

Vatican II's Noncompetitive Theology of the Church

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Abstract. — *Many contributions to the study of Vatican II offer more focused, analytic treatments of a specific theme, text or passage. These contributions must be complemented by broader, more synthetic studies of the council that seek to construct a more internally coherent, constructive account of the church. Without such a cohesive vision the council's reforms can too easily be isolated as ad hoc proposals that are subject to superficial implementation and domestication. This essay offers such a synthetic account of the council, employing American Protestant theologian Kathryn Tanner's competitive/noncompetitive theological schema to Catholic ecclesiology. A careful study of the council documents suggests a wide-ranging shift from a competitive to a noncompetitive theology of the church in four specific areas: 1) the relationship between pope and bishops; 2) the cooperation between the magisterium and the whole Christian faithful in the receiving and handing on of the faith; 3) the relationship between the exercise of baptismal charisms and church office; 4) the relationship between church and world as two overlapping spheres of Christian activity.*

The fiftieth anniversary of Vatican II that we are in the midst of celebrating as a church has elicited, in many corners of the church, a curious mix of gratitude and discouragement – gratitude for the gift of the council and discouragement at the extent to which important conciliar teachings have not yet been fully implemented. One response to the discouragement has been invoked so frequently as to border on cliché, namely that it takes the church fifty to a hundred years to fully implement a conciliar agenda. This kind of response seems to counsel patience. Just give it time and eventually we will see the full fruits of the council. But certainly other factors have contributed to the mixed implementation of the conciliar program for ecclesial reform. First, particularly in the initial post-conciliar decades, the council's call for reform was often conflated with the *Zeitgeist* of the 1960s such that, for some, it was difficult to distinguish a perceived cultural revolution from authentic ecclesial reform. Second, much of the council's reformist agenda was delegated to the Roman curia, arguably the ecclesiastical

institution least open to institutional reform. A third reason lies, paradoxically in the council's general distrust of canon law. Hervé Legrand writes:

Vatican II paid scant attention to the canonical dimension of the reforms it sought to introduce. Of all the Council documents, only the Constitution on the Liturgy concerned itself with guaranteeing its enactment, setting out forty-nine (!) normative prescriptions. After this, *Christus Dominus* was virtually the only document to use this method, though it set out wishes rather than norms.¹

Legrand wonders whether this failure to attend to issues of canonical implementation may be a consequence of the fact that canon law at that time “presented no more than a cramped vision of ecclesiology” that consequently held little interest for the council majority.² The question of canonical implementation extends beyond the council itself to the post-conciliar reform of the code of canon law, where, in spite of the obvious improvements in the 1983 code as compared to its predecessor, the new code too often failed to implement the more profound aspects of the council's ecclesiological vision.³

To these contributing factors I would add the need for more constructive theology to be done in the service of a systematic, unifying theological vision of the church. Over the past five decades we have seen the publication of many helpful commentaries on the conciliar texts. Important contributions to Vatican II studies have been made in numerous books and articles that have provided redaction histories and nuanced interpretations of key conciliar texts and formulations. These studies

1. Hervé Legrand, “Forty Years Later: What Has Become of the Ecclesiological Reforms Envisaged by Vatican II?,” *Vatican II: A Forgotten Future* [Concilium 2005/4], 57-72, at 57.

2. *Ibid.*, 58.

3. Although the documents of the council are frequently cited in the code, and important conciliar themes do appear, Eugenio Corecco contends that the project to revise the code of canon law may simply have been undertaken too soon after the close of the council. Unlike the case of the liturgical reform, where a special commission was given the task of implementing one document, the Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law was charged with revising the code in the light of all sixteen documents. This represented a monumental task, and one that had to be undertaken before any systematic interpretations of the council's teaching had been fully achieved. According to Corecco, the commission charged with the revision “lacked the necessary distance from the conciliar event and, instead of undertaking a work of comprehensive comparative interpretation of the conciliar texts, preferred to make a selection.” Eugenio Corecco, “Aspects of the Reception of Vatican II in the Code of Canon Law,” *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua, and Joseph Komonchak (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1987) 249-296, at 261.

have been indispensable for Catholic scholarship. Yet Gilles Routhier has warned of the dangers for ecclesiology of relying exclusively on such focused, analytic projects:

Necessary and legitimate though this analytic method is, it tends, if it is not accompanied by a more synthetic method, to dismember the conciliar corpus by reducing it to so many instructions on specific questions. It tends to concentrate on particular, isolated pronouncements, thereby preventing a grasp of Vatican II as a coherent whole or a unified ensemble and reducing it to an aggregate of specific teachings. In effect, it is possible to gloss on and to comment ad infinitum on the teachings of the council – on subsistit in, for example, or the hierarchy of truths – without ever arriving at a grasp of the council's central intuitions that should still be nourishing us today.⁴

As Routhier notes, such a synthetic reading will look for seminal ideas, larger patterns and architectonic structures that informed the council's deliberations.⁵

In the last few years, promising efforts have been made toward the construction of a coherent ecclesiological interpretation of the council's many contributions. Peter Hünemann has offered an impressive account of the council's abiding significance by proposing that the council texts should function as a kind of "constitution" for the church.⁶ Massimo Faggioli has proposed a privileged role for the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy as a hermeneutical key for integrating the diverse ecclesiological concerns of the council.⁷ Jared Wicks and Christoph Theobald have both advocated for beginning conciliar theology with *Dei Verbum* and the council's theology of revelation.⁸ In this essay I wish to make a modest contribution toward a more synthetic account of the council by identifying a conciliar shift from a competitive to a noncompetitive theology of the church.

4. Gilles Routhier, "Vatican II: Relevance and Future," *Theological Studies* 74 (2013) 537-554, at 540.

5. *Ibid.*, 541.

6. Peter Hünemann, "Der Text: Werden – Gestalt – Bedeutung: Eine hermeneutische Reflexion," *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, ed. Peter Hünemann and Bernd Jochen Hilberath (Freiburg: Herder, 2006) V: 5-101.

7. Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012).

8. Jared Wicks, "Vatican II on Revelation – From Behind the Scenes," *Theological Studies* 71 (2010) 637-650; Christoph Theobald, *La réception du concile Vatican II*. Vol. I: *Accéder à la source* (Paris: Cerf, 2009).

