I refer to an anti-Modernist "paradigm," I do not mean to imply that anti-Modernism was the only preoccupation of the Vatican II minority—far from it. Nevertheless, anti-Modernism implied a range of (aforementioned) commitments, and it heavily colored an approach both to doing theology and to church governance.

I call anti-Modernism an "ideological" rather than "theological" paradigm, because Modernism was almost never seen as a purely doctrinal problem. Anti-Modernists agreed that the root Modernist error was both philosophical and theological: a "vital immanence" that ultimately degenerated into a kind of Pantheism (*Pascendi* §§7–10, 19, 39). However, many anti-Modernists, sometimes referred to as the "integralist" party, saw this fundamentally theological heresy as logically leading to a host of errors in fields ranging from biblical studies to politics.[21] This expansive understanding of Modernism periodically drew support not only from the policy decisions and clear opinions of certain popes and bishops, but also from official magisterial documents. This is true even after the death of Pius X. His successor, Benedict XV (pope from 1914 to 1922), defanged some of the more ferocious anti-Modernist efforts. But

19. One illuminating recent study is Brenna Moore, *Kindred Spirits: Friendship and Resistance at the Edges of Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).
20. See Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie–New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2010). Hans Boersma argues that the *ressourcement* of the *nouvelle théologie* differed in critical ways from Modernism. See *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
21. On the political dimension of anti-Modernist opposition to the *nouvelle théologie*, see John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri De Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005). Political concerns were present and consequential from the beginning; see Arnold, "Authority and Integralism in Pius X: The Conflict Over the Christian Democratic *Sillon* Movement and Joseph Lahitton's Doctrine of Priestly Vocation," *ET-Studies* 13 no. 1 (2022): 23–40, https://doi.org/10.2143/ETS.13.1.3290779.

Pius XI (1922–39), in the encyclical *Ubi Arcano*, spoke of a "moral, legal, and social modernism" that "We condemn, no less decidedly than We condemn theological modernism" (article 61).[22]

It was this expansive anti-Modernist paradigm the majority bloc at Vatican II believed was critically flawed. For these Catholics, anti-Modernism was, at best, not the most effective way to present Catholic doctrine to the world or to frame the problems facing the church. While this reformist perspective depended upon theologies of divine revelation and tradition that were dialogical and dynamic, it went beyond a desire to re-present those doctrines. This methodological and ideological difference was a critical "issue under the issues" at the council.[23] We should thus not be surprised that the major Roman condemnations of Modernism, especially Pius X's *Pascendi*, were evoked by members of the minority during numerous debates at Vatican II, in attempts to reassert the status quo or to demand the amendment of draft texts bearing a reformist stamp.

The three aforementioned anti-Modernist documents—*Pascendi, Lamentabili*, and *Sacrorum Antistitum* (the anti-Modernist oath)—were also prevalent sources in the initial preparation of conciliar documents, a process controlled mainly by the Curia and Roman theologians.[24] In August 1961, the influential *ressourcement* theologian and future *peritus* Yves Congar (1904–95) complained that one of the preparatory texts was merely "a summary of papal documents over the past century: a sort of syllabus of these documents, including the ADDRESSES of Pius XII. That has the disadvantage of highlighting the errors which these documents have successively denounced. At times, errors of long ago. A Modernism which is already dead is slain yet again."[25]

The first evocation of Modernism during debates on the council floor came during this initial discussion of the liturgy schema (draft text) in October 1962, fewer than three weeks after Vatican II's first session opened. In quite harsh terms, the Sicilian prelate Giovanni Battista Peruzzo (1878–1963) criticized those calling for the expansion of the use of the vernacular in the liturgy. The Passionist Archbishop of Agrigento, reacting to "many observations and propositions" he had heard "against Sacred Tradition around the use of the Latin language in the sacred liturgy," argued that the

22. This condemnation followed a litany of grievances aimed at those Catholics who wished to diverge from recent papal teaching on a number of political and social questions. See Pius XI, *Ubi Arcano*, §60, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19221223_ubi-arcano-dei-consilio.html.

23. The American Jesuit John Courtney Murray, one of the chief architects of the council's teaching on religious liberty, argued doctrinal development was the "*the* issue under the issues" at the council. See O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 9, where he quotes Murray, "This Matter of Religious Freedom," *America* 112 (Jan. 9, 1965): 40–43, at 43. O'Malley used this phrase to illuminate the subtext of a number of debates. See esp. 8–12 and 298–313.

24. For an overview of Vatican II's preparatory phases, see Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak, eds., *History of Vatican II*, vol. 1, *Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II: Toward a New Era in Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995). For the numerous references to Modernism, see the index entry on page 523.

25. Yves Congar, *My Journal of the Council*, ed. Denis Minns, trans. Mary John Ronayne and Mary Cecily Boulding (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 47.

liturgical movement (which he called the "anti-liturgical movement") was "*non placet*" because of its "origins."[26] Archbishop Peruzzo saw the current calls for more use of the vernacular as just the latest link in a centuries-long chain of errors running from Humanism and Protestantism to Jansenism and Modernism:

> This movement [for vernacular liturgy] arose at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. The first anti-liturgists were humanists: pagans in Italy, they were better in France and the northern lands under the leadership of Erasmus, but all of them were insecure in the faith. From there appeared the Jansenists, in Italy the adherents of the *Conciliabuli* [Synod] of Pistoia, and finally the Modernists. This is the company that many of those who have spoken are keeping.[27]

Peruzzo went on to claim he could not "find a single holy bishop promoting this movement," neither "ancient nor modern." This was a serious accusation, because as Peruzzo knew well, bishops all over the Catholic world were interested in more incorporation of the vernacular into the liturgy, and in some cases were already doing so. "This fact"—meaning the lack of good bishops supporting the liturgical movement—"must make us cautious about proposing novelties. It would be easy to relinquish the safe old ways: but this [new] path might lead us into the abyss!"[28] Peruzzo recognized his words were hard and potentially accusatory: "Forgive me," he asked, "if some of my abrupt statements [*praecisatio*] should be displeasing to you."[29]

Peruzzo's speech helpfully demonstrates a reading of history that can be termed the "chain of errors," as well as the malleable uses to which Modernism could be put in such a narrative.[30] We cannot adequately understand the anti-Modernism of the Vatican II minority without situating it in a longer time frame, one that stretches far earlier than the twentieth century.[31] For the anti-Modernist council fathers at Vatican

