

*Yamauchi*  
LECTURES IN RELIGION

Prof. Ratzinger  
at Vatican II:  
A Chapter in  
the Life of Pope  
Benedict XVI

The Rev. W. Jared Wicks, S.J., Ph.D.



LOYOLA  
UNIVERSITY  
NEW ORLEANS

*Spring 2007*

The Yamauchi Lectures in Religion series, established in 1985, is named in memory of the Rev. H. James Yamauchi, S.J., a former chair of Loyola's Department of Religious Studies who taught at Loyola from 1956 to 1966. Yamauchi was known for his effective and enthusiastic communication of knowledge about the religions to the New Orleans community.

### About the Rev. W. Jared Wicks, S.J., Th.D.

The Rev. W. Jared Wicks, S.J., Th.D., studied in the Catholic Theology faculty of the University of Muenster (1964 – 67), gaining his Th.D. with a dissertation, *Man Yearning for Grace: Martin Luther's Spiritual Teaching 1509 – 1517*. Other writings and reviews on Luther followed down to today. After Muenster, he taught at Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago, the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (1979 – 2004), and is now adjunct professor of fundamental and ecumenical theology at John Carroll University (Cleveland, Ohio). Wicks was named to the Lutheran/Catholic world-level dialogue in 1986 for the phase that brought out *Church and Justification* (1994) and continued in the dialogue that has produced *The Apostolicity of the Church* (2007). He also worked in the group that drafted the *L/RC Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999). Recently, Wicks has become active in research on the contributions of the theologians/periti at Vatican Council II, with conference papers in Rome and Louvain and publications in *Gregorianum*, *Humanitas* (Brescia), and *Catholic Historical Review*.

## Professor Ratzinger at Vatican II: A Chapter in the Life of Pope Benedict XVI April 15, 2007

Jared Wicks, S.J.

### **Introduction, 1. A helpful visit to Prof. Ratzinger in his office**

In May 1964, I was completing my Jesuit tertianship in Münster, while also thinking ahead to doctoral studies in theology. I found out the times of Prof. Ratzinger's office hours and I went one day to the Catholic Theology Faculty to explore with him the possibility of doing a dissertation under his direction. I told him that I wanted to prepare for work in the ecumenical area by doing a dissertation on one of the Protestant reformers. He listened and after a minute of reflection he told me that he could not add another *doctorandus* to the group already working with him because his Council work of assisting Cardinal Frings was taking time away from his teaching and directing of theses. But then he added that the Council of Professors had completed negotiations to bring Prof. Erwin Iserloh, a historical theologian specializing in the Reformation era, from Trier to join the Münster Faculty. Prof. Ratzinger thought that, once Prof. Iserloh arrived in the late summer, I would find him ready and willing to be my dissertation moderator. On the basis of that "tip" I stayed in Münster, where I did receive attentive direction of my dissertation on Luther from Prof. Iserloh, but I also had the chance to follow Prof. Ratzinger's lectures on ecclesiology before he left for Tübingen.

### **Introduction, 2. Research on the Vatican II theologians/periti**

At the Gregorian University in Rome, where I taught until June 2004, several doctoral candidates whom I directed chose to do their dissertations on Vatican II doctrinal topics, based on research in the published record of the Council and in archives which preserve the papers of Council members and of the theological experts who assisted them. As I followed the work of these students, I became fascinated with the "great generation" of theologians who contributed at different times and in different ways to the huge event that was Vatican Council II. Researching the theologian-experts with an eye to the ways and means of their contribution to the Council's documents, I've been able so far to publish articles based on the papers of the Dutch Jesuit, Pieter Smulders, along

with studies on the Council work of the French Dominican Yves Congar and the Louvain professor Charles Moeller.<sup>1</sup>

After Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger became Pope Benedict XVI in April 2005, it was natural to begin assembling materials on his contribution as a theologian at Vatican II. His Council work falls into three parts. First, the then Professor assisted Cardinal Joseph Frings of Cologne, especially in preparing what the Cardinal said in his oral comments in the Council meetings in St. Peter's.<sup>2</sup> Second, Ratzinger was active in the opening months of the Council, with others, in writing "alternative" texts as better bases of discussion than the first official draft-documents. Third, the Professor was drawn into the service of Commissions of the Council in their work of entering revisions into draft texts to make them ready for voting and promulgation as final Vatican II documents.

What follows falls under nine headings, beginning before the Council and continuing through its four working periods, with the aim of illustrating Joseph Ratzinger's work at Vatican II.

### 1. Cardinal Frings's Genoa Lecture, Nov. 1961.

In February 1962, Cardinal Frings, Archbishop of Cologne, Germany, and President of the West German Episcopal Conference, was in Rome, taking part in meetings of the Central Preparatory Commission of Vatican Council II. This was eight months before the opening of the Council, which followed in October, and in February 1962, this Commission of ca. 80 cardinals and bishops was going over draft texts, already prepared by the ten particular Commissions, to evaluate them for their suitability to serve as bases of discussion in the coming Council and even for eventual publication as teaching documents by the Council or as decrees on Catholic practice.

At the beginning of one day's meeting, Card. Frings found at his place a note telling him to come for an audience with Pope John XXIII later that morning. No reason was given. When he was admitted to the papal apartment, Pope John met him with a smile and *abbraccio* (hug), explaining, "Last night I read your lecture given in Genoa. Thank you for such a fine talk. Our thinking about the Council flows together beautifully (*che bella coincideza del pensiero!*).

Frings had to answer to the effect that the lecture was written for him by Prof. Ratzinger, who is now teaching theology near Cologne in Bonn. John XXIII smiled understandingly, "Yes, they do the same for me; the key thing is to find good help for texts like this and then put your signature under them!"