I. The Modern Emergence of Competitive Theologies

A noncompetitive theology of the church represents an effort in ecclesiology to overcome a two-tiered failing of the theological imagination. The first level places God and creation, or some element of creation, in a competitive relationship. The second level places two elements or dynamisms within the life of the church in a competitive relationship.

In the first major work of an enormously fruitful theological project, the Protestant theologian Kathryn Tanner contended that traditional Christian doctrinal claims no longer appear coherent to many people today.⁹ The difficulty, she claimed, was that modern cultural/philosophical assumptions have been applied to traditional faith claims in ways that have rendered those faith claims incoherent. The theological challenge this presents, however, lies not in returning to a pre-modern worldview but in developing a kind of theological grammar that is both adequate to the insights of traditional faith claims yet capable of responding to contemporary challenges to the coherence of those claims. For Tanner, this apparent incoherence is the consequence of a persistent failure in the Christian tradition to provide an adequate theological account of the *noncompetitive* relationship between God and creation. This insight was, of course, central to the theology of Thomas Aquinas, who resolutely refused to place God and the world on some kind of ontological continuum. Tanner points out simply that “a noncompetitive relation between creatures and God means that the creature does not decrease so that God may increase.”¹⁰ Since God and creatures do not exist, as it were, on the same plane of being, we can speak of two distinct spheres of divine and human agency that interact in a noncompetitive relationship. Failure to honor the contours of this noncompetitive relationship has haunted Christian theology for centuries. In Christology, for example, we find the persistent inclination to place Jesus’ humanity and divinity in a kind of zero-sum game where to emphasize one was, inevitably, to de-emphasize the other.

According to Tanner, at least since the sixteenth century, this principle of noncompetition has been obscured by modern theology’s failure to recognize the modern cultural/philosophical presuppositions that came to govern the reception of traditional faith claims. She claims that

9. Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

10. Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001) 2.

“a modern emphasis on autonomous human powers of self-determination and self-assertion, and a modern tendency to perceive and comprehend the world apart from any reference to God,” uncritically accepted by theologians, produced, often against the intentions of those theologians, a competitive account of relations between God and the world.¹¹

Consider the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century debates regarding the proper relationship between divine providence and human freedom. In the Catholic theological world this debate was taken up in the form of the *de auxiliis* debate between Jesuits and Dominicans. The Jesuits, led by Luis de Molina, fought to preserve a sphere for authentic human freedom while the Dominicans, represented by Dominic Banez, stressed the absolute priority of divine sovereignty.¹² As Tanner notes, this theological debate suffered from a series of characteristically modern assumptions regarding the being and action of God and an increasingly extrinsicist view of the relationship between nature and grace that “tended toward a secularistic naturalism.”¹³ The modern presuppositions that governed the debate led to a situation in which “theological discourse about God’s sovereignty and the power and freedom of the creatures [was] no longer coherent.”¹⁴ For Tanner, the task of contemporary theology is to reconstruct a noncompetitive theological framework that can recover the coherence of traditional faith affirmations.

In Tanner’s later works she expands her project to develop a non-competitive theology of Christian life.¹⁵ For Tanner such a theology is grounded in God’s unmerited gift of God’s self to us. This grace never becomes our private possession but is received and shared in gratitude. Since grace is not a commodity to be measured, it cannot be the basis for a competitive relationship among creatures. Our lives are themselves sites of God’s self-giving action; this awareness of the graced character of our existence ought to challenge any competitive relationships with one another. Christians are to live in imitation of the divine gift-giving in which God, in giving away God’s very self, does not become any less God.¹⁶ God’s giving does not create lack within God because what is

11. Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology*, 152.

12. See Piet Schoonenberg’s own classic exposition of this dilemma in his work, *The Christ: A Study of the God-Man Relationship in the Whole of Creation and in Jesus Christ* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971) 13-49.

13. Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology*, 142-152, at 143.

14. *Ibid.*, 144.

15. Kathryn Tanner, *The Politics of God: Christian Theologies and Social Justice* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992); ead., *Economy of Grace* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005).

16. Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity*, 90.

given transcends quantification. So too we, God's creatures, acknowledging our own giftedness, are to imitate God's gift-giving in our relations with one another. What we give to and for one another is also beyond quantification and therefore does not contribute any lack or debt of the kind that would require a commensurable exchange.

In several of her works Tanner applies this principle of noncompetition to the field of social ethics but with relatively little consideration of its implications for ecclesiology. Recently the Catholic theologian John Thiel has appropriated elements of Tanner's work and proposed that Vatican II's teaching on the universal call to holiness, the baptismal priesthood and a more optimistic theology of the salvation of nonbelievers, all reflected the emergence of a noncompetitive theological framework.¹⁷ Thiel critically appropriates Tanner's schema in service of a more speculative project in eschatology. My interest lies in his claim that Vatican II marks the recovery of a noncompetitive theological schema.

II. Vatican II's Development of a Noncompetitive Theology of the Church

Let us recall Tanner's argument that the Christian story is ultimately concerned with the pursuit of a noncompetitive form of human relationship established within the sphere of divine grace. She writes:

God is always offering the whole of the good to everyone, limited only by our capacities to receive, limitations that may be the product of natural forms of finitude or of a divinely arranged diversity of roles in church or society, but are more likely the result of our own sinful institution of contrary, competitive economies . . . Inequalities that remain among creatures who retain the particularities of their identities are, ideally, not a matter of rank but a matter simply of a diversity of genuine goods.¹⁸

Tanner's brief mention here of "a divinely arranged diversity of roles in church or society" suggests the Christian ideal that within the sphere of God's grace, these roles are to be noncompetitive in form. Tanner does not develop this observation, but her theology invites a more extended application in the field of ecclesiology. For the church is indeed structured around a great diversity of roles and responsibilities, yet throughout history it has too often succumbed to the temptation to configure these

17. John Thiel, *Icons of Hope: The Last Things in Catholic Imagination* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013) 101-151.

18. Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, 28.

diverse roles and responsibilities in competitive hierarchical “economies” constituted by pervasive power inequities. I propose that Vatican II’s substantial, if not entirely consistent, recovery of pneumatology allowed it to move, however tentatively, toward a noncompetitive theology of the church.