26. *Acta* I/1, 594–598, at 594. The phrase *non placet* (literally, "not pleasing") was used to formally indicate a "no" vote on a document. For the Vatican II "Acta" (proceedings), see *Acta Synodalia Concilii Vaticani Secundi*, 25 vols. (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanus, 1970–96).
27. *Acta* I/1, 594. This passage is discussed in the article "Vatican II at 50: Archbishop Peruzzo, the Prophet—and the Anti-Liturgical Revolution That Was to Come," July 19, 2012, at the popular traditionalist blog *Rorate Caeli*, https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2012/07/vatican-ii-at-50-archbishop-peruzzo.html. See also Roberto de Mattei, *Il Concilio Vaticano II: una storia mai scritta* (Turin: Lindau, 2010), 246–48.
28. *Acta* I/1, 594.
29. *Acta* I/1, 594.
30. This phrase, or variants of it, is used in some recent scholarship. See, for example, Massimo Faggioli's description of the idea of a "chain of modern errors" in *A Council for the Global Church: Receiving Vatican II in History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 43–45. In the specific context of anti-Modernism, Claus Arnold writes of a "history of descent." See Arnold, "Authority and Integralism in Pius X."
31. See my forthcoming "Catholic Enlightenment from *Catholicisme intransigeant* to the Reception of Vatican II: Black Legend, Myth, or Historiographical Tool?," in *Debating Enlightenment: Scholarship, Historiography and the Transmission of Books and Ideas*, ed. Marco Barducci (Woodbridge, UK: Durham University IMEMS Press/Boydell & Brewer Ltd, forthcoming).

II, the term "Modernism" was not just a reference to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century people or ideas that deformed the Catholic faith. Modernism was a link in a "chain of errors" that usually began with Martin Luther and his rejection of Catholic hierarchical authority, especially papal authority. This narrative of decline ran through Jansenism, "the Enlightenment" (considered as monolithic and teleologically secularizing) and the French Revolution, before arriving at nineteenth- and twentieth-century "errors" like rationalism, liberalism, and socialism. Finally, these errors culminated with atheistic Communism persecuting true religion in the public sphere and the "synthesis of all heresies" (Modernism) perverting it from within. While by no means totally hegemonic in the Catholic world from 1800 to 1950, the "chain of errors" narrative was always prominent, and it found much support in Rome, with the most consistency during the reigns of intransigent popes like Pius IX (1846–78) and Pius X (1903–14).

Therefore, anti-Modernism on the eve of Vatican II was not just an opposition to liberalizing views on the inspiration of Scripture or the doctrine of "vital immanence" condemned in *Pascendi*. An underlying chain-of-errors narrative saw Modernism as a synthesis of the heresies represented by Protestantism, Jansenism, the Enlightenment, and the myriad errors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, against which the First Vatican Council and recent popes had reacted. These errors were all necessarily intertwined and dependent upon one another, which is why Archbishop Peruzzo felt it was necessary, if uncomfortable, to remind his fellow bishops of the infernal pedigree of some recent proposals for liturgical reform.[32] We can thus see why evocations of Modernism at Vatican II could move rather seamlessly from opposing vernacular liturgy, to concerns about historical-critical biblical research, to new views of divine revelation, to assertions of papal monarchy, to rejections of religious liberty. The truth was one, and for anti-Modernists there was an underlying sense that error was also one.

"The Outdated Formulas of the 'Counter-Reformation' and 'Anti-Modernism'": A Majority Forms During Session One (1962)

There were dozens of other evocations of Modernism in the first session, in addition to Peruzzo's blast against vernacular liturgy. Only a few were liturgical. A German-born Brazilian bishop praised Pius X for guarding against Modernism in the context of the liturgy.[33] On the other hand, Bishop Franz Zauner (Linz, Austria) argued that concerns about schism and Modernism were unfounded. In his view, the liturgical movement was demonstrably bearing good fruit through retrieving practices like concelebration and communion under both kinds.[34]

The debate over liturgy was relatively pacific. The great majority of council fathers supported some kind of reform, though there were differing opinions about what such

32. *Acta* I/1, 594.
33. See the intervention of João Batista Przyklenk, bishop of Januária. *Acta* I/2, 68–71.
34. *Acta* I/2, 151–54.

a renewal ought to look like. The much more fraught issue in the first session was divine revelation. After the first draft of the Dogmatic Constitution *De Fontibus Revelationis* ("the sources of revelation") was presented to the council fathers on November 14, 1962, it became clear that significant numbers of bishops were operating out of theological paradigms and ecclesial worldviews that were in deep tension, if not incompatible.[35] The ghost of Modernism was never far off when discussions arose concerning ecumenism, the nature of tradition, doctrinal development, and the critical study of Scripture. An increasingly assertive and confident majority bloc emerged from this clash in session one. In general, this majority bloc wished to reform the church along ecumenical and pastoral lines, animated by a theological methodology of *ressourcement*.[36]

In key respects, *De Fontibus* was the antithesis of this new direction. The draft schema seemed to take no account of ecumenism or of the advances made by the biblical or patristic movements. *De Fontibus* and the *relatio* (the official explanation of the text) featured citations of *Pascendi, Lamentabili*, and the anti-Modernist oath.[37] These evocations were considered crucial by minority leaders like Cardinal Giuseppe Siri and Cardinal Michael Browne, the Superior General of the Dominicans. Siri, the Archbishop of Genoa, argued they had a duty to condemn such Modernist errors, since they had arisen after the close of Vatican I in 1870, the most recent ecumenical council.[38] The Irishman Browne defended *De Fontibus*, pushing back against criticism by citing the anti-Modernist oath and other recent papal teaching.[39]

Pablo Gúrpide Beope (Bishop of Bilbao, Spain) praised Pius X for defending Scripture, one of the two "sources" or "founts" of revelation that the title *De Fontibus* referred to, against Modernism.[40] Geraldo de Proença Sigaud (Archbishop of Diamantina, Brazil) echoed a key concern of the anti-Modernists regarding biblical criticism when he argued that belief in Moses as the author of the Pentateuch must be safeguarded,[41] a view that most biblical scholars saw as indefensible in light of

35. See *Acta* I/3, 14–26. Joseph Komonchak has provided an English translation with informative commentary on his personal website: https://jakomonchak.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/de-fontibus-1-5.pdf. An additional draft text on revelation was prepared but was never discussed on the council floor. This draft, *De Deposito Fidei Pure Custodiendo*, is printed in an appendix to *Acta* I/4, 654–94. See also https://jakomonchak.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/de-deposito-fidei-latin-text.pdf. While this text was never formally debated, it sheds light on the centrality of anti-Modernism for many in the Theological Commission. The text includes citations of the anti-Modernist oath (659, 668), *Pascendi* (670, 674, 676, 679), and *Lamentabili* (656, 669, 673–74) and mentions George Tyrrell and Henry Duméry by name (669, 670) in the explanatory footnotes.
36. On that methodology, see Grant Kaplan, "Retrieval and Renewal: Chenu, the Tübingen School, and the Renewal of Theological Method in *Optatam Totius*," *Theological Studies* 77, no. 3 (2016): 567–92, https://doi.org/10.1177/00405639166530.
37. *Acta* I/3, 19, 26.
38. *Acta* I/3, 37–38, at 38.
39. *Acta* I/3, 82–84, at 83.
40. *Acta* I/2, 333–38, at 336.
41. *Acta* I/3, 224–29, at 225. Congar found this intervention "very tedious." See *My Journal of the Council*, 194.