The background to this "meeting of minds" between Pope and Cardinal is the series of lectures on the coming Council by leading cardinals at the Christopher Columbus Center in Genoa in Autumn 1961. For this series, Frings was asked to speak on the world-situation facing the Church, contrasting the present world situation before Vatican II with what Vatican Council I had faced 90 years earlier. Just after he agreed to give the lecture, the Cardinal met Prof. Ratzinger and told the 34-year-old, little-known Professor about the topic given him, and when Ratzinger showed interest, the Cardinal asked him to work up some points.<sup>3</sup>

Soon the Professor sent the Cardinal a full text in German on the world situation and factors in the life of the Church as it turns toward Vatican Council II. Card. Frings liked it so much that he had copies made which he gave to all the German bishops at the next meeting of the German Episcopal Conference, of which he was President. Shortly after, the text was translated into Italian and then given in Genoa at the Columbus Center on Nov. 20, 1961. Very soon the Italian version was out in the book that John XXIII read, with an "Aha!" of recognition of ideas expressing his own hopes for the Council.

Note the setting: Frings and John XXIII talked two years after the Pope had announced (Jan. 25, 1959) that he was convoking a General Council. In early 1961, the Council was being prepared—by particular Commissions (doctrine, missions, lay apostolate, liturgy, seminary education, bishops)—but few of these were giving signs of having grasped what Pope John was hoping for. So the Pope welcomed the ample vision and pertinent "pointers" that he found in Card. Frings's lecture.<sup>4</sup>

### 2. The Tasks of Vatican II according to Ratzinger/Frings, 1961

The Genoa Lecture written by the Professor for the Cardinal came to be published under the Cardinal's name.<sup>5</sup> The text ranges widely, but here I select just three points in which Ratzinger/Frings set out what the Council could very well undertake.

2.1 The experience of massive destruction during two World Wars has shown that the traditional culture of Western Europe has serious limitations. This means that the Catholic Church, long identified with that culture, has to open itself to the variety of humankind. The challenge is to become more truly "catholic" or universal.<sup>6</sup> We are one as a people reborn sacramentally of water and the Holy Spirit, but that unity has to learn to co-exist with greater Catholic variety. (1) Our worship must break out of its Latin uniformity to allow greater differentiation, as different peoples give expression before God to their special gifts and outlooks. (2)

Church government should become less centralized, so as to give bishops and their conferences greater roles in their own regions, where "local churches" are truly Churches with their sacrament life and vocation of service, while united with the See of Peter, which need not be an all-encompassing government.

2.2 In the urban-industrial society of the mid-20th century, people have very few contacts with the natural wonders of God's creation. We deal all the time with human-made realities, products of industry and technology, and are rarely in direct contact with the beauties and grandeur of nature. Modern people have few contacts with the work of the Creator. So, in teaching the faith, the Council should focus less on nature and more on the human person in its grandeur and restlessness, on human yearnings for "more" and "better," yearnings which God alone truly satisfies. Here we hear an echo of St. Augustine: "our hearts are restless, until they rest in you, Lord." We recall that Joseph Ratzinger's doctoral dissertation of 1953 had immersed him in the writings of St. Augustine.

2.3 In looking at the Church of ca. 1960, Ratzinger/Frings singled out two notable "movements" inspired by the Holy Spirit to enrich Catholic piety and spirituality: devotion to Mary (Lourdes, Fatima), and (from Benedictine monasteries) proposals of liturgical renewal to deepen our Christian spirit through worship based on the original structures of Eucharistic and sacramental worship. But these two movements seem alien to each other. The Council should work toward integrating the two dynamic gifts, for example, by presenting Mary as the icon and original image of the believing Church and by connecting her with the communion of saints, which is present and praying in our worship.

### **3. Prof. Ratzinger as Cardinal Frings's peritus (theological expert) before Vatican II**

The experience of Prof. Ratzinger's help on the Genoa lecture convinced Card. Frings to ask further assistance. In April and May 1962, Frings gave the Professor the draft texts about to come before the Central Commission for evaluation, especially texts from the Theological Commission, headed by the powerful Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani. From the biography of Card. Frings and from the published minutes of the Central Commission, we can follow the trail of Prof. Ratzinger's preparation of several of the Cardinal's interventions in Rome at the May and June 1962 meetings of Vatican II's Central Preparatory Commission.

3.1 In May 1962, the Central Commission reviewed a draft on the nature of the Church. Following Ratzinger, Cardinal Frings registered his dissent over calling the Church on earth "the church militant." Far better to speak of the Church as being "on pilgrimage here on earth." In Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*), the opening chapter will set forth "the mystery of the Church" (LG nos. 1-8) and, yes, will take the very word "church" from Scripture's account of Israel on pilgrimage in the desert, where it knew "trials and tribulations" (LG 9.3)

3.2 In the same draft, Frings followed Ratzinger in asking that the text omit any precise account of who was and was not a Church "member." Theologians are discussing this, with some now underscoring how central in being a Christian are baptism and other "elements" shared with non-Catholic Christians, who, while confessing Christ, are not "members" of the Catholic Church. The Council should not cut short this on-going exchange among reputable Catholic theologians.<sup>7</sup> Vatican II in time spoke of degrees of incorporation into the church, and so of "communion" with other Christians, which is real or true but imperfect, while avoiding any use of the term "members" (LG 14-15).

3.3 In June 1962, the Theological Commission submitted a text on Church/State relations. On this, Ratzinger wrote and Frings repeated in the Central Commission, that another preparatory body, the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, was developing a much better account of Church/State, one that avoided Card. Ottaviani's ideal of a Catholic State that, as State, professed the true faith and gave its support to the one true Church. In the meeting, Frings attacked the Ottaviani text: Today the Church never appeals to "the secular arm" for help, and it recognizes that human beings have a right to make their personal option of faith free of any of coercion by secular public authorities. The State is duty-bound to protect this right to religious liberty.<sup>8</sup> Here, clearly, was one step toward Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Liberty (*Dignitatis humanae*).