A. *The Council’s Recovery of Pneumatology*

Vatican II took decisive steps toward recovering the long neglected place of pneumatology in Catholic ecclesiology. Since no one deserves more credit for lifting up the importance of pneumatology at Vatican II than Yves Congar, we might consider his own description of pneumatology:

By pneumatology, I mean something other than a simple dogmatic theology of the third Person. I also mean something more than, and in this sense different from, a profound analysis of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in individual souls and his sanctifying activity there. Pneumatology should, I believe, describe the impact, in the context of a vision of the Church, of the fact that the Spirit distributes his gifts as he wills and in this way builds up the Church. A study of this kind involves not simply a consideration of those gifts or charms, but a theology of the Church.¹⁹

But what of the council’s own treatment of pneumatology?²⁰ As Congar wrote in an essay published late in his career, it would not be correct to attribute to the council a fully developed pneumatology in spite of the 258 different references to the Holy Spirit in the council documents.²¹

Nevertheless, the council’s tentative re-appropriation of a more pneumatological ecclesiology represented an advance beyond the mystical body ecclesiology that emerged in the later writing of Johann Adam Möhler²² and which was adopted by the Roman School of neoscholastic

19. Yves Congar, “The Place of the Holy Spirit in Catholicism since the Counter-Reformation,” *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Seabury, 1983) I: 151-159, at 156.

20. See A. M. Charue, “Le Saint-Esprit dans ‘Lumen Gentium’,” *Ecclesia a Spiritu Sancto Edocta* [Festschrift for Gérard Philips] (Gembloux: Duculot, 1970) 19-39; Mary Cecily Boulding, “The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Documents of Vatican II,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 51 (1985) 253-267; Sally Vance-Trembath, *The Pneumatology of Vatican II: With Particular Reference to Lumen Gentium and Gaudium et Spes* (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2009).

21. Yves Congar, “The Pneumatology of Vatican II,” *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, I: 167-173, at 167.

22. Johann Adam Möhler, *Symbolik: oder, Darstellung der dogmatischen Gegensätze der Katholiken und Protestanten nach ihren öffentlichen Bekenntnisschriften* (Regensburg: G. J. Manz, 1924). For an extensive study of his ecclesiology see Michael Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation: Johann Adam Möhler and the Beginnings of Modern Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad, 1997).

manualists.²³ That mystical body theology was given a new impetus in the twentieth century in the work of Émile Mersch²⁴ and in Pope Pius XII's encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*. This pre-conciliar mystical body theology was not entirely lacking a reference to the Holy Spirit but the tendency was to draw on the Augustinian view of the Spirit as the animating soul of the ecclesial body. The difficulty with this approach, which admittedly is not entirely absent from the council documents, is that it tends to see the Spirit as a secondary adjunct to Christ; the Spirit is too easily presented as the Trinitarian person who comes along later to animate what Christ has already established.

We can identify the origins of the council's recovery of pneumatology with Pope John XXIII who, from the preparatory period all the way to his address at the close of the first session of the council, would express the hope on numerous occasions that the council might become a "new Pentecost."²⁵ Indeed, the allusion to Pentecost is decisive for grasping the council's pneumatology. After Christ's death and resurrection the Holy Spirit came down upon the believers gathered in Jerusalem. As those who received the Holy Spirit gave testimony to God's deeds, Jewish foreigners from throughout the known world all heard and comprehended their testimonies. The Spirit, allowing each to understand the other, transcended linguistic differences. In the account of Pentecost found in Acts 2, those diaspora Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem from other lands heard those giving witness *in their own languages*. Cultural difference was not destroyed but became the very instrument for a realization of a more profound unity-in-difference, a *noncompetitive* embrace of otherness, if you will. John XXIII's repeated allusions to Pentecost, allusions that would be taken up by many commentators on the work of the council,²⁶ suggests that the entire sphere of conciliar action can be read within the framework of Pentecost, a dramatic outpouring of the Spirit.

In the council's documents as well we can identify the outlines of a more fruitful appropriation of pneumatology. This pneumatology, however, never appears in isolation. As Congar notes, the council was

23. The Roman School included such figures as Giovanni Perrone, Carlo Passaglia, and J. B. Franzelin.

24. Émile Mersch, *La théologie du corps mystique* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1937).

25. For an extended treatment on the ubiquity of this biblical image in the many addresses of Pope John XXIII, see Thomas Hughson, "Interpreting Vatican II: A New Pentecost," *Theological Studies* 69 (2008) 3-37.

26. None more famously than Cardinal Leo Suenens in his book, *A New Pentecost?* (New York: Seabury, 1975).

able to recover the integral work of the Spirit in the life of the church while avoiding the dangers of both a Christomonism²⁷ and a pneumatocentrism.²⁸ The conjoined work of Christ and the Spirit appears throughout the council documents. In *Lumen gentium* 8 the analogy of the hypostatic union is enlisted in order to establish the vivifying work of the Spirit of Christ with respect to the “social structure of the church.” *Lumen gentium* 48 attributes to both Christ and the Spirit a role in the establishment of the church: “Christ when he was lifted up from the earth drew all humanity to himself. Rising from the dead he sent his life giving spirit upon his disciples and through him set up his body which is the church as the universal sacrament of salvation.”²⁹ The council presents the Spirit as the principle of growth and development within the life of the church. The interrelated missions of Word and Spirit flow from God’s initiative. Indeed, the conjoining of the missions of Word and Spirit find their proper place within the larger Trinitarian framework employed with a striking consistency in the council documents. In *Lumen gentium* the council quotes St. Cyprian, declaring “the Church has been seen as ‘a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’” (LG 4). *Sacrosanctum concilium* describes the church’s sacramental life as a Trinitarian participation in the paschal mystery:

Thus by baptism men and women are implanted into the paschal mystery of Christ; they die with him, are buried with Him, and rise with him. They receive the spirit of adoption as sons and daughters ‘in which we cry: Abba, Father,’ and thus become true adorers such as the Father seeks (SC 6).

In *Dei Verbum* the council eschewed the more propositional theology of revelation dominant in the dogmatic manual tradition in favor of a Trinitarian understanding of revelation as the self-communication of God the Father in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit:

It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will, which was that people can draw near to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature (DV 2).

