

STUDY MATERIALS: History of Vatican II

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Lesson 1: The Background of the Council

Subjects

The condition of the Church in the 1950s. Differences between Europe and America. Popular strength but intellectual problems.

The election of John XXIII. His character and the significance of his election.

The "style" of John XXIII. The symbolic importance of his personality and actions.

The meaning of an ecumenical council. Some previous councils. Why was the Second Vatican Council summoned?

Suggested Readings

- Documents of the Second Vatican Council (various editions) Sacrosanctum Concilium ("Introduction")
- Loris Capovilla, *The Heart and Mind of John XXIII*
- James Hitchcock, *The Decline and Fall of Radical Catholicism*, Ch. 1.
- Peter Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII*
- Paul Johnson, *Pope John XXIII*
- Robert Blair Kaiser, *Pope, Council, and World*
- Xavier Rynne, *Letters from Vatican City*, I
- Ralph Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber*

Suggestions for Review

1. What are ecumenical councils and what role do they play in the life of the Church?
2. Assess the state of the Church on the eve of the Council.
3. What purposes was the Council expected to serve, according to John XXIII and the Council fathers themselves?
4. Describe the "mood" of the times (early 1960's). How did the summoning of the Council fit that mood? What expectations did various people have for the Council?
5. How did the personality and public image of John XXIII affect expectations for the Council?
6. What is the relationship between an ecumenical council and the pope, in terms of the exercise of authority?
7. Compare the view of John XXIII found in Hebblethwaite, Rynne, or Kaiser with the *Journal of a Soul*.
8. Based on Wiltgen, assess the thesis that the concerns of northwest Europe exercised a disproportionate influence on expectations for the Council. What was distinctive about northwest European Catholicism, both historically and in 1960?

Lesson 2: The Nature of the Church

Subjects

The relationship between hierarchy and collegiality.

Varying concepts of the Church. Theological and legal approaches.

The Mystical Body and the People of God. The "Pilgrim Church." The Church as both human and divine.

The role of the laity. The Church as "democratic."

The role of Mary. Her relationship to the Church. Her role in the economy of salvation.

Suggested Readings

- Council document -- *Lumen Gentium*
- Walter Abbott, *Twelve Council Fathers*
- Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*
- Rynne, *Letters*, I
- Alberic Stacpoole, *Vatican II: by Those Who Were There*
- Wiltgen, *Rhine*

Suggestions for Review

1. Are the concept of Church as Mystical Body of Christ and the concept of Church as the People of God in tension with one another?
2. Are the concept of Church as hierarchical and the concept of church as collegial likewise in tension?
3. Did the Council weaken the concept of papal authority, as compared with the First Vatican Council?
4. What was the Council's view of the role of the laity in the Church?
5. Why was the Council's discussion of Mary placed within the decree on the Church?

6. Using Abbott's and/or Stacpoole's books, discuss the role of one or more prominent Council fathers. What were their distinctive views of the Church, and what affects did these fathers have?
 7. Discuss Wiltgen's thesis concerning the influence of northwest Europe on the direction of the Council, with specific reference to the nature of the Church.
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Lesson 3: Inner Spiritual Renewal

Subjects

The renewal of the liturgy. The meaning of "participation." Relation between tradition and innovation.

The renewal of the priesthood and religious life. Searching for the original charism. In the world but not of the world.

Renewed appreciation of Scripture. Balancing Scripture and the Tradition of the Church.

Suggested Readings

- Council Documents -- *Sacrosanctum Concilium, Presbyterorum ordinis, Dei Verbum, Perfectae Caritatis.*
- Abbott, *Council Fathers.*
- Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI.*
- Ratzinger, *Highlights.*
- Rynne, *Letters*, I, II.
- Stacpoole, *Vatican II.*
- Wiltgen, *Rhine.*

Suggestions for Review

1. Why did the Council think the priesthood and religious life needed to be renewed? What were the criteria of authentic renewal?

2. Why did the Council think the liturgy needed to be renewed, and what were the criteria of authentic renewal?
3. Did the Council seek to make religious life and the liturgy more "relevant to the world"?
4. Did the Council consider liturgy too remote from people's ordinary experience?
5. Why did the Council give new encouragement to the reading of Scripture? What was its attitude towards modern scripture scholarship?
6. Using Abbott's and/or Stacpoole's books, discuss the role of one or more prominent Council fathers. What were their distinctive views of the subjects discussed in this chapter, and what affects did these fathers have?
7. Discuss Wiltgen's thesis concerning the influence of northwest Europe on the direction of the Council, with specific reference to the nature of the Church.
8. What was Paul VI's relationship to the Council after he became pope?