### **4. Ratzinger/Frings on the Official Draft-texts for Vatican II's First Period, 1962**

In 1962, in the German language area, theologians helping future Council members began to exchange ideas among themselves. September 9 - 11, a month before Vatican II opened, seven of them worked for two days in Mainz at the residence of Bishop Hermann Volk, who had been dogma professor at Münster until shortly before. The theologians assessed

the first booklet of seven draft texts that all the bishops had just received as matters of discussion for the Council's First Period. In the group, the much-published Karl Rahner (b. 1904) was the natural leader and convener, since he had been for nearly a year evaluating the draft documents for Cardinals König of Vienna and Döpfner of Munich. But Prof. Ratzinger was there, since he had the ear of Card. Frings, the President of the Bishops' Conference.

By late summer 1962, Prof. Ratzinger had agreed to be Card. Frings's personal *peritus* or theological assistant during the Council. At the end of August, six weeks before Vatican II began, Card. Frings sent Ratzinger the booklet of seven drafts asking his evaluation, for example, on what texts to reject, with reasons for this, and what improvements to introduce into the other texts.

Ratzinger waited until after the Mainz meeting with other theologians and then he sent the Cardinal his own version of what he thought after meeting with the other theologians. He wrote in Latin to make it easy to send a part or even all of it on to the Council Secretariat as had been requested. Card. Frings did not even have Ratzinger's text re-typed, but simply signed it and sent it on to Rome.

Some points made by Ratzinger/Frings in evaluation of the first drafts for Vatican II are these.

4.1 John XXIII has set as goals for the Council a vital spiritual renewal of Catholics and the updating of worship and practice, so that the Church's witness to Christ might resonate in the world with greater impact. Judging by these criteria, only two of the drafts are outstanding: the document on liturgical renewal and another text on ecumenical steps toward restoring full communion with the Orthodox churches.

4.2 However, the other texts, especially those from the Theological Commission, suffer from adopting a dry text-book approach, bereft of the beauty found in biblical teaching and the works of early Church Fathers. Furthermore, they are too ready to settle topics of open discussion among Catholic theologians, which past General Councils have intentionally avoided doing. And in citing the sources of their judgments, they list many discourses of Pope Pius XII and his and other papal encyclicals of the past ca. 70 years as if these recent texts stood on the level of teaching by the Church's general councils. Furthermore, the Preparatory Theological Commission has not revised its texts according to recommendations made when they were reviewed by the Central Preparatory Commission.

4.3 One of the other texts, namely, the draft that treats tradition and Scripture as "sources of God's revelation," should be thoroughly revised. To make it satisfactory for the Council: (1) statements should be struck which settle inner-Catholic controversies; (2) the text needs a first chapter on God's own word of revelation before it treats the "sources" from which we know God's word; and (3) the text could well take over passages from the draft-text *De verbo Dei* of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity with the aim of improving the Theological Commission's chapter on the Bible in the life of the Church.<sup>9</sup> As it turned out, Vatican II did take these steps as it moved toward completing its most profound text, *Dei Verbum*, on God's revelation and its communication in the Church.

#### 5. J. Ratzinger to the German-speaking bishops, Oct. 10, the vigil of VCII's opening.

In Rome for the Council, Cardinal Frings convened the German bishops, with an open invitation as well to the bishops of Austria, Scandinavia, and German-speaking Switzerland, to meet Monday afternoons during the Council at the residence, Collegio S. Maria dell'Anima, near Piazza Navona, where he lived and Prof. Ratzinger had his room during the working periods of Vatican Council II.

The Monday meetings were for discussing Council matters, often with input by experts on questions coming up on the agenda. Soon the meeting became the place for preparing common interventions, signed by many bishops or all them, with one of the Cardinals or Archbishops delegated to speak in St. Peter's in the name of 60 – 65 of them. Card. Frings also set up an office in the College, with a mimeograph machine and a secretary, for producing and circulating information and other texts. Mimeographing was the technology for circulating ideas and proposals at Vatican II, leading to a great "deposit" of papers in archives of those who were there.

The initial meeting of this German-speaking group of Council members took place Oct. 10, 1962, the day before the solemn opening of the Council. There, at the invitation of Card. Frings, J. Ratzinger spoke on the first text in the booklet of drafts, "The Sources of Revelation" (tradition & Scripture), since it might come up early in the Council. Here are three points made by the professor that day.<sup>10</sup>

5.1 Ratzinger was critical of the draft-text for being typically modern in its approach, that is, focused on our human discovery of God and his Word, on where we look for the Word. But the Council should begin, as Scripture does, with God, with God's initiative to communicate to us, an initiative which comes before humans give the witness to God and the

saving message, as we find this in Scripture and the other sources. The eventual text of *Dei Verbum* does have a new Chapter I on God's initiative in revealing himself to humans in Israel and in a culminating way in Christ, who is the "mediator and sum total of revelation" (DV 2).

5.2 Where the text takes up the inspiration of the Bible, Ratzinger noted how it gives a theory of the Holy Spirit's influential interaction with the biblical author's human mind, will, and expressive powers. For Ratzinger this was not wrong, but it goes into more detail than a Council should do in its teaching. The text would have the Council do what should be left to theological work. Furthermore, the account can be read as saying that God dictates timeless doctrine, as in the case of Muhammad and the Qur'an, while it neglects how our biblical authors served in communities of faith in Israel and the early Church. The Council should confess the faith that God called and aided human authors in composing Scripture, but remain reserved about how this took place. Again, this is exactly what *Dei Verbum*, no. 11, on biblical inspiration, does in the text approved by the Council in 1965.