27. Yves Congar, “Pneumatologie ou ‘Christomonisme’ dans la tradition latine,” *Ecclesia a Spiritu Sancto edocta*, 41-63.

28. Congar, “The Pneumatology of Vatican II,” 167-168.

29. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from conciliar texts are taken from Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations* (Northport, NY: Costello, 1996).

The distinctive role of the Spirit in this Trinitarian account of divine revelation is articulated in DV 5 where it is the Spirit that is the work of God within believers allowing them to “accept and believe the truth.” The council’s recovery of pneumatology, finding its proper place within a Trinitarian account of the life and mission of the church, undergirds the council’s shift from a competitive to a noncompetitive theology of the church.

B. Four Instances of the Council’s Development of a Noncompetitive Ecclesiology

This shift is evident in the council’s treatment of four central ecclesiological issues.

1. Toward a Noncompetitive Theology of the Relationship Between Pope and Bishops

In the eleventh century Pope Gregory VII inherited a church in crisis. Embedded in a feudal culture, the nobility exercised extraordinary influence over the life of the church, extending to the appointment and investiture of local bishops. Gregory feared that the autonomy necessary to fulfill the church’s mission was in jeopardy and so he acted decisively, asserting sweeping claims to papal authority over the nobility and over the processes by which bishops were invested with ecclesiastical authority. These initiatives came to be known as the Gregorian reforms and while they probably saved the proper autonomy of the church, they had a series of unintended consequences. The most important among these consequences was the dramatic reshaping of the papacy according to the model of the Roman emperor. The pope was not pope because he was bishop of the local church of Rome; the pope was effectively, bishop over the universal church. As William Henn has observed,

... one may wonder whether the juridical means used to achieve this end may not have overshadowed the desired effect. The desired freedom was won, but the fundamental “sacramentality” of the church was somewhat forgotten in the face of the overriding insistence that the church is a juridically structured society.³⁰

The shift from a sacramental to a juridical framework would have tremendous consequences for an understanding of the exercise of power

30. William Henn, *The Honor of My Brothers: A Brief History of the Relationship between the Pope and the Bishops* (New York: Crossroad, 2000) 107-108.

and authority in the church. The sacramental framework of earlier ecclesiologies had helped preserve a more relational view of power, one exercised in service of the church's life and mission. The juridical framework, however, encouraged over time competing claims to ecclesiastical power and jurisdiction.

A second stage in this development occurred in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries with the conciliarist controversy. The rise of first two and then three claimants to the papacy led to the summoning of the Council of Constance in 1413, considered the greatest (at least in terms of representation) ecclesiastical assembly of the whole Middle Ages. This council resolved the crisis by either deposing or accepting the resignation of all three claimants. The bishops at Constance then elected a new pope. This conciliar action effectively ended the schism, however, the resolution of the crisis occurred without any substantive papal participation, leading canonists to develop alternative accounts of the authority of councils, vis-à-vis the authority of the pope. A conciliarist tradition emerged which, in its more extreme forms, posited the fundamental superiority of councils over popes.³¹ The Council of Florence-Ferrara ultimately condemned, rather indiscriminately, all forms of conciliarism. From that time on the papacy would remain vigilant in repudiating any claims to a limited autonomy by national churches and their bishops as new forms of conciliarism. We see this ecclesiastical paranoia at the spectre of conciliarism in papal condemnations of Gallicanism, Febronianism and Josephinism in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. What had emerged was a competitive theology of the church in which power was distributed in a zero-sum game between two different and opposed ecclesiastical entities: the papacy on the one side and the council/bishops on the other. To assert the authority of the pope was to deny the authority of the council/bishops and vice versa.

Vatican II's teaching on episcopal collegiality represents an important if only initial move away from this competitive schema. The council was able to move in this direction in part by recovering both a theology of the local church and a theology of the bishop in service of the local church and the communion of churches. Beginning with the Eucharistic ecclesiology of *Sacrosanctum concilium*, the council offered a

31. The classic study of conciliarism remains, Brian Tierney, *Foundations of Conciliar Theory: The Contributions of the Medieval Canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955). See also Francis Oakley, *The Conciliarist Tradition: Constitutionalism in the Catholic Church, 1300-1870* (New York: Oxford, 2003); Paul Avis, *Beyond the Reformation?: Authority, Primacy and Unity in the Conciliar Tradition* (London: T & T Clark, 2006).

theological account of the local church as something other than a “branch office” of the universal church. It is in the local church where the people of God gather for the proclamation of the Word and the breaking of the bread under the presidency of an apostolic minister and from which they are sent into the world in mission. The council’s presentation of the local church and its relation to the universal church, however inconsistent, constituted nothing less than what Joseph Komonchak once referred to as a “Copernican revolution in ecclesiology.”³² Since it is the Eucharist that constitutes the local church, a theology of the universal church appears, not as an abstract universal entity, but as a spiritual communion of Eucharistic communions. And it is the Holy Spirit that acts as the divine agent of that communion (see LG 13, 25, 49; UR 2, AG 19).

From this recovery of the local church came a theology of the bishop as something other than a vicar of the pope; the council taught that the bishop is the ordinary pastor of the local church. We see in *Sacrosanctum concilium* that the local church finds its most visible expression at diocesan liturgies presided over by the bishop:

Therefore all should hold in great esteem the liturgical life of the diocese centered around the bishop, especially in his cathedral church; they must be convinced that the pre-eminent manifestation of the Church consists in the full active participation of all God’s holy people in these liturgical celebrations, especially in the same eucharist, in a single prayer, at one altar, at which there presides the bishop surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers (SC 41).

According to this passage the bishop’s ministry is best apprehended not by way of some abstract analysis of the sacramental powers conferred on the bishop at his consecration, but by way of his pastoral relationship to his flock, a fundamental relationship that was ritually enacted in the bishop’s presidency at the Eucharist. The council develops this further in the Decree on the Pastoral Office of the Bishop:

A diocese is a [portion] of God’s people entrusted to a bishop to be guided by him with the [the cooperation of his priests] so that, loyal to its pastor and formed by him into one community in and through the Gospel and the Eucharist, it constitutes one particular Church in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is truly present and active (CD 11).

