

# UNIT 6B – THE POST-CONCILIAR REFORMS

**RECOMMENDED READING:**

In this unit, we will analyze how the Church was able to undergo such a profound change in so short a time. The explanation for such a dramatic historical shift seems to involve four elements.

1. The “spirit” of Vatican II.
2. The influence of a new theological synthesis: an integrated Neo-Modernist system.
3. Changes in Church administration: structure, personnel, and policy.
4. Vehicles for disseminating Neo-Modernism among faithful: catechisms and the New Mass.

## 1. THE “SPIRIT” OF THE COUNCIL

In a way which is unique among Councils, Vatican II had a “spirit” i.e. something expressed in the documents but going beyond the literal wording of the documents.

**If a “practical” goal is the focus, a “spirit” will almost necessarily exist.**

- This “spirit” or underlying principle was manifestly one of **change**.
- “Novus” recurs 212 times in Vatican II documents – far more than any other Council.
- Paul VI: *“The word newness has been given to us as an order, a program.”*<sup>1</sup>
- The continual reference to *“Faith of Vatican II”* and to *“Church of Vatican II”* by bishops and theologians after the Council is an implicit admission to innovative nature of 2nd Vatican Council. No one ever spoke of the *“Church of Nicea,”* nor the *“Faith of Trent.”*<sup>2</sup>

**What exactly is driving this “newness” and “change”?** The primacy of “union” over truth.

- a. The “pastoral” (i.e. **ecumenical**) rather than doctrinal focus of the Council is both obvious and obviously new.
- b. Equally obvious is the ambiguity of the documents produced by this ecumenical focus, hardly surprising since Protestant had a hand in drafting them.
- c. Note also that “dialogue” appears 28 times in Council texts though **never** found in any

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<sup>1</sup> O.R., July 3, 1974.

<sup>2</sup> *That the Church must be essentially the same throughout time (essentially traditional for example) is made evident when one realizes that the Church is Christ, in social form, living through time.*

papal or conciliar document before Vatican II.

- d. Paul VI sums up the need for putting doctrine in a secondary role with this quote, less than three weeks after the Council: *“The Church, with its demanding and precise attitude to dogma, impedes free conversation and harmony among men; it is a principle of division in the world rather than of union. How are division, disagreement and dispute compatible with its catholicity and its sanctity?”* (December 24, 1965)

Although this new “spirit” of ecumenically driven change is intentional, it is also true that the expression “spirit of council” will provide cover for anyone who wants to make any kind of change.

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## 2. NEO-MODERNISM AS THE SYSTEM BEHIND THE SPIRIT

Such a *universal* shift in Catholic thought and practice suggests that its “engine” would be an integrated, organized system of thought – a counter-theory of Catholicism that could be exchanged for the existing one as a “unit” and be put into immediate service.

We can **prove** that this is exactly what happened in **two ways**.

1. We can make a **historical connection** between Modernism and the reforms which followed Vatican II by simply stringing together names e.g. Tyrell influenced de Lubac who played a significant role in the Church during and after the Council.
2. We can make an **ideological connection** between Neo-Modernist theory and the practice of the Church after Vatican II.

### **1. THE HISTORICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN MODERNISM AND VATICAN II: 3 FACTS**

- I. St. Pius X had already warned in *Pascendi* that, for the first time, the Church was confronted with a complete un-Catholic system being spread by men within the Church for the purpose – not of destroying the Church *per se* but of re-inventing it.
  - a. *There, such a counter-system did exist, just 60 years before Council.*
- II. By everyone's admission, the most influential men at Vatican II were the intellectuals, the *periti*. The most influential of them were Rahner, Congar, and de Lubac.
  - a. *“Theologians as eminent as Henri de Lubac, J. Danielou, Yves Congar, Hans Kung, R. Lombardi, Karl Rahner, and others played an extraordinary role in the preparatory work.”* (Bp. Karl Wojtyla)
  - b. *If such a complete counter-system did exist, we would expect to find it among the intellectuals.*
- III. All three of these men borrow extensively (often by their own admission) from the

thinkers condemned by Pius X (*Pascendi*) and Pius XII (*Humani Generis*) including Kant, Heidegger, Tyrell, and Blondel. This explains why all three of these men had been censured (to some extent or another) by the Holy Office.