5.3 A Church historian in the fourth century, Eusebius, said that the Roman Emperor Constantine first defended the Church against its pagan enemies, but then by convening the first general Council, at Nicea in 325, Constantine went to war against heretics, the internal enemies of God's truth. Ratzinger said that this is not a good image of the Council since it is not an army in battle array, but a gathering of those who teach the faith, to confess our common beliefs and help present-day unbelievers to see the beauty and meaningfulness of our response of faith. This word from 1962, preferring to drop a self-understanding of "the Church militant," anticipates in an uncanny way the style of Benedict XVI in his first months as Pope: speaking softly, extolling God's love, focused on Christ as source of meaning in human life.

#### 6. Joseph Ratzinger as a "constructive agitator" at Vatican II, 1962

During the first working period of Vatican II, October 11 to December 8, 1962, the assembly of ca. 2,300 Council members dealt with three main topics: (1) liturgical renewal, from Oct. 22 to Nov. 14; voting 2162-46 to follow the lines of the draft decree, with proposed revisions; (2) the sources of revelation, voting on Nov. 20 1368-822 for ending discussion of this text, which John XXIII remanded to a special Commission for major reworking; (3) the nature and structure of the Church, Dec. 1 - 7, with so many criticisms that no vote was needed to show that the Doctrinal Commission would have to prepare another text.

Some theologians advising the bishops began exchanges among themselves, with the German theologians being especially active, eventually circulating mimeographed statements of support for the draft on Liturgy and of objections to the texts, "The Sources of Revelation" (tradition and Scripture), and "On the Church."

Early on, with Card. Frings's backing, Prof. Ratzinger went beyond criticisms of the official texts to draw up a positive statement on the Word of God, Scripture, and tradition in a more pastoral style, treating Scripture in a positive way as source of Christian vitality. Such a text might replace the draft on the sources. On Oct. 25, Frings called together seven leading cardinals to discuss the problems of the draft texts. And at this meeting, J. Ratzinger read a first version of his alternative text.<sup>11</sup> K. Rahner was doing similar work, and in the following week, he and Ratzinger melded their texts into a short Latin treatise, *The Revelation of God and Man in Jesus Christ*, which stated the central truth of faith on human beings called by God to union with himself, on revelation in Christ, on the Church's active and vital "traditioning" of the Gospel, and on the Scriptures as the inspired written witness to God's saving work.<sup>12</sup>

Card. Frings liked the text and got the approval of four other Conference presidents to circulate it in their name as "a compendium of points from the initial drafts, in a positive and pastoral tone." The text was mimeographed, stapled, and distributed in ca. 2,000 copies early in November 1962. It had 11 dense paragraphs, divided into three chapters.

Chs. I - II appear to be mostly from Rahner, in their treatment of God's creation of human beings with the destiny of union with Himself in interpersonal love. To this, God calls every person, while also giving historical support to this call partially by the world's religions and then operatively in Israel before it becomes supremely clear in Christ.

Ratzinger's hand can be seen in Ch. I, on Christ himself as "God's living word searching us out" (*vivum Dei verbum quaerens nos*). The authors show the significance of their title by insisting that Christ reveals to us both the true face of God and the profound truth about our humanity as loved and redeemed by God. Vatican II will state this notion clearly at the end of DV 2 and dramatically in *Gaudium et spes* 22,5.

Ch. III seems to be basically from Ratzinger. It sets forth Christ as the center of revelation, the one truth to which all revealed truths lead back, which echoes a motif from St. Bonaventure. The Church hands on God's saving word, by its life and preaching, which is *tradition* in the whole life of the Church. In Scripture, what was taught orally in Israel and the apostolic church was fixed in inspired writings, which we must examine as human texts but also as vehicles of life-giving spirit. The Church is the

gathering of “those who hear the word of God and keep it” (Lk 11:28). The biblical writers worked in and for believing communities in Israel and the Church, and an adequate understanding of their written words presupposes the influence of the faith instilled by the Church. But the Church submits to Scripture, because it is the *ancilla verbi*, “handmaid of the Word,” serving the word, but Scripture looks to the action of the Church in opening up its meaning. In the end, Christ, living in the Church, is the key to grasping Scripture’s message and meaning (*clavis Scripturarum, canon interior aperiens quod in eis est*).

We can ask here, what was going on in this “constructive agitation” by the theologians who circulated texts during Vatican II’s opening Period in 1962, an activity in which Joseph Ratzinger took part.<sup>13</sup>

(1) Some texts circulated by the theologians urge strongly that the official texts prepared before the Council did not breathe the generous spirit of Pope John XXIII, as he spoke of the aims and purposes of the Council in his major addresses of September and October 1962. He hoped for fresh presentations of the Church’s heritage, to show it an agency of God’s mercy and promoter of human life in the world. Some of the theologians were summarizing Pope John’s aims and goals, while judging that the first draft-texts, except the one on liturgical renewal, were defective by this criterion.

(2) The theological drafts were mainly summaries of what Popes had been teaching from 1890 to ca. 1955 and what then went into theology textbooks based on papal teaching. A theologian like Joseph Ratzinger, formed during the 1950s, worked regularly from biblical theology and the great Fathers of the Church, to offer a better integrated and more vibrant vision of Christianity than found in the standard dogmatic textbooks. Pope Pius XII had once urged theology to seek constant *rejuvenation* from these sources. The theologians were showing the bishops, many of whom were educated before World War II, the possibility of a “better way” of teaching, which was also ecumenically promising.