32. Joseph A. Komonchak, “Ministry and the Local Church,” *CTSA Proceedings* 36 (1981) 58.

This relational view of episcopal ministry is then extended to the bishop's relationship to his fellow bishops in the episcopal college:

Individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular churches, which are modeled on the universal Church; it is in and from these that the one and unique Catholic Church exists. And for that reason each bishop represents his own church, whereas all of them together with the pope represent the whole Church in a bond of peace, love and unity (LG 23).

Note the significance here of the pope being placed *within* the college of bishops as both head and member. Even in its treatment of the teaching authority of the pope and bishops, *Lumen gentium* 25 begins first with the teaching authority of the college of bishops before considering that of the pope. Vatican II affirmed Vatican I's teaching on papal primacy, but did so by situating that primacy within the larger context of the entire episcopal college.

This shift provided the decisive theological foundation for the council's teaching on episcopal collegiality. The council asserted that although the college of bishops has no authority on its own apart from communion with its head, the pope, nevertheless, the college shares with the bishop of Rome, and never apart from him, "supreme and full power over the universal church" (LG 22). By making the doctrine of episcopal collegiality the context for a consideration of papal teaching authority, the council provided an opening for a noncompetitive framework for the pope/bishops relationship. Even when the pope exercised his authority apart from the explicit cooperation of the bishops, his actions presume an enduring communion between the pope and the college.

Unfortunately, the many compromises made to mollify the conservative minority, particularly the juridical rendering of collegiality articulated in the *nota praevia* attached to chapter three of *Lumen gentium*, attenuated this shift. For all the advances evident in the council's teaching on the episcopate, its treatment would have been improved by a more developed integration of pneumatology into its consideration of this topic. This lacuna is nowhere more evident than in the third chapter of *Lumen gentium* where we see a return of the pre-conciliar tendency to view the Spirit merely guaranteeing the efficacy of the exercise of church office.

Nevertheless, what we see in the council's teaching on episcopal collegiality is a move from a competitive to a noncompetitive account of the relationship between pope and bishops. The shift here is more tentative than one might have hoped. This is largely due to the council minority's fear that the emerging teaching on collegiality would undermine

Vatican I's teaching on papal primacy. The juridical reframing of collegiality in the *nota praevia* left only a cramped ecclesial space for a properly pneumatological account of the episcopal office. There can be no doubt that a fuller treatment of the liturgical context of episcopal ministry, hinted at in SC 41, would have placed the ministry of the bishops and their relationship with the bishop of Rome within a more satisfying, Trinitarian framework, one which would have brought out the full theological implications of a noncompetitive theology of the relationship between pope and bishops.

Two post-conciliar documents have offered more promise in this regard. The first is a much-overlooked 1982 ecumenical document produced by the Joint Commission for Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, titled, "The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity."³³ There the liturgical context of the ministry of the bishop is given rich expression. At the Eucharistic synaxis it is the bishop who presides over the *koinonia* of the Eucharistic assembly, a *koinonia* in turn grounded in the *koinonia* of the triune God. Episcopal ordination is not about the conferral of power but the insertion into a ministry of service to the *koinonia* of the church. And since this ecclesial *koinonia* is not limited to the local church but extends to the *koinonia* among all the churches, so too the bishop's ministry of service extends to his communion with his brother bishops, including, it would follow, the bishop of Rome.

We find further hints of a noncompetitive account of the pope-bishop relationship in Pope John Paul II's encyclical on ecumenism, *Ut unum sint*. There we find the following account of the relationship between pope and bishops:

This service of unity, rooted in the action of divine mercy, is entrusted within the College of Bishops to one among those who have received from the Spirit the task, not of exercising power over the people – as the rulers of the Gentiles and their great men do – but of leading them towards peaceful pastures.³⁴

Note that it is the Holy Spirit that establishes a noncompetitive relationship among the bishops and between bishops and the Christian faithful.

33. This document can be accessed on-line at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19820706_munich_en.html.

34. Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, 94. This encyclical can be accessed on-line at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html.

In spite of this remarkable document, the pontificate of John Paul II was responsible for a dramatic retrenchment in which the two principal post-conciliar institutions intended to realize the council's teaching were emasculated, the role of episcopal conferences and the synod of bishops.

2. Toward a Noncompetitive Theology of the Cooperation of the Magisterium and the Whole Christian Faithful in Receiving and Handing on the Faith

A second instance of the council's shift from a competitive to a noncompetitive theology of the church concerns the very handing on of the Christian faith. In 1906 Pope Pius X, in his encyclical *Vehementer nos*, described the church as an unequal society comprised of two ranks, the clergy and the laity. It was with the clergy alone that fell the responsibility of leadership in the church and the one responsibility of the laity was "to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the pastors" (8).³⁵ With the bishops lay the exclusive responsibility to teach the faith. At work here was a centuries old distinction between the teaching church (*ecclesia docens*) and the learning church (*ecclesia discens*). Neoscholastic theologies treated divine revelation as a *depositum fidei*, a somewhat unfortunate formulation that, while retaining a legitimate truth, risked distorting revelation by suggesting a quantitative collection of truths. Quantifiable conceptions of revelation made it easier to imagine revelation as something that could be possessed. This more propositional understanding of revelation hinted at an ecclesiastical Gnosticism in which divine truth was held exclusively by the pope and bishops who then handed these truths on to the rest of us. The French Benedictine, Ghislain Lafont, has referred to this as an "epistemology of illumination."³⁶ Yet this theology has tenuous roots in the Catholic tradition. According to Catholic teaching bishops do not receive supernaturally infused knowledge of divine revelation at their ordination. The bishops are given a special assistance of the Holy Spirit in their ministry to preserve that apostolic faith given to the whole church. The neoscholastic, propositional view of revelation reflects another manifestation of a competitive theological framework in which one posits a finite set of truths that are in the exclusive possession of the magisterium. Any claim that the faithful

35. This document can be accessed at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_11021906_vehementer-nos_en.html.

36. Ghislain Lafont, *Imagining the Catholic Church: Structured Communion in the Spirit* (Colleville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000) 39.

would have had their own access to those truths would compromise the distinctive claims of the magisterium.