- a. *Now the link between the minds behind Vatican II and Modernist thought is obvious.*
- b. *The divergence between Neo-modernist thought and Catholic doctrine should also be obvious by the historical connection of names involved. It is further highlighted by the historical fact that all preparatory schema (except Liturgy), prepared under the influence of the Curia are rejected.*

Therefore, there is a historical link between thinkers behind Vatican II and the condemned Modernist thinkers before Vatican II – between the Modernists and the Neo-Modernists.

## 2. HISTORICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN VATICAN II AND THE REFORMS AFTER VATICAN II

- Official commentary of Council texts in German cites: Rahner (95 times), Congar (67 times), St. Thomas (48 times), and de Lubac (15 times).
  - Therefore, the documents were *meant* to be interpreted by Neo-Modernists. Collectively, they are cited 3.5 times as often as the greatest theologian in Church history (and Rahner alone twice as often).
- After the Council, Neo-Modernists hold great influence in the Church.
- On January 3, 1966 Paul VI at suggestion of European Alliance, creates five commissions for the interpretation of Council texts:<sup>3</sup>
  - Religious, Missions, Christian Education, Apostolate of the Laity, Bishops and the Government of Dioceses... note that the *Consilium* was already in existence.
  - Most members are former *periti*.<sup>4</sup>
  
- Rahner and de Lubac both named to the International Theological Commission.
- Ratzinger, de Lubac, and von Baltasar are all named cardinals by John Paul II.
- Before becoming pope, Ratzinger was the most powerful man in the Curia serving as Head of the *Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, the *International Theological Commission*, and the *Pontifical Biblical Commission*.
- Paul VI had staffed the *Biblical Commission* with Neo-Modernist exegetes, and Ratzinger (as Head of these 3 bodies), “packed the court” with various Neo-Modernists.<sup>5</sup>
- Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI frequently express their admiration for Rahner, Teilhard de Chardin, Kung, de Lubac, von Balthasar – even Blondel.

## 3. THE IDEOLOGICAL CONNECTION: EXPLANATION OF NEO-MODERNISM

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<sup>3</sup> “We will express it in a diplomatic way, but after the Council, we will draw out the implicit conclusions.” Fr. Schillebeeckx, in the Dutch magazine *De Bazuin*, 1965. (See *Iota Unum*, p. 107.)

<sup>4</sup> *As reported in The Tablet. Cd. Heenan of Westminster had said that it would be a disaster if those responsible for the wording of the documents were allowed to interpret them.*

<sup>5</sup> See *One Hundred Years of Modernism*, p. 293.

To understand how complete a synthesis Neo-Modernism is, note its basis: Existentialism.

- Agnosticism is not really a complete “system.” It is a skepticism which causes a certain re-interpretation of dogma, faith, etc., but it has more of “negation” about it than “alternative system.” Existentialism has *more* of an alternative system about it, so it lends itself more to a complete re-interpretation of even individual dogmas e.g. Redemption, original sin, last judgment, etc.<sup>6</sup>
- The notion of “re-interpretation” strikes us as something pre-meditated and malicious, but it is important to note that if one possessed an alternative philosophy and even a little formation in alternative theology, re-interpretation would come almost naturally.

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### 3. THE CHANGES IN CHURCH ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY

This is the next step in understanding how the Church was able to undergo such a profound change in so short a time. We have noted already the powerful positions held by Neo-Modernists (the papacy, not the least, of course).

#### 1. REFORM OF THE HOLY OFFICE (Renamed Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith)

The Holy Office was *established* in 1542 by Paul III to combat heresies, and to suppress dangers to the Faith.