(3) The German theologians, especially, had experience of regular dialogue with their Lutheran colleagues in the Evangelical Theology faculties in the universities, and so were impatient with a textbook theology—still reigning in Rome and present in many prepared Council drafts—that featured anti-Protestant positions based on simplistic accounts of what the Reformation stood for.

(4) Some of the “agitation” was in continuation of work by the theologians in the three years before Vatican II opened. During the initial canvas of 1959 – 60, some theologians had assisted bishops in formulating possible Council topics and they worked on studies of topics submitted by their theology faculties. Then, some of them, not, however, J. Ratzinger, had been consultants of the Preparatory Commissions and so knew how these were dominated by thinking different from Pope John’s vision. There was a real symbiosis at Vatican II between Pope John XXIII and several theologians from northern Europe as shown by John’s delight over the Ratzinger/Frings Genoa lecture.

### 7. Card. Frings speaks to the Council, with Prof. Ratzinger’s help

During the four working periods of Vatican II, Cardinal Frings made 17 oral interventions on Council topics. His speeches in St. Peter’s had a notable impact since as a senior Cardinal he was often among the first to address a topic. Also, his promotion of development aid by the West German church for third-world and especially Latin American churches had gained him many grateful friends among the bishops of those areas, who would listen carefully to the points he made when speaking in St. Peter’s. Cardinal Frings was nearly blind, and so he was very dependent upon his advisors, among whom J. Ratzinger covered issues of doctrine.<sup>14</sup>

I’ll mention only five high points of the 10 speeches that the Cardinal prepared with Ratzinger’s help.<sup>15</sup>

7.1 On Nov. 14, 1962, the first day of discussion on “The Sources of Revelation,” Card. Frings was the second speaker, beginning, “*Schema... non placet*—I do not approve the draft.” It has the wrong tone, being too sharp in correcting other views, some held by reputable Catholic theologians. It does not echo the Good Shepherd. It asks the Council to ratify at the highest level a recent notion of “two sources” of our knowing the Word of God (tradition & Scripture), as different from each other, a view which the Church Fathers, previous Councils, and even St. Thomas did not defend.<sup>16</sup>

7.2 On December 4, 1962, on the draft on the nature of the Church, Frings spoke against the text in the name of all the German-speaking Council members. The draft’s documentation for its positions gave references to earlier Church documents, but they are almost all from the Latin Church and most from the Popes of the past century. The text neglects the early Fathers, which impoverishes the text, and its exclusively Latin basis is sure to repel Orthodox Christians. The text misses a great ecumenical opportunity by bearing no trace of the Greek Fathers’

understanding of the Church from the sacrament of the Eucharist, which makes us one in Christ.<sup>17</sup>

7.3 On November 8, 1963, during the Second Period of Vatican II, the members were discussing a draft on the ministry of bishops. This occasioned Card. Frings's best known Vatican II speech, because it included critical remarks on how offices of the Roman curia carry out their work. Those offices have to be more carefully regulated, especially the office of doctrinal oversight, which has outdated methods which injure the Church and scandalize many. This was a critique of Cardinal Ottaviani's office and of its methods inherited from the Inquisition.

Actually Cardinal Frings added on his own seven lines of sharper criticism beyond Joseph Ratzinger's draft. They concerned the right of a person accused of doctrinal error to be presumed innocent and to make a defense against the accusation. This remark, in St. Peter's by Card. Frings, led to long applause from the Council members and, shortly after, to an angry retort by Card. Ottaviani. But that evening, Pope Paul VI contacted Cardinal Frings to ask him to draw up a memorandum on reform of the Curia.<sup>18</sup>

7.4 During Vatican II's Third Period, on Oct. 27, 1964, a Ratzinger-inspired intervention of Card. Frings was sharply critical of the first draft of Vatican II's document on the Church in the Modern World. The text speaks of the great significance for understanding the world that God's eternal Son became incarnate in human flesh in this world, but the text neglects to say that his coming led to his death on the cross. We must not think that human progress in the world brings about the Kingdom of God. Salvation comes by Christ's death and resurrection and real progress consists in human beings growing in faith, hope, and charity by which we relate rightly to God and our fellow humans.<sup>19</sup>

7.5 Cardinal Frings spoke on Oct. 8, 1965, in praise of the revised draft-text on the Church's missionary activity, because of its solid theological account of why the Gospel must still be preached by missionaries, even in a world in which God's grace of salvation is offered to every person, often by ways known only to God. Missions must continue, for the good of the whole human family in which the Church has to show forth its life and worship as saving and dynamically growing.<sup>20</sup> This intervention was, in fact, a bit of kudos for Joseph Ratzinger, who had worked as theological expert for the Commission on the Missions in revising its text, the future Vatican II decree *Ad Gentes*.

## 8. Prof. Ratzinger's work as Council *peritus* assisting Council Commissions

During the Council's First Period in 1962, at Card. Frings's recommendation, Joseph Ratzinger was named an official *peritus* of the Council, which opened for him an area of work beyond being Card. Frings's personal theologian. He soon began assisting conciliar commissions, made up of Council members, in the demanding work of preparing new versions of draft texts in the light of comments made on them by the Council members, whether given orally during the debates in St. Peter's or submitted in writing as the debates ended.

8.1 The great theme of the Second Period of Vatican II was the Episcopate in the Church, especially its collegial structure around its head the Pope. The Council members debated the revised draft on the Church in October 1963, treating the episcopate Oct. 4 – 16. They expressed themselves in a first vote on Oct. 30 affirming that "episcopal collegiality" is essential to the Church, that is, collegial and collaborative governance by the body of bishops, who with the Pope their head, succeed the "college of the Apostles."