Here again the council moves toward a noncompetitive framework by way of a more robust appropriation of a Trinitarian theology of revelation. This is evident in the very opening line of *Dei Verbum*: “Hearing the word of God with reverence and proclaiming it with faith, the sacred synod takes its direction from these words of St. John ...” (DV 1). Revelation, the council teaches, begins not with a collection of doctrines but with God’s Word. This Word is offered as an event of divine self-communication. In divine revelation God “addresses us as friends” and invites us into communion. Then it asserts, “by this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of humanity shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation” (DV 2). Knowledge of God is not like knowledge of the periodic tables in chemistry or of the public bus schedule. The knowledge of God that has been revealed to us in Christ is the kind of knowledge gained in personal relationship. We come to know God through our relationship with Christ and in his Spirit. Revelation comes to us in the person of Christ and, as such, it is received by the whole church, albeit in different ways. According to council teaching the magisterium has the exclusive responsibility to safeguard the apostolic faith through its authoritative teaching but, as the council taught:

This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit. . . (DV 10).

The council resisted any claim that the magisterium had an exclusive role to play in the transmission of the apostolic faith. According to the council all the Christian faithful play a role in receiving God’s Word. *Lumen gentium* 12 teaches that every Christian, by virtue of their baptism, receives a supernatural instinct for the faith through which “the people of God adheres unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints, penetrates it more deeply with right thinking, and applies it more fully in its life.” This insight appears as well in *Dei Verbum*’s articulation of the ecclesial processes that allow tradition to grow and develop:

This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth (DV 8).

In these various passages we see a theology of a listening church, one in which all believers should contribute to the development of tradition. Since the same Spirit that guides the magisterium confers on all believers the *sensus fidei* there can be no competition between the contributions of the bishops and those of ordinary Christian faithful. Further evidence of this noncompetitive understanding of the traditioning process of the church is fully displayed in *Gaudium et spes* 44:

With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word, so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage.

This noncompetitive understanding of the complex processes by which the church receives God's word will be further developed by Pope John Paul II, who in his apostolic letter, *Novo millennio ineunte*, quotes St. Paulinus of Nola: "Let us listen to what all the faithful say, because in every one of them the Spirit of God breathes" (NM 45). Later in an address to the U.S. bishops in September 2004 the pope went even further:

A commitment to creating better structures of participation, consultation, and shared responsibility, should not be misunderstood as a concession to a secular democratic model of governance, but as an intrinsic requirement of the exercise of episcopal authority and a necessary means of strengthening that authority.³⁷

It is difficult to ignore the unusually strong language: consultation is an "intrinsic requirement" of the exercise of church authority. There is no competition between the magisterium and the rest of the Christian faithful, all belong to a listening church. The pontificate of John Paul II and that of his successor, Benedict XVI, offered little evidence of any structural implementation of this conciliar insight.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law, in canon 212, explicitly affirms the rights of the faithful to make known their needs and desires and to share their insight with church leaders. In keeping with this fundamental right, the code provides several consultative structures oriented toward input from the Christian faithful.³⁸ For example the code encourages the creation of

37. Quoted in Thomas J. Healey, "A Blueprint for Change," *America* (September 26, 2005) 15.

38. Sharon Euart, "Structures for Participation in the Church," *Origins* 35 (May 26, 2005) 18-25. The treatment of the canonical structures for the consultation of the faithful in this section is largely drawn from Sr. Euart's address.

diocesan pastoral councils (c. 511) and the convocation of diocesan synods (cc. 460-468); in both instances lay participation is envisioned. However, it must also be noted that these structures are only *recommended* by the code whereas diocesan presbyteral councils are actually mandated by canon law (c. 495). There is another structure mandated by the code that, in principle, could offer an important venue for consultation of the faithful and that is the parish visitation. The Code of Canon Law requires that the bishop or a proxy visit all parishes in their diocese over a five-year period (c. 396.1). Of course structures for consultation are not limited to these canonical provisions. In many dioceses one finds various boards and commissions created to oversee important dimensions of the church's ministry and mission and many of these boards and commissions have significant lay representation. Still one has the impression that consultation is something more of pragmatic value than a theological and even doctrinal imperative.

Recent statements by Pope Francis offer hope that a new phase of ecclesial implementation of the council's teaching in this regard may finally be at hand. In an address to the coordinating committee for CELAM Pope Francis posed some pointed questions to the bishops who were gathered there:

Is pastoral discernment a habitual criterion, through the use of Diocesan Councils? Do such Councils and Parish Councils, whether pastoral or financial, provide real opportunities for lay people to participate in pastoral consultation, organization and planning? The good functioning of these Councils is critical. I believe that on this score, we are far behind.³⁹

In his young pontificate we can already see helpful indications that Pope Francis wishes to move beyond rhetoric to substantive reform in the area of consultative structures. This is evident in his creation of the Council of Cardinals and in the recent distribution of an extensive questionnaire seeking input from the faithful on a wide range of issues related to marriage and family in advance of the forthcoming synod.

3. Toward a Noncompetitive Theology of the Relationship between Baptismal Charisms and Church Office

A third instance of the council's noncompetitive ecclesiology concerns the relationship between the ministry of the ordained and public

39. This address, given on July 28th, 2013, can be accessed at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130728_gmg-celam-rio_en.html.

lay activity in the life of the church. The years immediately before Vatican II had seen a great burst of activity on the part of the laity that often found its form in what came to be known as Catholic Action. In 1927 Pope Pius XI characterized this initiative as “the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy.” In spite of the real contributions of the many Catholic Action initiatives, we see the same problematic way of imagining the ministry and other forms of ecclesial life. To the clergy alone belonged the prerogative of actively furthering the work of the church. The laity could only do so as a kind of auxiliary to the clergy. But was there a way to conceive of lay activity in the church and in the world as something other than a participation in an apostolate that was actually proper to the ordained? Was there a way of characterizing lay activity in the church in a noncompetitive relationship with the ministry of the ordained?