Lesson 4: The Church and the World

Subjects

The relationship of the Church and an unbelieving world. Balancing openness and fidelity to the faith. Reading the signs of the times. Ecumenism. New openness to non-Catholics. "Concentric circles" of religious truth. True and false ecumenism.

Religious freedom. The Church repudiates coercion in matters of faith.

Suggested Readings

- Council documents -- *Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate, Dignitatis Humanae, Ad Gentes Divinitis, Gaudium et Spes.*
- Abbott, *Council Fathers.*
- Robert McAfee Brown, *Observer in Rome.*
- Albert Outler, s.
- Ratzinger, *Highlights.*

- Rynne, *Letters*, II, III.
- Stacpoole, *Vatican II*.
- Wiltgen, *Rhine*.
- Yzermans, *American Participation in the Second Vatican Council*.

Suggestions for Review

1. In the minds of some people the Council's encouragement of ecumenism represented a repudiation of previous teaching. Is this true?
2. What distinctions did the Council make among the various non-Catholic faiths? Is there a kind of hierarchy of truths with respect to those faiths?
3. How did the Council think it was possible to respect the truths of other faiths without abandoning belief in the Catholic Church as the true Church?
4. Based on Brown and/or Outler's books, how did American Protestants respond to the events of the Council?
5. What are the criteria for distinguishing true and false ecumenism, according to the Council?
6. In the minds of some people the Council's decree on religious liberty represented a repudiation of earlier teaching on that subject. Is this true?
7. America's chief contribution to the council is sometimes said to be the decree on religious liberty. Discuss American participation in the Council.
8. Did the decree on religious liberty represent the Church's adopting an essentially secular theory of tolerance?
9. *Gaudium et Spes* has sometimes been called essentially optimistic in its view of the modern world. Discuss.
10. What did the Council think the Church has to learn from the world?
11. What does the world need which only the Church can provide?
12. Trace the theme of human freedom as it runs through the decree on religious liberty and *Gaudium et Spes*.
13. Ecumenism and the Church's openness to the modern world have sometimes been said to preclude missionary activity in the traditional sense. What did the Council say about missionary activity?

14. What was Paul VI's relationship to the Council after he became pope?

Lesson 5: The Aftermath of the Council, part 1

Subjects

Divergent understandings of "renewal." Aggiornamento and "Ressourcement." The "spirit" of the Council.

The cultural context of "the Sixties" and its affect on the understanding of the Council.

Democracy in the Church. Post-conciliar understandings of the "people of God" and the "pilgrim Church." Making liturgy "relevant."

The crisis of priestly and religious life. The world and the cloister.

The Sexual Revolution and its affect on Catholic moral theology.

Suggested Readings

- John Paul II -- *Veritatis Splendor, Ex Corde Ecclesiae, Redemptionis Donum, Chistifideles Laici, Ordinatio Sacerdotalis, Sources of Renewal.*
- Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948-75.*
- Anne Carey, *Sisters in Crisis.*
- Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-76.
- Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI.*
- Hitchcock, *Decline and Fall.*
The Recovery of the Sacred.
- Ralph McInerny, *What Went Wrong with Vatican II?*
- Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report.*
- Janet Smith, *Humanae Vitae.*
- Stacpoole, *Vatican II Revisited.*