modern critical scholarship. Antônio de Castro Mayer (Bishop of Campos) argued that *De Fontibus* was correct to focus on "the errors of the Modernists" since "the seeds still remain."[42] This important Brazilian leader of the minority believed contemporary biblical scholars, whose methods are often pleasing to Modernists (*ad placita modernistarum*), must be reminded that the Magisterium alone enjoys the assistance of the Lord and protection from error. Such positions sought continuity with the rulings of the Pontifical Biblical Commission under Pius X.[43] There were numerous interventions by the minority similar to the above.[44]

Pushback by the majority was much broader than any one point of contention. A growing number of council fathers and their *periti* wished to simply throw the draft out in frustration and start again. In the words of the young *peritus* Joseph Ratzinger, the *schema* on Revelation was "utterly a product of the 'anti-Modernist' mentality which had taken shape about the turn of the century."[45] Rather than echoing "the great positive initiative of the liturgy schema," *De Fontibus* "was written in a spirit of condemnation and negation." Its "frigid" and "offensive tone" reflected the "cramped thinking" of anti-Modernism's "theology of negations and prohibitions."[46]

Ratzinger published these words only in 1966, safely after Vatican II's close. On the council floor, members of the majority usually did not tackle the ghost of Modernism so directly. For the most part, they argued for their views on other grounds, for example stressing the pastoral problems with a schema, or pointing out other deficiencies in a text, like its lack of ecumenical awareness or effectiveness. But some council fathers addressed anti-Modernism head-on. Andre-Marie Charue (Bishop of Namur, Belgium) argued that the answer to the problems raised by Modernism was not to restrict exegesis and seek to restrain theologians but to encourage good Catholic scholars and good exegesis.[47] The English abbot Christopher Butler, OSB, with his typical moderation and scholarly subtlety, argued for a similar position.[48]

Archbishop Peruzzo, in explicating the "chain of errors" narrative undergirding the anti-Modernist worldview, articulated an uncompromising minority position. Just after the presentation of *De Fontibus* to the council fathers and the *relatio* (official commentary) by Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, a rather idiosyncratic character did something similar for the majority position. Maximos IV Saigh, Patriarch and head of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, took the floor on November 14, 1962. Maximos had already staunchly intervened in favor of the vernacular in the initial debate on the liturgy a few weeks earlier. On October 23, the Syrian patriarch pointed out to his

42. *Acta* I/3, 312–13.
43. See, inter alia, Denzinger-Hünermann 3372–73, 3394–3400, 3503–28, 3561–93.
44. See, for example, the following interventions of council fathers evoking Modernism or anti-Modernist doctrinal documents: *Acta* I/3, 85–86, 87–88, 309–10, 810–13; *Acta* I/4, 334–38.
45. Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009 [1966]), 21.
46. Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 21.
47. *Acta* I/3, 143–45.
48. *Acta* I/3, 107–10, esp. 109. For a new study of Butler see Peter Phillips, *Christopher Butler: Monk, Theologian, Bishop* (Reading, UK: Weldon Press, 2024).

overwhelmingly Roman Catholic confreres—and in French, not Latin—that Christ offered the first Eucharist in the vernacular. Maximos argued it would never have occurred to Jesus and the apostles to read Scripture and conduct services in a tongue unknown to the congregation.[49] In addition to these provocative statements, Maximos's refusal to speak Latin on the council floor was a powerful symbolic statement regarding the nature of Catholic universality and the equal dignity of the non-Roman rites and churches (he gave all his addresses in French).

Maximos's intervention on November 14 in response to *De Fontibus* was a cogent and effective summation of a reformist paradigm that sought to leave anti-Modernism behind, or even repudiate it. First, Maximos argued that ecumenical councils ought to have pastoral concerns and the concrete life of the church at the forefront. Additionally—and as many others had pointed out—John XXIII had explicitly affirmed his desire for a council animated by ecumenism. The draft *De Fontibus*, on the other hand, was "restrictive, negative, and polemical."[50] Rather than opening the church up to ecumenical dialogue, the schema "repeated the outdated formulas of the 'counter-Reformation' and 'anti-Modernism.'"[51]

In stark contrast to those who believed the threat of Modernism was still very much alive, Maximos argued that "no danger truly threatened the church" on these "precise points" of doctrine concerning divine revelation. To proceed in a heavy-handed manner, then, would risk "stiffening the traditional positions" of the church "or stopping the harmonious development of dogma." For years, a variety of questions surrounding the relationship between Scripture and tradition and the interpretation of the Bible "have been the object . . . of research and in-depth discussions between specialists in both the positive secular sciences and the sacred sciences." Maximos called for scholarly and ecclesial humility, arguing that the Magisterium did not yet have "the necessary elements" to "definitively" settle these debates: "a sufficient point of maturation" did not yet exist.[52]

Maximos's intervention was a transparent and forceful rebuke of triumphalist and condemnatory attitudes. While the Melkite patriarch conceded that *De Fontibus* said some true things, he argued that the text did so in the "negative form of condemnations and polemics."[53] This was against the wishes of Pope John XXIII and did not do justice to "the faithful people who expect from us a serene, positive, and rich exposition of the history of our salvation, to nourish the Christian life." Finally, the document was an ecumenical failure: It did nothing to further dialogue and actually impeded ecumenism by reasserting a Counter-Reformation and anti-Modernist theological worldview.[54] Maximos concluded that the council should "renounce" the draft schema "purely and simply" and start anew in a "positive and pastoral manner."[55] The new text

49. *Acta* I/1, 377–80.
50. *Acta* I/3, 53–54, at 53.
51. *Acta* I/3, 53.
52. *Acta* I/3, 53.
53. *Acta* I/3, 54.
54. *Acta* I/3, 53.
55. *Acta* I/3, 53.

should "remain open" to the "research of specialists" in the relevant fields, especially "Catholic scholars and theologians of great renown."[56]

One week later, on November 20, 1962, 1,368 council fathers voted to reject *De Fontibus* and draft a new text, against 822 who stood by it. While this was about 100 votes shy of the two-thirds majority the council's regulations required, John XXIII intervened. The pope, to wide acclaim, judged that the dissatisfaction of the council fathers was too great to continue with *De Fontibus*.[57] Maximos had gotten his wish. Somewhat ironically, it was granted through papal prerogative.

The discussion in November 1962 over the draft schema on divine revelation was the first great debate of Vatican II. In hindsight, it provided a road map for the direction of the council and highlighted the basic divisions and tensions among the participants. Against a minority bloc marked by anti-Modernism had arisen a majority *ressourcement* party with a growing commitment to John XXIII's ecumenical agenda and the *aggiornamento* he had spoken about. As would quickly become apparent in the second session, the most basic division among the council fathers was not over liturgy or even over a theology of divine revelation, but over ecclesiology—that is, the very nature and mission of the church itself.