The solution came, once again, by way of the council’s recovery of the pneumatological conditioning of the church and in particular its appropriation of the biblical understanding of charism.⁴⁰ The council taught that the Spirit “guides the church in the way of all truth and, uniting it in fellowship and ministry, bestows upon it different hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs it and adorns it with his fruits” (LG 4). In this passage “hierarchic gifts” refers to stable church office and “charismatic gifts” refers to those many charisms that the Spirit distributes among all the faithful. In council teaching, charism and office are not opposed to one another since both have the Spirit as their origin. The council was effectively acknowledging that the Holy Spirit was co-instituting, with Christ, both institutional and charismatic elements in the church.⁴¹ In this way it affirmed that church office could not function properly unless it was informed by the Holy Spirit and charisms could not survive unless they submitted to an ordering which sought the good of the whole church.

By appealing to the biblical category of charism the council affirmed the indispensable role of all the faithful in building up the church and assisting in the fulfillment of the church’s mission in the world. The

40. Congar writes: “One of the most important ways in which the holy Spirit has been restored to the pneumatological ecclesiology of the Council was in the sphere of charisms.” “The Pneumatology of Vatican II,” 170.

41. Congar would, in his more mature work on pneumatology, insist that it was not enough to speak of the Spirit animating a church already established in its institutional structures by Christ. The Holy Spirit worked in history as a co-instituting principle in the development of those institutional church structures. See Yves Congar, “The Two Missions: The Spirit as the Co-Instituting Principle of the Church,” *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, II: 7.

bishops wrote: "It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries that the holy Spirit makes the people holy, leads them and enriches them with his virtues. Allotting his gifts 'at will to each individual,' he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank" (LG 12). Although few if any at the council could have anticipated the flourishing of lay ministries that would occur in the ensuing decades, it is this emphasis on the charisms of all the baptized that provided a helpful theological framework for interpreting that later post-conciliar development of lay ministry.

The council successfully transcended any competition between charism and office by stressing their mutual dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. In several passages the council suggested a possible theology of ordained pastoral leadership within a community animated by many charisms. Ordained pastoral leadership need not compete with the exercise of the many gifts of the faithful. Each requires the other. According to conciliar teaching, those ordained to pastoral leadership were not to absorb into their own ministry all the tasks proper to building up the church. Rather the church's pastors were exhorted to recognize, empower and affirm the gifts of all God's people. In the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam actuositatem*) the council held that, having received charisms from the Spirit through baptism,

there follow for all Christian believers the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of humanity and the development of the Church, to use them in the freedom of the holy Spirit who "chooses where to blow," and at the same time in communion with the sisters and brothers in Christ, and with the pastors especially. It is for the pastors to pass judgment on the authenticity and good use of these gifts, not certainly with a view to quenching the Spirit but to testing everything and keeping what is good (AA 3).

The Decree on Priestly Ministry and Life (*Presbyterorum ordinis*) likewise asserted the responsibility of the priest to affirm and nurture the gifts of the faithful: "While testing the spirits to discover if they be of God, they must discover with faith, recognize with joy and foster diligently the many and varied charismatic gifts of the laity, whether these be of a humble or more exalted kind" (PO 9). These passages situated ordained pastoral ministry not above but within the Christian community. The ordained minister is responsible for the discernment and coordination of the charisms and ministries of all the baptized.

The council boldly asserted the right and obligation of the faithful to use the charisms given them by the Spirit for service in the church

and in the world.⁴² The full significance of this development depends here on a noncompetitive conception of ecclesial power. As we saw in our treatment of the pope/bishops relationship, a competitive theology of power inevitably sees power as a possession held by some at the expense of others. Moreover, a competitive theology of ecclesial power tends to argue for such power as the exclusive province of the ordained. This competitive theology is reflected in the influential "German school" of canon law that saw ecclesiastical power as the exclusive province of the ordained. This continuing preoccupation with the distribution of ecclesiastical power is a stubborn remnant of a more competitive, juridical ecclesiology. The council nudged the church toward a new theological account, one that insisted that the pastors do not compete with the charisms of the lay faithful but lead the church by testing, empowering and ordering those charisms for the building up of the church and in service of its mission. Fifty years after the council we are still waiting for the institutional and pastoral fruition of this noncompetitive account of office and charism.

4. Toward a Noncompetitive Theology of the Spheres of Christian Activity

This final instance of the council's shift from a competitive to a noncompetitive ecclesiology is rooted in the council's theology of mission. Yet again, the council's Trinitarian framework plays an essential role in its understanding the church's mission: "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (AG 2). Just as the missions of Word and Spirit establish God as fundamentally God-with-us, that is, God reaching out to all creation in order to redeem it and draw it into saving communion, so too the church is described as essentially missionary. The church's mission to the world is not a dimension that is superadded to an essentialist account of the church's nature (something that is sometimes suggested when the theological phrase "the nature and mission of the church" is employed); rather the church's nature *is* to be in mission. In *Gaudium et spes* the council teaches that

42. According to John Beal, this "is the only right asserted in the documents of Vatican II not incorporated into the revised code." John Beal, "It Shall Not Be So among You: Crisis in the Church: Crisis in Church Law," *Governance, Accountability and the Future of the Catholic Church*, ed. Francis Oakley and Bruce Russett (New York: Continuum, 2004) 88-102, at 97.

“in virtue of its mission to enlighten the whole world with the message of the Gospel, and to gather together in one spirit all women and men [of every nation, race and culture, the church shows itself as a sign of that amity which renders possible sincere dialogue and strengthens it” (GS 92).

The council largely eschewed an antagonistic attitude toward the world, an attitude cultivated over centuries in response to a series of perceived threats: Protestantism, the rise of modern science, the Enlightenment, communism and capitalism. This new missionary stance is evident in a passage from the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity where a careful distinction, but not separation, is articulated regarding the relationship between the temporal and spiritual orders:

The mission of the church, consequently, is not only to bring people the message and grace of Christ but also to permeate and improve the whole range of temporal things. The laity, carrying out this mission of the church, exercise their apostolate therefore in the world as well as in the church, in the temporal order as well as in the spiritual. These orders are distinct; they are nevertheless so closely linked that God’s plan is, in Christ, to take the whole world up again and make of it a new creation, initially here on earth, totally at the end of time (AA 5).

The missionary framework for grasping the relationship between the temporal and spiritual orders is further developed in both *Ad gentes* and *Gaudium et spes*. The latter document rejected the competitive juxtaposition of church and world in favor of a noncompetitive view of the church sent in mission into the world, a church active within the world, offering to the world the precious gift of the Christian gospel while also receiving wisdom and insight from worldly realities (GS 44).