- The Holy Office was reformed in 1965 (this was called for by Modernists condemned by *Pascendi*).
  - No more obligations would be *imposed by law* e.g.: Index
  - Index remains binding on conscience if the book represents a danger to the personal faith of a particular person.
  - But no longer has the force of ecclesiastical law. The Church trusts the “*intellectual maturity*” of Christians.
- Investigations into authors no longer conducted in secret, making it almost impossible to condemn anyone if the theologian has powerful protectors. (Very few condemnations since 1968.)

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<sup>6</sup> We say “more” of an alternative system since Existentialists claim that it is a non-system by definition.

## 2. REFORM OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CURIA AND THE BISHOPS

After Vatican II, the national bishops' conferences acted much more independently of and even in opposition to the Vatican.

- This was a result of the Council's teaching on collegiality (to be studied later) or the democratization of the Church hierarchy.
  - A major example of this was the bishops' opposition to Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (1968) which condemned artificial contraception.
    - Although Paul VI took a brave stand on this issue, he created much of the problem himself by refusing to allow the Council to condemn it and by giving the impression that it was an issue which still had to be studied.

## 3. SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

Following the teaching of *Dignitatis Humanae*, Rome urged the secularization of Catholic states: Spain, Italy, Swiss cantons, and especially South American nations.

- This effectively:
  - Sent a message of doctrinal and moral relativism (e.g. divorce no longer illegal).
  - Restricted the Church's influence over public life (civil rights legislation, education, etc.)
  - Opened the door to Protestant (etc.) evangelization (particularly in South America).

## 4. REFORM OF RELIGIOUS ORDERS (See *Iota Unum*, Chapter 14)

- After Vatican II, every religious order held a special general chapter to update their constitutions to bring them in line with the Vatican II decree *Perfectae Caritatis*.
- Principles of change:
  - Define religious life in terms of service to man, not God.
  - Decrease differences with secular world (the world which it serves).
    - Lay dress.
    - Living outside the community becomes common.
  - Redefine notion of obedience to respect the freedom of the individual.
    - Obedience as dialectical dialogue between superior/inferior to determine God's will.
    - Interesting to note that Benedict XVI launched an investigation into the religious lives of American nuns in 2009 concerned over falling numbers, unorthodox positions, and liberty of action. There was an outcry among American nuns.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See BBC article, August 8, 2009.

#### 4. VEHICLES FOR DISSEMINATING NEO-MODERNISM: CATECHISMS AND THE NEW MASS

##### **NEW CATECHISMS:**

The few specifically mentioned are by way of example:

- The **Dutch Catechism** (by far the worst)
  - Written by Schillebeeckx: denied Incarnation, Real Presence, priesthood, and angels.
  - *Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* condemned it but permitted that it be printed so long as the condemnation was printed as an appendix!
- **French Catechism** (*Living Stones*)<sup>8</sup>
  - Also riddled with heresies.
  - Attacked by Cd. Ratzinger, but he withdrew his comments after French bishops defended it.
- **The Catechism of the Catholic Church** (1994)<sup>9</sup>
  - This is the “Bible” of the conservative Novus Ordo camp and does reveal a certain “conservatizing evolution” of Neo-Modernism.
  - Nevertheless: *“Together with the liturgical reform and the New Code of Canon Law, the new Catechism gives a solid foundation to the ecclesiastical reform started by the Council.”* (John Paul II, December 18, 1992).
  - This is obvious since, in large part, the Catechism is simply a stringing together of Vatican II quotations.
  - Problematic passages include:
    - *“The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and preserve permanent value for the Old Covenant has never been revoked (n.121).”*
    - *“The divisions between Christians hold the Church back from realizing the plenitude of Catholicity which is proper to it in those of her children who, it is certain, belong to it by Baptism but who find themselves separated from full communion.” Unitatis Redintegratio, quoted in the Catechism.*
    - *“The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman constitute themselves a lifelong community, ordained by its natural character to the good of the spouses as well as to the generation and education of children... (n.1601)”*

The New Mass: primary vehicle of the New Theology. See next section.

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<sup>8</sup> **One Hundred Years of Modernism, pp.281-282.**

<sup>9</sup> *The official Vatican version was published in 1992, but it was not translated into vernacular languages until 1994.*