Suggestions for Review

1. Identify ways in which "the Spirit of Vatican II, has been invoked to justify changes in the Church. Evaluate the authenticity of this "spirit" in the light of the actual texts of the Council.
2. Study the post-conciliar writings of one of the following: Hans Kung, Richard McBrien, Charles Curran, Rosemary Ruether. To what extent can their ideas be legitimately rooted in the decrees of the Council?
3. Based on Bugnini's book, trace the process by which liturgical change was introduced after the Council. Use the official Documents as a guide to this process.
4. Based on Bugnini's book and Hitchcock's *Recovery* discuss the proposition that the meaning of liturgical reform changed after the Council.
5. Based on Carey's book, discuss "renewal" as it occurred in religious life after the Council. To what extent did it follow the authoritative conciliar prescriptions?
6. Discuss the spirit of "the Sixties" and relate it to postconciliar understanding of renewal.
7. As a bishop, John Paul II was a participant in the Council. Based on his writings, discuss his understanding of the particular conciliar themes, as contrasted with the way in which those might be understood by his critics (e.g., Kung, McBrien).
8. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was a leading "liberal" theologian at the time of the Council. In what ways did he later think that the promise of the Council was subverted or improperly understood?
9. Some "conservative" Catholics doubt or reject the authority of the Council, which they claim has borne bad fruit. How did Ratzinger deal with that claim?
10. Discuss ways in which the promise of the Council has, in your judgment, been fulfilled, e.g. the role of the laity in the Church, a higher level of real participation in the liturgy. Document your judgments.
11. Taking the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* as the focal point, discuss the ecclesiology of the post-conciliar Church in terms of papal authority, collegiality, the role of theologians, etc.
12. Based on Stacpoole's book, how did leading participants in the Council later view its affects?
13. How did Paul VI come to view the results of the Council?

Lesson 6: The Aftermath of the Council, part 2

Subjects

The development of ecumenism. The changing religious scene. Heightened awareness of the Third World. Inculturation. Radical cultural and social change. How does the church respond?

The "coming of age" of American Catholics. The symbolic importance of the Kennedy presidency.

New public issues -- abortion, homosexuality, government sponsorship of contraception, etc.

The Church's social teachings in the context of the collapse of Marxism and the resurgence of "free market capitalism."

The meaning of religious liberty in a pluralistic society.

Suggested Readings

- John XXIII -- *Mater et Magistra, Pacem in Terris*.
- Paul VI -- *Populorum Progressio*.
- John Paul II -- *Sources of Renewal, Redeemer Hominis, Dives in Misericordia, Laborem Exercens, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, Centesimus Annus, Familiaris Consortio*.
- Hitchcock, *Catholicism and Modernity*.
- McInerney, *What Went Wrong*.
- Ratzinger, *Ratzinger Report*.
- Stacpoole, *Vatican II Revisited*.

Suggestions for Review

1. How did the general culture change shortly after the Council, and how did that affect authentic understanding of the Council's teachings?

2. Discuss specific controversial issues from this point of view, e.g. abortion, homosexuality, divorce, contraception.
3. Discuss how the fact of religious pluralism in society has led to the conclusion that there are no certain truths. What is the teaching of the Council on that subject?
4. How has the religious landscape changed since the Council, in terms of such things as the resurgence and spread of Islam, the resurgence of evangelical Protestantism in the United States, the decline of the "mainline" churches, etc. Discuss this in the light of the Council's teachings concerning ecumenism.
5. It has been said that the most important line of division within Christianity now runs through the various churches. To what extent is that true? Is it true with respect to the Catholic Church? Was this one of the consequences of the Council?
6. Discuss the role of the media in shaping the public's understanding of the Council, both during and after its meetings. Trace the way in which the Council was reported in, for example, Time magazine, the *New York Times*, or other major publications. Was this reporting accurate? What overall impression of the Council did it give?
7. Study the reports of "Xavier Rynne" and Robert Blair Kaiser as examples of journalism designed to go beyond information in order to affect the course of the Council itself and its popular understanding. What were these reporters' agenda, and how did they attempt to achieve them?
8. Discuss the political career of the Kennedy family. Can they be seen as personifying Catholic social thought? What was their overall symbolic importance for American Catholicism?
9. What guidance did the Council give as to social and economic justice in the world?
10. Discuss the social encyclicals of John XXIII, Paul VII and John Paul II in this context.
11. Is there a distinctively Catholic vision of the good society, as found in today's society, as found in the conciliar documents and the papal encyclicals?
12. Study the movement known as Liberation Theology, using the work of Gustavo Gutierrez, Jon Sobrino, Ernesto Cardenal, and others. To what extent was the movement compatible with authentic Catholic social teaching?
13. What is the view of the "free market" according to Catholic social thought?

14. To what extent did the Council address the fact that the Church is now found in all cultures of the world and is no longer solely Western?
15. Discuss the concept of "inculturation" in Third World cultures from the standpoint of conciliar teaching.