The council’s preferred metaphor for this new orientation of church to world was “leaven,” a metaphor that suggested a process of transformation from within. Church and world were no longer conceived as two completely different realms but overlapping and intertwined spheres of life. Indeed, in *Gaudium et spes* the sacred/temporal binary for configuring the church/world relationship gave way to a more eschatological framework. Jan Grootaers sees, for example, in chapter seven of *Lumen gentium* and in *Gaudium et spes* a reconfiguration of the church, not in relation to the temporal or secular order but rather in relation to the eschaton.⁴³ The pilgrim church “will attain its full perfection only in the glory of heaven, when there will come the time of the restoration of all

43. Jan Grootaers, *IDO-C*, Dossier 67-15/16 (May 14, 1967) 10.

things” (LG 48).⁴⁴ This pilgrim church travels in history in deep solidarity with all humankind, waiting in humility for the consummation of history in fulfillment of God’s reign:

The joys and the hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts (GS 1).

Of course this noncompetitive conception of the church/world relation was not maintained consistently throughout the council documents. This is evident in the council’s somewhat ambiguous theologies of the laity.

According to the Italian theologian, Giovanni Magnani, one can identify in the documents two different theologies of the laity.⁴⁵ The first, which he refers to as a “contrastive” theology, tries to define the laity in contrast to the clergy and puts more emphasis on the distinctively secular character of the lay vocation. This emphasis is certainly present in certain passages found in both *Lumen gentium* and *Apostolicam actuositatem*. So we find in *Lumen gentium* 31 the claim that

To be secular is the special characteristic of the laity ... It is the special vocation of the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will. They live in the world, in each and every one of the world’s occupations and callings and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, form the context of their existence (LG 31).

This contrastive view presumes a more pronounced distinction between church and world as distinct spheres of Christian activity, encouraging the view that the proper province of the clergy is ecclesiastical activity in the church while the realization of the laity’s proper vocation lies in the secular order. Although called to a more active participation in the mission of the church, the laity nevertheless realize what is truly proper to their Christian vocation in the temporal order. This contrastive theology of the laity was unable to escape a more competitive conception of church and world.

Edward Schillebeeckx criticized this theology of the laity, claiming that in spite of its significant advances, it still started from largely

44. My account of this eschatological framework of the church’s mission in the world is not intended as an alternative to what is often referred to as an incarnational understanding of the church world relation. See Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York: Paulist, 2012) 88.

45. Giovanni Magnani, “Does the So-Called Theology of the Laity Possess a Theological Status?” *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives*, vol. 1, ed. René Latourelle (New York: Paulist, 1988) 597ff.

“hierarchical premises” that reflected, using the terminology of this article, a competitive relationship between clergy and laity and a correlative competitive relationship between church and world:

Here it was often forgotten that this positive content [of a “theology of the laity”] is already provided by the Christian content of the word *christifidelis*. The characteristic feature of the laity began to be explained as their relation to the world, while the characteristic of the clergy was their relationship to the church. Here both sides failed to do justice to the ecclesial dimension of any *christifidelis* and his or her relationship to the world. The clergy become the apolitical men of the church; the laity are the less ecclesially committed, politically involved ‘men of the world’. In this view, the ontological status of the ‘new humanity’ reborn with the baptism of the Spirit was not recognized in his or her own individual worth, but only from the standpoint of the status of the clergy.⁴⁶

Although there is no denying that traces of this competitive schematization of the lay vocation can be found in select council texts, I contend that the deeper and more authentic impulses of the council took it in another direction. This deeper impulse situated all such distinctions regarding ecclesial roles and functions within the context of an overarching “common matrix,” as Kenan Osborne has referred to it.⁴⁷ The council’s frequent use of the term *christifidelis* to refer to all the baptized and its appeal to the priesthood of all believers further reinforced this common matrix.

Magnani also finds in the council texts evidence of a different account of the lay vocation, a more *intensive* theology of the laity. This approach sees the life of the typical lay Christian simply as a more intensive realization of the situation of all the *christifideles*, including the ordained as well as consecrated religious.⁴⁸ The council was clearly not attempting a formal definition of the laity.⁴⁹ This is confirmed in Cardinal Wright’s *relatio* on behalf of the sub-commission regarding *Lumen gentium* 31 where he noted that the text should not be read as an “ontological definition” but merely as a “typological description.”⁵⁰

46. Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face* (New York: Crossroad, 1985) 157.

47. Kenan B. Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist, 1993) 530ff.

48. Magnani, “Does the So-Called Theology of the Laity Possess a Theological Status?,” 611.

49. *Ibid.*, 604-620.

50. *Acta Synodalia* III/1, 282. This also appeared in the *relatio* introducing chapter four, see *Acta Synodalia* III/3, 62. For one interpretation of this distinction see Edward Schillebeeckx, “The Typological Definition of the Christian Layman according to Vatican II,” *The Mission of the Church* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973) 90-116.

By establishing the foundational character of baptism, discipleship and our shared obligations for Christian mission the council did much to nudge the church toward a more noncompetitive theology that refuses to place church and world in competition and consequently, refuses to assign the laity and clergy to completely separate spheres of Christian activity.

This analysis of the council's transition to a noncompetitive theology of the church might easily have been extended to other topics in conciliar teaching including the Catholic church's relationship to other Christian churches and ecclesial communities as well as Christianity's relationship to other non-Christian religions. However, the four topics explored in this essay are sufficient, I hope, to demonstrate the fruitfulness of this interpretation of conciliar teaching.

I began this essay with a brief consideration of some of the reasons why the full implementation of the council's bold reformist vision has not been fully realized. I have suggested that furthering the council's reformist program requires that the many contributions of more focused, analytic studies of the council be accompanied by more synthetic interpretations that can hold together the diverse elements of the council's program. Without such a cohesive vision the council's reforms can too easily be isolated as *ad hoc* proposals prone to superficial implementation and an inevitable domestication. Seeing the council's work as part of a fundamental ecclesiological shift from a competitive to a noncompetitive account of the church can help provide a more coherent rendering of the council's enduring contributions and help the church today enact a new agenda for ecclesial reform.

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