But the Council members' many interventions in speeches and written comments had then to be analyzed by the Doctrinal Commission in order to further revise the text in line with what the members had proposed in their interventions. This began in November 1963, and continued after Period II ended, in meetings of January – February 1964. Joseph Ratzinger worked with Karl Rahner and two others, assisting four bishops of the commission in revising of what in time became nos. 21 – 23 of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>21</sup> Now that, as Benedict XVI, he is head of the Episcopal College, one could well study his promotion of collegial consultation and collaboration.

8.2 In Spring 1964, another task for the Doctrinal Commission was the revision, in the light of many written comments by Council Members, of the draft text on divine revelation and its communication by tradition and Scripture in the Church. Again, the work was divided according to the draft chapters, and Joseph Ratzinger assisted in drawing from the members' comments new formulations to enrich what became, in *Dei Verbum*, Chapter VI (nos. 21 – 26), a many-sided promotion of "Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church." This is a bit of background of Pope Benedict's recent decision that the next ordinary Synod of Bishops (2008) will treat just this topic on which he as Council *peritus* worked (just before I met him) in 1964.



8.3 During Vatican II's Third Period in 1964, the general meetings on Nov. 6 – 9 dealt with a set of propositions on the Church's missionary activity. The discussion concluded with a vote by the Council Members to transform this into a complete decree of the Council.

Therefore, the Council's Commission on the Missions set up a sub-commission which began work on a new draft text on November 16, 1964. Joseph Ratzinger was drawn into this work by Fr. Johannes Schütte, General Superior of the Society of the Divine Word, and chair of the sub-commission. This opened a period of intense collaboration between Ratzinger and Yves Congar, O.P., on the doctrinal basis of missionary action.<sup>22</sup>

To help begin this work, J. Ratzinger drafted a Latin text of ca. 5,200 words, in which he identified the basis of all missionary activity as the outpouring of God's goodness and love, as expressed supremely in the twin missions for our salvation of God's own Son and Holy Spirit. Thus mission is not a work of conquest but a movement of *caritas* which intends to give to others God's own saving gifts and blessings. In its missionary activity, the Church is not the light, but instead a witness to the light of God, who intends to illuminate everyone as He invites them to eat at his table and come to offer adoration as a living sacrifice to give God glory.

Mission testifies to the truth that humans are not saved by their own abilities and exertions but by what comes from Christ, to whom the Church witnesses by its ministry through Christ's sacraments. On mission, God's own call is made audible in a public and historical form, the call to reconciliation with God, as St. Paul expressed it (2 Cor 5:18-20). The missionary message is much like Jesus' own programmatic announcement, "The kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the Gospel" (Mk 1:15). It calls for repentance (*metanoia*) from sin and for faith in the Gospel announcement of God's healing grace for life in faith, hope, and charity. If the aim is to "plant the Church" where it has not lived before, this is only realized in an integral manner when a mission church becomes itself engaged in further evangelization. The basic image for mission unites the Old and New Testaments, since it is like the first Pentecost, gathering believers from many nations, which was a counter-movement to the dispersal from the Tower of Babel and the confusion of different languages. In line with the doctrine of episcopal collegial responsibility, promulgated in *Lumen Gentium* in November 1964, the leadership of the whole Church should take responsibility for promoting and supporting missionary activity.<sup>23</sup> – This was Prof. Ratzinger's contribution to a profound text of Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, Ch. I (nos. 2 – 9).

### 9. Prof. Ratzinger as an interpreter of Vatican Council II

The experience of being close to an influential Council member like Card. Frings and then of revising texts for Council Commissions gave Joseph Ratzinger a good platform for understanding the Council and for interpreting it in his publications. I remember well the overflow crowds at Prof. Ratzinger's lectures reporting on the just finished working periods of the Council in December 1964 and 1965, at the University of Münster, where I was then studying. The Professor enlarged these reports to bring them out as small booklets and he brought them together into the book translated as *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (Paulist Press, 1966; 185 pages), which still provides good nourishment to a theologically-minded reader.

In this interpretation of Vatican II, a typical remark is his critical assessment of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and its Ch. III on the collegiality of the bishops.

Not everything has been achieved that one might have hoped for. Much remains incomplete and fragmentary, and even what has been achieved, such as the doctrine on collegiality of bishops, is more properly termed a beginning than an end. . . . We must go even one step further and say that everything a Council decides can only serve as a beginning; its real importance is only achieved in its translation into the realities of everyday Church life.<sup>24</sup>

Joseph Ratzinger also took part in the collaborative project of German-speaking theologians to publish detailed interpretations of the 16 Vatican II Constitutions, Decrees, and Declarations. This first appeared in three volumes added to the encyclopedia *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (2nd edition), and then in English in the five-volume *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, coordinated by Herbert Vorgrimler and brought out in 1967 – 69. In this account of how documents grew, what they say, and why they speak as they do, J. Ratzinger offered comments on crucial portions of three texts:

(1) Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), on Paul VI's preliminary note on Chapter III, on the episcopate and the papal primatial office.<sup>25</sup>

(2) Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), origin and background of the text, the Preface (DV 1), Chapters I – II (DV 2-10), and Chapter VI, Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church (DV 21-26).<sup>26</sup>

(3) Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), Part I, Chapter I, The Dignity of the Human Person.<sup>27</sup>

To leap 40 years ahead...after Card. Ratzinger became Pope Benedict XVI, he took up the basic meaning of Vatican Council II at his pre-Christmas encounter with the staff members of the Roman Curia on December 22, 2005. The Pope was critical of an interpretation of the Council as discontinuous with what went before, a rupture with the Catholic past, which he said had been operative and troublesome across the span of the 40-year reception of Vatican II.<sup>28</sup> But his alternative for understanding Vatican II is not simply an affirmation of its continuity with what went before, but instead he urged that people apply a hermeneutic of reform. This is a way to realize what Pope John posited, as Vatican II opened, as a demanding synthesis of fidelity combined with a dynamic movement of change. As the work of the Council developed, Vatican II came to deal with three emblematic clusters of issues posed by developments of modern thought and modern life, namely, faith and critical scholarship, the Church and the modern state, and Christian faith and world religions. On these, Vatican II was a reform council undertaking corrections of aspects of Catholic teaching and life. The Council did embrace a type of discontinuity, while acting in agreement with undercurrents of permanent principles. This was the Council's response at the time...when broad new thinking was required.