The Ghost of Tyrrell: The Ecclesiological Debate Begins (Session Two, 1963)

When the first session closed on December 8, 1962, the council had promulgated nothing, but majority and minority camps had clearly formed, a liturgical reform was in principle approved, and productive, if sometimes tense, debate over divine revelation and ecclesiology was underway. The council fathers, not to mention the wider world, were unaware that the beloved convenor of the Second Vatican Council, "Good Pope John," was to die of stomach cancer in June 1963, before the next session opened.

But before his death, the pope made a second critical decision. In addition to sending the schema *De Fontibus* back for re-drafting, John XXIII appointed a new "Mixed Commission" to oversee the re-drafting. The new commission combined veterans of the Theological Commission with members of the Secretariat for Christianity Unity. Pope John was purposefully "mixing" members of a committee led by the minority leader Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, an upholder of the Roman and curial status quo, with those in a secretariat dedicated to ecumenism and led by Cardinal Augustin Bea, a German Jesuit and an important majority leader. John XXIII's consequential decisions helped chart the course of the rest of the Council, setting Vatican II on a new path marked by *ressourcement* methodology and a clearer commitment to producing ecumenical texts.[58]

The critical moment in the council's first session, which Maximos IV and many others had called for, was ditching the *De Fontibus* draft for something new. But by the end of the first session, indeed, by the end of Maximos's critical speech of November

56. *Acta* I/3, 53.
57. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 150.
58. O'Malley, 150–52.

14, it was clear the key debates were shifting to the ecclesiological realm. As the Melkite patriarch remarked, "The greater part of this first session of the council has passed" without an examination of "the most vital questions" facing the Catholic Church, namely: those connected with "divine constitution of the church." With his trademark parrhesia, Maximos yet again named the elephant in the room: the First Vatican Council and the nineteenth-century ultramontane ethos it had seemingly enshrined as perennial Catholic orthodoxy. Vatican I, Maximos argued, had only provided a "partial vision of the church" grounded in the "prerogatives of its visible head [the pope]." The rest of the church, from bishops down to the laity, "seem to be reduced to the proportions of a dwarf" and "deprived of [their] vital powers." If Vatican II can restore the "right proportions . . . between the head and the body" then "many truths will emerge," making Catholic doctrine on the papacy "more acceptable to other Christians."[59]

Maximos then called for the schema *De Ecclesia* to be presented to the fathers as soon as possible. That document, and the crucial issues it discussed, could then form "the centerpiece of the council—because all other disciplinary questions depend on it in one way or another."[60] In addition to accurately forecasting what in fact became the "centerpiece" or "cornerstone" (*la pièce maîtresse*) of debate at the council—ecclesiology—Maximos illustrated how a *ressourcement* agenda in liturgy or divine revelation tended toward, implied, and was fundamentally dependent upon an ecclesiological perspective. These ecclesiological concerns were basically shared by the council majority. Such a perspective united the Middle Eastern patriarch on certain essential questions with a diverse range of allies, including leading Latin Americans like Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez (Archbishop of Santiago, Chile), German theological experts like Ratzinger and Rahner, and influential European prelates like Cardinal Achille Liénart (Archbishop of Lille, France).

While there were only a handful of public evocations of anti-Modernist doctrinal documents during the second session, the legacy of Modernism figured prominently in a key ecclesiological debate over the image of the church as "sacrament" or "sacrament of salvation." Inspired by the general renewals in biblical and patristic studies, as well as Pope Pius XII's teaching on the Mystical Body of Christ in the 1943 encyclical *Mystici Corporis, ressourcement* theologians began to ever more deeply plumb the depths of the Scriptures and the writing of the Church Fathers.[61] They were in search of ecclesiologies that, while avoiding errors deemed to be Protestant, Jansenist, or Modernist, were able to balance the visible, external, and objective with the invisible, internal, and subjective. Leading up to the council, sustained reflections on the church as "sacrament" appeared in the work of the Dutch Dominican Edward Schillebeeckx and the German Jesuits Otto Semmelroth and Karl Rahner.[62] The most important

59. *Acta* I/3, 54.
60. *Acta* I/3, 54.
61. For an illuminating recent study see Elyse Raby, "Eighty Years after *Mystici Corporis Christi*: Rereading Mystical Body Theology in the Early Twentieth Century," *Theological Studies* 85 no. 2 (2024): 287–308, https://doi.org/10.1177/00405639241238387.
62. John M. McDermott, "Vatican II and the Theologians on the Church as Sacrament," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 71, nos. 1–2 (2006): 143–78, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021140006072575.

theological work for Vatican II's subsequent use of this image was Semmelroth's 1953 monograph, *Die Kirche als Ursakrament* ("original" or "primordial sacrament").[63]

The first draft of *De Ecclesia*, distributed to the council fathers toward the end of session one (November 23, 1962), was primarily the work of the Dutch Jesuit Sebastian Tromp.[64] Tromp was a consultor of the Holy Office and a noted anti-Modernist who had worked zealously to purge teaching institutions of any traces of the heresy. A sophisticated thinker and highly regarded theologian, Tromp worked closely with Cardinal Ottaviani. He was also the principal ghostwriter of Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis*, and the first draft of *De Ecclesia* "reads something like an updated version of that encyclical."[65] While the text contained many affirmations the majority saw as true and needed, it was deemed to suffer from many of the same issues as *De Fontibus*. The stinging critique of the Belgian Bishop Emiel Jozef De Smedt (Bruges) is famous: The text was crippled by a prevailing triumphalism, clericalism, and "juridicism" (*iuridismus*).[66]

Semmelroth and Rahner co-authored an extensive and constructive critique that "surfaced problems of method and content" in *De Ecclesia*.[67] The German Jesuits argued that the draft text "was missing an organic structure, a perspective, and a coherent ordering of chapters among themselves," problems which could be rectified by employing "the church as sacrament" as an organizing ecclesiological image.[68] Echoing concerns that were percolating in the majority camp, Semmelroth and Rahner also deemed *De Ecclesia* to be insufficiently scriptural, pastoral, and ecumenical. Additionally, the text did not adequately distinguish between levels of authority in ecclesial documents, which could give the mistaken impression that all papal teaching was irreformable—an assumption of momentous significance in a clash between anti-Modernist and *ressourcement* paradigms.[69]

The second draft of the Constitution on the Church began with the now-famous words *Lumen Gentium*. This new draft led with the image of the church as sacrament in article one: "The church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race."[70]

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63. *Die Kirche als Ursakrament* (Frankfurt: Joseph Knecht, 1953). See also Semmelroth, "Um die Einheit des Kirchenbegriffs," in *Fragen der Theologie Heute*, ed. Johannes Feiner et al. (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1959), 319–35.
64. *Acta* II/4, 12–91.
65. Dennis M. Doyle, "Otto Semmelroth and the Advance of the Church as Sacrament at Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 76 no. 1 (2015): 65–86, at 75, https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563914565542.
66. *Acta* I/4, 142–44.
67. Doyle, "Otto Semmelroth," 75. See the document "*Animadversiones de schemate* '*De ecclesia*,'" in Günther Wassilowsky, *Universales Heilssakrament Kirche: Karl Rahners Beitrag zur Ekklesiologie des II. Vatikanums* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 2001), 410–23, and Wassilowsky's analysis on 192–64.
68. This is Doyle's commentary in "Otto Semmelroth," 75.
69. Doyle, "Otto Semmelroth," 75.
70. *Acta* II/1, 215–90, at 215. This wording was almost identical to the final draft promulgated in November 1964 in session three. The English translation above is from the final text: *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964), https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_lt.html.