### **Conclusion**

The Professor, Archbishop, and Cardinal, Joseph Ratzinger, has now become the successor of Peter and bishop of Rome, the primatial see of the Church.

When we recall his labors at Vatican Council II, we can appreciate in a special way what he said to the Cardinal Electors at Mass on April 20, 2005, the morning after they had elected him to become Pope Benedict XVI.

Here is the first part of his sketch of what he intends to do in the years of his Petrine ministry.

As I start in the service that is proper to the Successor of Peter, [I] wish to affirm with force my decided will to pursue the commitment to enact Vatican Council II, in the wake of my predecessors and in faithful continuity with the millennial-old tradition of the Church. Precisely this year is the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the conciliar assembly (December 8, 1965). With the passing of time the conciliar documents have not lost their timeliness; their teachings have shown themselves to be especially pertinent to the new exigencies of the Church and the present globalized society.<sup>29</sup>

Pope Benedict was an "insider" at the Council and thus he does know what he was committing himself to promote and bring ever more to realization.

This review of Professor Ratzinger's varied contributions during the Council years 1961 – 65 has brought us into contact with the dynamic of theological discussion and decision-making at Vatican II. It also reveals several important facets of theological thinking by the man who is now Pope Benedict XVI.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Based on Smulders's papers in the Catholic Documentation Center in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, I brought out a series of five articles under the general title, "Pieter Smulders and *Dei Verbum*," showing his contributions, as *peritus* for the bishops of Indonesia, to Vatican II's treatment of God's Revelation, Scripture, and Tradition, in *Gregorianum*, beginning in vol. 82 (2001) and continuing into vol. 86 (2005). Also, "Yves Conger's Doctrinal Service of the People of God," *Gregorianum* 84 (2003), 499-550; "I teologi al Vaticano II. Momenti e modalità del loro contributo al Concilio," *Humanitas* (Brescia) 59 (2004), 1012-38; and "De revelatione under Revision, March-April 1964: Contributions of Charles Moeller and Other Belgian Theologians," in *The Contribution of the Belgians to Vatican Council II*, ed. M. Lamberigts (Leuven: Peeters, forthcoming in 2007).
- <sup>2</sup> Study of the collaboration between the Professor and the Cardinal is greatly helped by Norbert Trippen, *Josef Kardinal Frings (1877-1978)*, 2 vols. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003-05), especially the great chapter IV in vol. 2, on Frings as a key figure in shaping Vatican II.
- <sup>3</sup> In his memoirs, Card. Ratzinger / Benedict XVI says that he began assisting Card. Frings after the Cardinal heard the Prof. lecture on the theology of the Councils at the Catholic Academy of Bensberg. J. Ratzinger, *Milestones. Memoirs 1927-1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998), 120. The lecture came out as "Zur Theologie des Konzils," *Catholica* 15 (1961), 292-304. Cardinal Frings's biographer N. Trippen places the initial meeting at a concert.
- <sup>4</sup> The account of this earliest collaboration between the Professor and the Cardinal draws on Trippen, *Josef Kardinal Frings*, 2, 239-241, 262-63.
- <sup>5</sup> "Kardinal Frings über das Konzil und die moderne Gedankenwelt," *Herder-Korrespondenz*, 16 (1961/62), 168-174. Also in French, *Documentation catholique*, Feb. 18, 1962. In Italian in *Concilio ecumenico Vaticano II* (Genoa: Ed. del Columbianum, 1962), which would be what Pope John read.
- <sup>6</sup> Asian Catholics, it is noted, are sensing how Christianity came to them with a heavy overlay of Western European forms of piety, religious art, etc. For Ratzinger/Frings, this indicates that a dose of relativism can help, leading to modesty about the Western European patrimony. What is really absolute, God and Christ, should be freed from its Western "casing" so that the absolutes may appear in their purity and true grandeur. "Kardinal Frings über das Konzil," 170.
- <sup>7</sup> *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando*, 26 vols. (Vatican City, 1960-1995) Series II, vol. II/3, 1026.
- <sup>8</sup> *Acta et Documenta*, II, II/4, 692-93.
- <sup>9</sup> The Latin text of Cardinal Frings's comments is given, along with other initial comments by Council Fathers on the first seven drafts, in *Acta Synodalia Concilii Vaticani II, Appendix* (Vatican City, 1983), 74-77.
- <sup>10</sup> I found a copy of the text of the 10/10/62 lecture, in the Smulders-Archive, Catholic Documentation Center, Nijmegen, Netherlands.
- <sup>11</sup> Frings gathered Cardinals Liénart (Pres. French Ep. Conf.), König (Austrian Conf.), Alfrink (Dutch Conf.) Suenens (Malines-Brussels, Belgium), Montini (Milan), and Siri (Genoa). We know about this gathering from the diary of the last-named, published in B. Lai, *Il papa non-eletto* (Bari 1993), 369-70, recording the poor impression made on Siri by Ratzinger. The text that Ratzinger presented has been hard to locate. I'm now pursuing a lead given in the recently published catalogue of Vatican II papers of Cardinal Julius Döpfner of Munich.
- <sup>12</sup> *De revelatione Dei et hominis in Iesu Christo facta*, in Latin and English, given by Brendan Cahill, *The Renewal of Revelation Theology* (1960-1962), *Tesi Gregoriana*, Series Theologia, 51 (Rome: Gregorian Univ. Press, 1999), 300-317.
- <sup>13</sup> What follows is a reflection based on the diaries of theological *periti* like Yves Congar, O.P., Otto Semmelroth, S.J., and Piet Smulders, S.J., with the memoirs of Hubert Jedin. I have also studied other alternative texts prepared by Congar, Jean Daniélou, S.J., and Mons. Gérard Philips (Louvain), along with critical assessments of the drafts by Karl Rahner, by Smulders, for the bishops of Indonesia, and by Eduard Schillebeeckx, O.P., originally for Dutch missionary bishops but then circulated widely in Rome during Nov. 1962 in mimeographed form.