The influential German Cardinal Josef Frings (Archbishop of Cologne) took the floor on September 30, 1963, backed by the signatures of sixty-six German and Scandinavian bishops, in support of this explicit recognition of the church as *Ursakrament*.[71] Support for Frings's position, however, was much wider than just a northern European bloc. In one of many possible examples, Adrianus Djajasepoetra (the Jesuit Archbishop of Jakarta, Indonesia) intervened with a strong statement on the sacramentality of the church.[72]

The next day, Italian Cardinal Ernesto Ruffini, a tireless leader of the minority, rose in rebuttal. Ruffini, the Archbishop of Palermo, argued that the term "sacrament" ought to be reserved exclusively for the seven sacraments. "If anyone called the church a sacrament today," claimed Ruffini, "he would be speaking obscurely, and it would be necessary to add long explanations."[73] Such ambiguity, Ruffini pointed out, ran counter to the pastoral nature of the council. While no doubt sincere, this was also a clever rhetorical move by Ruffini, since the loudest members of the majority had been consistently criticizing texts as unpastoral. Cardinal Ruffini then raised the ghost of Modernism, pointing out that the image of the church as sacrament was "frequently used" by the Irish Jesuit George Tyrrell (1861–1909),[74] whom Ruffini called "an apostate priest and the prince of the modernists."[75] Tyrrell is the only Modernist theologian to be referred to by name in an intervention on the council floor.[76]

About six weeks later, Joseph Clifford Fenton argued along similar lines in *Observationes* submitted to the council's doctrinal commission.[77] Professor at the Catholic University of America, Fenton was a neo-Scholastic theologian of stature and Cardinal Ottaviani's *peritus*.[78] Fenton argued that the image of church as sacrament is novel, pointing to Semmelroth's 1953 book. The image is not found in Scripture, and it mostly fell out of use after Peter Lombard (d. 1160). Fenton argued that this new image would confuse the faithful, especially in the English-speaking world, where it will seem that Tyrrell has had the last laugh over Pius X (and specifically over the

71. *Acta* II/1, 343–46.
72. *Acta* II/1, 381–83.
73. *Acta* II/1, 393.
74. On Tyrrell, see David Schultenover, *George Tyrrell: In Search of Catholicism* (Shepherdstown, WV: Patmos Press, 1981).
75. *Acta* II/1, 391–94, at 393.
76. There was a written reference to the French philosopher Henry Duméry (1920–2012) that implied the French philosopher was a Modernist, but this was in the explanatory notes to *De Deposito Fidei Pure Custodiendo* (an abandoned draft on Divine Revelation). See note 36, this article.
77. "*Observationes D. I. Fenton circa usum verbi 'Sacramentum' tamquam designationem Ecclesiae Cathlolicae*," Document 0955, Papers of Msgr. G. Philips, archives of the Centre for the Study of Vatican II, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium. I am grateful to Prof. Dries Bosschaert and Mr. Chidiebere Nnabugwu for providing me with a scanned copy of this document. See also the discussion in Doyle, "Otto Semmelroth," 67–68.
78. Fenton is best known today as the major American opponent of John Courtney Murray, SJ, on the issue of religious liberty. See the study of Donald E. Pelotte, *John Courtney Murray: Theologian in Conflict* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976).

encyclical *Pascendi*).[79] Fenton advised that more traditional definitions of the church are sufficient, such as "a congregation or convocation of the faithful in Christ."[80]

The bishop of Eichstätt (Germany), Joseph Schröffer, asked Semmelroth to respond to Fenton's criticisms.[81] Semmelroth addressed the ghost of Modernism head-on: He argued that it would indeed be an error to use the image of the church as sacrament in order to deny that the historical Jesus had founded the church and instituted sacraments. But that is not what he or the document *Lumen Gentium* were doing. Quite the opposite. Furthermore, Semmelroth pointed out that even if the image is not explicitly used in the Bible, the concept is all over Scripture—whenever images like "Body of Christ" or "Temple of the Spirit" are used. Citing Michael Schmaus's *Dogmatik* (1938–41), Semmelroth argued that the concept was central to both liturgy and doctrine in the patristic and medieval periods.[82]

The voting records on the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church are ample testimony that most council fathers were convinced by arguments like Semmelroth's. The image of "church as sacrament" was there to stay in article 1 of *Lumen Gentium*, despite prominent council fathers linking that image to Modernism in general and George Tyrrell in particular. The successful defense of this ecclesiological image is another episode of the *ressourcement* party's ability to handle ghosts like Modernism in a manner that was historically conscious while reaching back to what was deepest and most fundamental in the Catholic tradition.

"Directly and Diametrically Opposed to Catholic Doctrine": Modernism and the Problem of Doctrinal Development in Sessions Three and Four (1964–65)

In the third session (autumn 1964), an important constellation of basically ecclesiological issues came into clear focus. While a minority bloc was clearly operative from the beginning of the council, a concerned group of fathers coalesced into a formal organization before the start of the third session, dedicated to resisting the reformist agenda of the majority.[83] The *Coetus Internationalis Patrum*—led by well-known minority prelates like the French Marcel Lefebvre, the Italian Luigi Carli, and Brazilians Castro Mayer and Proença Sigaud—was defined by anti-Modernism. It claimed to hold the membership of about 10 percent of the council fathers, with outsized sympathy among the Spanish bishops and an important core of Brazilian leadership and influence.[84]

79. "Esset aliqua iustificatio Tyrrell contra doctrinam S. Pii X," *Observationes D. I. Fenton*.
80. *Observationes D. I. Fenton*. See also Doyle, "Otto Semmelroth," 67–68.
81. Doyle, "Otto Semmelroth," 67–68. See also the fuller account of Günther Wassilowsky, *Universales Heilssakrament Kirche*, 390–97.
82. Doyle, "Otto Semmelroth," 67–68.
83. On the *Coetus*, see the prodigious output of Philippe Roy-Lysencourt, especially *Recueil de documents du Coetus Internationalis Patrum pour servir à l'histoire du concile Vatican II* (Strasbourg: Institut d'Étude du Christianisme, 2019).
84. See Melissa J. Wilde, "How Culture Mattered at Vatican II: Collegiality Trumps Authority in the Council's Social Movement Organizations," *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 4 (2004): 576–602, https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240406900406.

While scattered evocations of Modernism were still put to a variety of purposes, the great bulk of references in the third and fourth sessions concerned the following nexus of closely interconnected issues. The first regarded the manner in which tradition in general and doctrinal development in particular would be understood. The second issue concerned whether the proposed reforms in the religious liberty schema, changes pushed for by many, entailed a Modernist understanding of dogmatic mutability. Finally, the question of whether the new posture toward the modern world, first proposed in "*schema* 13" (which became the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*), ambiguously smuggled Modernist social, political, and anthropological tendencies into the heart of the church. Since this basic situation held until the final votes of the council were taken in early December 1965, I will consider evocations of Modernism in these last two sessions simultaneously.

The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, renamed *Dei Verbum*, was not formally promulgated until November 18, 1965. The minority could thus continue to raise the alarm concerning positions they feared could serve as a trojan horse for Modernist understandings of divine revelation, including the development or "evolution" of church teaching. Cardinal Ruffini, for example, cited *Pascendi*'s refutation of false ideas concerning experience and revelation during the debate over *Dei Verbum*.[85] Cardinal Browne worried that *Dei Verbum* article 8 (on doctrinal development) risked repudiating *Pascendi*. Browne took issue with the language of tradition growing (*crescit*). Tradition can no more grow than can Scripture, he argued. The "explanation of doctrines can be augmented," Browne said, "but not the substance of them."[86] The Irish Dominican believed such clarifications were vital because the time of the Modernists was not long ago. Browne made clear, however, that he did not think the drafters of *Dei Verbum* intended this erroneous reading. The Somascan Archbishop of Reggio Calabria, Giovanni Ferro, had similar concerns. He evoked the decree *Lamentabili* (article 21), which condemned as Modernist the claim that "Revelation, constituting the object of Catholic faith, was not complete with the apostles."[87] Syllogistic understandings of doctrinal development were universally accepted by the council fathers. However, as evocations of the ghost of Modernism illustrate, using organic or dynamic language and images in the context of doctrinal development was still very much controversial at Vatican II.

Some bishops of the majority pushed back indirectly. Italian Archbishop Enrico Nicodemo observed that *Dei Verbum* proposed "a living and dynamic conception of tradition," which he accepted as orthodox. While the Puglian prelate noted that "not a few theologians of today defended" such a dynamic conception of tradition, he confessed he did not fully understand their views or what was at stake in the debate over *Dei Verbum* 8.[88] Christopher Butler (abbot of Downside), saw more clearly the meaning and import of this pivotal passage and what underpinned it. While not mentioning

85. *Acta* III/3, 142–45, at 145.
86. *Acta* III/3, 187–88. See also O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 228.
87. *Acta* III/3, 206–8, at 207. The translation of *Lamentabili* 21 is from Denzinger-Hünermann 3421.
88. *Acta* III/3, 239–41.

Modernism explicitly, the English Benedictine appealed to the pioneering work of his countryman John Henry Newman in support of *Dei Verbum*'s dynamic rather than material view of tradition and organic rather than syllogistic view of doctrinal development.[89]

A Spaniard gave the lengthiest anti-Modernist intervention in the debate over divine revelation. Bishop Garcia Martinez of Pamplona echoed several others by evoking the anti-Modernist oath as the best safeguard against erroneous views of divine revelation. Garcia Martinez submitted very lengthy written notes in support of his neo-Scholastic view of faith, attacking errors he saw as Protestant and Modernist.[90] The majority of council fathers, however, believed that the fear that *Dei Verbum* had been corrupted—either by a Modernism redivivus or by a subtle ambiguity—was unfounded.[91] Those council fathers wishing for an orthodox but historically conscious theology were finding resources in nineteenth-century innovators like Newman and Johann Adam Möhler and in the cutting-edge work of contemporary thinkers like Congar and Ratzinger, both of whom were at the council advising the bishops and helping draft the relevant texts.

Spanish bishops tended to be among the most ardent opponents of *Dignitatis Humanae*, the declaration on religious liberty. This reflected their political context—they lived not in a European liberal democracy or a Latin American republic, but under the dictatorship of General Franco. Additionally, anti-Modernists from a variety of nations worried that *Dignitatis Humanae*'s affirmations were a capitulation to heretical understandings of religious liberty, the relationship between church and state, and the relationship between ecclesial (or divine) authority and the individual conscience.

The Spanish opponents of *Dignitatis Humanae*, supported by other members of the minority (including several very outspoken Brazilians), are sometimes lambasted as unsophisticated reactionaries. But in their numerous interventions arguing against a change in church teaching on religious liberty, they put their finger on a neuralgic point, one many council fathers preferred not to face head-on: the potentially destabilizing issue of doctrinal reversal, rather than augmentation, growth, or clarification. At one point, almost 30 percent of the council fathers opposed the text of *Dignitatis Humanae* or asked for further qualifications, and not a few of these pointed to a long line of papal documents unambiguously condemning religious liberty.[92] This line was especially clear from Pius VI, elected pope in 1775, to Pius X, who died in 1914. Therefore, it is not surprising that those who subscribed to the aforementioned "chain of errors" narrative, or who held a view of doctrinal development that could not account for reversals or breaks of any appreciable kind would associate religious liberty *de iure* (as opposed to a pragmatic toleration) with Modernism.

89. *Acta* III/3, 260–261. Andrew Meszaros has argued convincingly that *Dei Verbum* 8 was reliant on Congar, who was drawing on the thought of Newman. See Meszaros, "'*Haec Traditio proficit*': Congar's Reception of Newman in *Dei verbum*, Section 8," *New Blackfriars* 92 (2011): 247–54, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2010.01414.x.
90. *Acta* III/3, 248–55. See also O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 217.
91. See, inter alia, *Acta* IV/2, 993.
92. Blanchard, *Synod of Pistoia and Vatican II*, 34–36.