- <sup>14</sup> N. Trippen's biography of Card. Frings (noted above, note 2) reviews all his Council interventions and in 10 cases relates them to preparatory help by J. Ratzinger, in some cases because pages written by the latter for the speech are preserved in the Cologne diocesan archive.
- <sup>15</sup> Cardinal Ratzinger wrote in a memorial volume published after Cardinal Frings's death that the latter's Council interventions were prepared in meetings at the Anima College at which the draft text under discussion would be slowly read and then each paragraph would be reviewed, with the Cardinal posing questions, evaluations, and possible reactions. At the end, Ratzinger or another advisor would draft a Latin text, which had to be read to the nearly blind Cardinal for his memorization, which at times led to revisions of the prepared text. "Kardinal Frings und das II. Vatikanische Konzil," in *Kardinal Frings: Leben und Werk*, ed. Dieter Froitzheim (Cologne: Wienand, 1980), 191-205, 202-203.
- <sup>16</sup> *Acta Synodalia*, I/3, 34-36. In the vote on this text on Nov. 20, 1962, 1,368 Council members voted to set it aside, and the next day Pope John XXIII created a special commission to thoroughly revise it.
- <sup>17</sup> *Acta Synodalia*, I/4, 218-220. In the discussion, Dec. 1 – 7, so many spoke against this draft on the Church that no vote was taken. The Doctrinal Commission made a new start in February 1963, with a draft-text which Msgr. Gérard Philips (Louvain) had composed with the assistance of numerous other *periti*. When the revised text was taken up in September – October 1963, Card. Frings opened the debate by praising it highly for its pastoral tone and constructive exposition, for its adoption of many biblical images for the Church, and for its good treatment of how other baptized and believing Christians stand in relation to the Catholic Church. *Acta Synodalia*, II/1, 343-346.
- <sup>18</sup> The address is in *Acta Synodalia*, II/4, 616-618. Afterward, Frings got help from the Louvain canon lawyer, W. Onclin, and sent the Pope a four-page list of reforms on November 18, 1963. N. Trippen, *Josef Cardinal Frings*, 2, 386-388.
- <sup>19</sup> *Acta Synodalia*, III/5, 562-563. In 1965, when the draft had been revised, Frings was still critical of its all too vague approach to "progress," ascribed at times simply to human work, to the neglect of the deeper human progress that is growth in love (*ex amore et non ex labore*). *Acta Synodalia*, IV/3, 760-761.
- <sup>20</sup> *Acta Synodalia*, IV/3, 739-740.
- <sup>21</sup> This work is sketched by Günther Wassilowsky in his book, *Universales Heilssakrament Kirche. Karl Rahners Beitrag zur Ekklesiologie des II. Vatikanums* (Innsbruck-Vienna: Tyrolia Verlag, 2001), 243-245. Ratzinger and Rahner had to contend with two other theologians not favoring the collegial principle, the Spanish Jesuit J. Salaverri and Prof. M. Maccarone of Rome's Lateran University.
- <sup>22</sup> The Council diary of Yves Congar tells of the debates that broke out between two factions, the canonists viewing missions as territories under the Vatican Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and theologians like himself and Ratzinger who envisaged mission as a fundamental dynamic of the whole Church coming from the Apostles. Congar appreciated the contribution of Ratzinger's human qualities to keep the differences among the redactors from blocking their work: "Il est raisonnable, modeste, désintéressé, d'un bon secours." *Mon Journal du Concile*, 2 vols. (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 2002), 2, 355-356.
- <sup>23</sup> My resume is from the book of James B. Anderson, who found the Ratzinger draft in the Council papers of Yves Congar and printed it in an Appendix of his dissertation, *A Vatican II Pneumatology of the Paschal Mystery. The Historical-Doctrinal Genesis of Ad gentes I*, 2-5. *Analecta Gregoriana*, 250 (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1988), 301-304.
- <sup>24</sup> *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (Paulist Press, 1966), 131.
- <sup>25</sup> *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, gen. ed. H. Vorgrimler, 5 vols. (Herder & Herder, 1967-69), 1, 297-305.
- <sup>26</sup> *Commentary*, ed. Vorgrimler, 3, 155-198, 262-271.
- <sup>27</sup> *Commentary*, ed. Vorgrimler, 5, 115-163. Thus the 5 vol. *Commentary* includes 113 pages of explanation and interpretation by J. Ratzinger. — He also offered Vatican II interpretations in other writings listed in the bibliography of his works down to February 2002, given in *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith. The Church as Communion*, ed. by Stephan O. Horn and Vinzenz Pfnür (Ignatius, 2005), pp. 299-379.
- <sup>28</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, "Interpreting Vatican II," *Origins* 35, no. 32 (January 26, 2006), 534-39, esp. 536-39.
- <sup>29</sup> Cited from *Origins* 34 (April 28, 2005).