Opposition along these lines was led by the Spanish bishops. Laureano Castán Lacoma (Bishop of Sigüenza-Guadalajara) cited a string of condemnations from Gregory XVI through Pius XII.[93] Rafael García y García de Castro (Granada) argued that the thesis-antithesis distinction regarding religious liberty was settled Catholic doctrine, taught by all popes; he listed Leo XIII, Pius IX, Pius X, Pius XI, and, curiously, John XXIII.[94] The Archbishop of Granada was unsettled—the religious liberty document taught a new doctrine on the "erring conscience," one that was "manifestly contrary to the Magisterium of the church."[95] While erring people can (indeed, should) be tolerated in certain circumstances, this toleration is pragmatic and situational, and never rises to the level of a right. Another Spaniard, Antonio Victor Pildáin y Zapiáin, bishop of Canarias (Canary Islands), was similarly unsparing. "Many eminent theologians" and bishops, he argued, have repeatedly insisted that parts of the religious liberty text are "directly and diametrically opposed to Catholic doctrine," especially to papal teaching from Pius IX to Pius XII (i.e., the period 1846–1958). The document suffers from "enormous philosophical, juridical, and theological confusion," and should be radically amended, the controversial points simply dropped as unripe for discussion.[96]

In the fourth session (September 14–December 8, 1965), the Portuguese Bishop António Ferreira Gomes (Porto) voiced his fears that the declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* accommodated Modernism.[97] The Dominican Juan Bautista Velasco Díaz, a Spanish missionary bishop in China and the Philippines, evoked the encyclical *Pascendi* in an intervention on the religious liberty debate.[98] Vicente Enrique y Tarancón (Bishop of Solsona, Spain) highlighted a "new Modernism" that he argued had already been denounced by Pope Paul VI.[99] Clearly, an expansive view of Modernism was operative here, and Pildáin y Zapiáin provided a proof-text justification for such a broad definition. He turned to the aforementioned passage in *Ubi Arcano* (1922), wherein Pius XI condemned "moral, legal, and social modernism . . . no less decidedly than We condemn theological modernism."[100]

Evocations of Modernism in debates over "schema 13," the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, depended upon this expansive definition. Eventually christened *Gaudium et Spes*, this text became a massive depository of theological, social, political, and cultural statements. Operating under the Iron Curtain, Bishop Kowalski of Chelmno, Poland, wanted the Constitution to include a strong condemnation of atheism. He cited a chain of philosophical errors: Kantianism to

93. *Acta* III/2, 641–45.
94. *Acta* III/2, 687–88.
95. *Acta* III/2, 688.
96. *Acta* III/2, 728–29, at 729.
97. *Acta* IV/1, 738–44, at 739.
98. *Acta* IV/1, 861–65, at 864.
99. *Acta* IV/2, 143–46, at 145.
100. *Acta* IV/2, 238–43. Pius XI, *Ubi Arcano* (December 23, 1922), §61, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19221223_ubi-arcano-dei-consilio.html.

agnosticism to Modernism.[101] Pildáin y Zapiáin again cited *Ubi Arcano* in a written intervention on *Gaudium et Spes*, clarifying that by "Modernism" he meant "not chiefly" what Pius X condemned, but rather a new moral, legal, and social Modernism censured by Pius XI. The outspoken Spanish prelate used an amusing neologism to describe this new form of Modernism: "snob-ism" (*snobismus*).[102]

Five council fathers wanted to omit the allegedly Modernist description of the church as "*anima societatis humanae*" in *Gaudium et Spes*'s article 40. The final text reads that the church "serves as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society."[103] To the very end, even after *Lumen Gentium* was promulgated, descriptions of the church that sought to balance the visible, external, and objective with the invisible, internal, and subjective were contested.

An unnamed council father worried that when *Gaudium et Spes* pontificated on atheism, the text slipped into Modernism by describing "a religious sense abstracted from objective truth."[104] Such a concern shows the connection with *Dei Verbum*. Indeed, *Gaudium et Spes* would not have been possible without the theological anthropology provided by the Constitution on Divine Revelation: that is, the pastoral *aggiornamento* of *Gaudium et Spes* was dependent on the theological *ressourcement* of *Dei Verbum*.

The French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, a leader in the *Coetus Internationalis Patrum*, was growing increasingly frantic as texts like *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Gaudium et Spes* came closer to formal promulgation. In his view, the council was losing its bearings entirely and teetering on the brink of heresy. In a written intervention, Lefebvre warned that *Gaudium et Spes* contained "innumerable ambiguities" to hide that its teaching was not truly Catholic; the Constitution instead taught a "new doctrine," which was the fruit of "nominalism, Modernism, liberalism, and *theillardismo*" (the latter a reference to the idiosyncratic French Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 1881–1955).[105] Lefebvre, future founder of the traditionalist Society of St. Pius X, argued that "this Pastoral Constitution is neither pastoral nor does it flow forth from (*dimanat*) the Catholic Church."[106]

One of the most eloquent defenders of *Gaudium et Spes* was Léon-Arthur Elchinger, auxiliary bishop of Strasbourg. On November 4, 1964, in an intervention that famously called for the formal rehabilitation of Galileo, Elchinger attacked anti-Modernism head-on. The church's campaigns against Modernism in "the fields of philosophy, history, and the sciences" are still in living memory, and it is thus no wonder the Magisterium has fallen under "suspicion."[107] Fear, according to the Strasbourg

101. *Acta* III/3, 190–92, at 191.
102. *Acta* IV/3, 340–44, at 342.
103. *Acta* IV/7, 447. See Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), §40, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.
104. *Acta* IV/7, 390.
105. *Acta* IV/2, 781–84, at 783.
106. *Acta* IV/2, 784.
107. *Acta* III/6, 266–69, at 266.

auxiliary, leads to a "narrow mind" and to a desire by the church "to always defend itself apologetically." The church's legacy of anti-Modernism, Elchinger argued, "remains an open wound."[108] The Archbishop of Turin, Michele Pellegrino, offered similar sentiments with equal frankness in a speech outlining the necessity of dialogue and scholarly freedom in the church. Pellegrino acknowledged that "we are all grateful" to ecclesial authorities for the "necessary repression" of Modernism. But would anyone "dare to affirm" that the "rights and dignity" of those accused were always preserved?[109] Do these abuses, Pellegrino asked, belong only to days past? In a fairly transparent reference to Congar, Pellegrino argued that "a certain religious" was only recently under ecclesiastical discipline because of doctrinal opinions that we now "rejoice to read today . . . in conciliar documents."[110]

While *ressourcement* methodology and a spirit of *aggiornamento* undoubtedly shaped the final documents, neither the event nor the letter of Vatican II represents the unambiguous victory of one Catholic worldview over another. The minority, and the *Coetus Internationalis Patrum* in particular, sometimes managed to apply the brakes to the reformist vision of the majority. Perhaps the most important such episode was when Pope Paul VI was convinced to add an explanatory note to *Lumen Gentium*. This controversial insertion, called the *Nota Praevia Explicativa*, reasserted papal supremacy in unequivocal terms and applied a minimalist interpretation to the doctrine of episcopal collegiality. Heeding the presence of Jansenist and Modernist "ghosts" on the council floor further illuminates this episode.

Public evocations of *Auctorem Fidei* (1794), the bull of Pius VI condemning the Jansenist Synod of Pistoia, helped convince Pope Paul VI to dilute the council's teaching on episcopal collegiality. For the fathers of the minority, this counter-Revolutionary and counter-Enlightenment doctrinal document should exert a powerful controlling function over ecclesiological debate.[111] In the words of Congar, "the spectre of the Synod of Pistoia" was then dragged up by minority fathers in private, in an effort to pressure the pope to intervene.[112] Just as Paul VI believed a change on the issue of birth control would violate the clear teaching of his predecessors (especially Pius XI), so he also seemed to believe that an episcopal collegiality unmoored from clear papal jurisdictional supremacy would constitute an unwarranted rupture in Catholic teaching, one he was simply not free to make. This episode has additional significance for our study of the ghost of Modernism, since the only magisterial document from the

108. *Acta* III/6, 266–69, at 266. See also Norman Tanner, "The Church in the World (*Ecclesia ad Extra*)," in *History of Vatican II*, vol. 4, *Church as Communion: Third Period and Intercession; September 1964–September 1965*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 270–364, at 313.

109. *Acta* IV/3, 135–37. See also O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 261.

110. *Acta* IV/3, 136.

111. For these public evocations, see Blanchard, *The Synod of Pistoia and Vatican II*, 259–302.

112. Dom Leclerq told Congar that influential members of the minority were evoking the memory of the Pistoian Jansenists in private appeals to Paul VI. Leclerq heard this news from Giuseppe Alberigo. Pope Paul was apparently also "struck" by Bishop Luigi Carli's speech appealing to *Auctorem Fidei* in a tense moment during the Second Session (1963). See Congar, *My Journal of the Council*, 426, 463.

early modern period that *Pascendi* cited was *Auctorem Fidei*. Pius X argued that the political and ecclesiological "principles from which these [Modernist] doctrines spring" are found in the heretical systems of Enlightenment-era Jansenists.[113] The council fathers who subscribed to a chain-of-errors narrative of history heartily agreed.

Conclusion: The "Controlling Function" of Anti-Modernist Doctrinal Documents at Vatican II

Anti-Modernism was a constitutive element of the worldview of the council minority at Vatican II. On issues ranging from liturgical reform to religious liberty to ecclesiology—and persistently in debates over divine revelation—members of the minority evoked Modernism and several doctrinal documents condemning it. The appellation "Modernist" did not just refer to ideas associated with doctrinally suspect figures from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather, the term designated a wider heresiology that relied upon a historical narrative I have termed the "chain of errors." Some acknowledged this explicitly, arguing it *was* justifiable to link Modernism back to "errors" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or forward into the age of Pius XI, Pius XII, and the present. They were aided in doing so by Pius XI's own expansive use of the term Modernist in his 1922 encyclical *Ubi Arcano*, and by certain reactions against the alleged neo-Modernism of the *nouvelle théologie* from the 1940s to the eve of the council.

Since the council majority wished to press forward with an ambitious reformist program, they had to contend with the resilient ghost of Modernism. Often, they ignored evocations of Modernism, which implicitly communicated that such evocations were beside the point. This strategy showed a preference for playing offense rather than defense: that is, the majority usually proceeded positively, stressing the precedents for their positions in Scripture and tradition (*ressourcement*), or justifying their reforms by appealing to recent papal teaching or pastoral need (*aggiornamento*). However, there were times that members of the majority confronted the Modernist bogeyman more or less head-on.

Ultimately, on the issue of the "controlling function" of anti-Modernist doctrinal documents, chiefly *Pascendi* and *Lamentabili*, the council majority was clearly victorious. Neither these documents nor the anti-Modernist Oath set the terms of debate in the manner the minority attempted to set them. Sometimes, this was because the majority quite plausibly showed that what was condemned in these documents as "Modernism" was not what the council majority was arguing for (e. g., *Lumen Gentium* 1 on the church as sacrament). In other cases, the anti-Modernist documents did not set the terms of debate because the majority believed they were voting for a justifiable or even necessary development of doctrine (as in the case of religious liberty), or they

113. When discussing allegedly Modernist ecclesiology, and especially anti-integralist views of society and the relationship between church and state, Pius X asserted that "the principles from which these [Modernist] doctrines spring have been solemnly condemned by our predecessor Pius VI in his Constitution *Auctorem fidei*" (§24). See also Blanchard, *The Synod of Pistoia and Vatican II*, 261–70.

wanted to quietly leave behind indefensible positions (for example, uncritical attitudes to biblical scholarship and especially the Old Testament).

The Second Vatican Council is often narrated as the triumph of the theological vision of a *ressourcement*-minded majority of council fathers over the neo-Scholastic and ultramontane minority bloc that wished to preserve the status quo ante. While there is some truth in such narratives, important nuances and serious cautions must also be considered. Vatican II is not simply the story of "progressive" ideals defeating "conservative" resistance, or of the clear-cut victory of any one side over any other. It is true, for example, that in the neuralgic issue of centralized Roman ecclesiastical authority, the minority "never really lost control," in the words of John O'Malley.[114] The debate between proponents of papal monarchy and episcopal collegiality was beset by ambiguities. As the current Catholic project of synodality has shown, a number of basic ecclesiological tensions touched on by Vatican II are still in many ways unresolved. But within a larger story of generalized trends and messy ambiguity, there are indeed clear instances of stark change. For example, the new attitudes toward non-Christian religions (especially Jews) in *Nostra Aetate* and *Lumen Gentium*, the general orientation of *Gaudium et Spes*, and *Dignitatis Humanae*'s reversal of church teaching on religious liberty are monumental magisterial developments.

It is certainly possible to overemphasize the revolutionary nature of the Second Vatican Council. Many do so, either to bemoan Vatican II or celebrate it. Nevertheless, the council majority's dismissal, indeed rejection, of the anti-Modernist theological paradigm promoted by the minority constitutes a kind of revolution of theological methodology. Absences can be, by their nature, easy to miss. But when absences are noticed, they can have striking explanatory power. Probably the best piece of evidence supporting the claim that anti-Modernist doctrinal documents ceased having a controlling function at Vatican II is that none of the four constitutions cite them at all, in any context. In fact, not a single promulgated document of the council cites *Pascendi, Lamentabili*, or the anti-Modernist oath. Just as with the ghost of Jansenism, the victory of the majority party led to an erasure of doctrinal documents that formerly constituted pillars of orthodox teaching. Nothing could symbolize leaving behind the "chain of errors" narrative more clearly than Pope Paul VI's abolition of the anti-Modernist oath in 1967. A new age for Catholic theology had dawned.[115]

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114. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 311. "It was in that regard so successful that with the aid of Paul VI the center not only held firm and steady but, as the decades subsequent to the council have irrefutably demonstrated, emerged even stronger."

115. I began the research resulting in this article for the National Institute for Newman Studies conference, "Saint John Henry Newman and Catholic Modernism," held in Pittsburgh on October 17–18, 2022. I am grateful to the editors of the *Genealogies of Modernity* website, who published a two-part summary of my conference paper on November 29 and December 2, 2022, titled "Vatican II's Departure from the Anti-Modernist Paradigm." Much of my work for this project in the Vatican II *Acta* was completed at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, LA. I am grateful to Thomas V. Bender, who generously hosted me at the Stahl Memorial Library. Finally, I am grateful to my colleagues Claus Arnold, William L. Portier, Elizabeth Huddleston, Kenneth L. Parker, Thomas V. Gourlay, John Stayne, and Stephen Bullivant for their comments, critiques, and suggestions.

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