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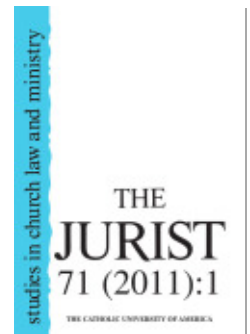
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Interpretation of the Documents of Vatican II

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REFORM WITH THE HELP OF JUXTAPOSITIONS:  
A CHALLENGE TO THE INTERPRETATION OF THE  
DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II

HENK WITTE\*

Why are conversion and reform in view of the unity of the Church not a constantly ongoing matter? Why is it that church renewal seems to stagnate? Does this possibly have to do with the way in which elements of reform and renewal were presented in the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council and finally were presented in its documents? Juxtaposition can be considered to be the method or strategy the council used in presenting the elements of reform and renewal. Juxtaposition also characterizes many conciliar statements. The main focus of this contribution concerns the question whether this method did not encumber the reception and interpretation of Vatican II with heavy baggage. Did it not cause several sterile debates in the post-conciliar period and does it not still continue to provoke them? Juxtapositions are a challenge to the interpretation of the council. How should we deal with them in order to encourage and implement the renewal Vatican II had in mind?

In order to answer these questions, first a clarification is needed in terms of understanding the phenomenon of juxtaposition. How can it be discovered in the council as a corpus of texts and as an historical event? The juxtaposition strategy had considerable influence on the reception and the interpretation of the council. A second topic concerns the question of how this influence came to the fore. Finally, we will discuss how to deal with juxtaposition in a fruitful way. Before we deal with these questions, a short introduction will determine the position of this contribution in the recent debate on the interpretation of Vatican II.

We recently noted the fiftieth anniversary of the announcement of the council by Pope John XXIII. This implies that only the generation of the faithful over 60 or 65 years of age has living memories of the council. Sometimes an appeal to these memories appears to justify a rather esoteric inward knowledge of the ‘spirit’ of the council that is used subsequently as a main criterion for the interpretation of the statements of the council. Younger generations of the faithful need an alternative access to

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the council. Recent contributions on the interpretation of the council by, among others, Ormond Rush, Christoph Theobald, Gilles Routhier, and Peter Hünermann are well aware of the necessity of formulating a short summary of the council, a ‘canon of the canon,’ which contains and discloses the council’s intention, and shows the unity and the coherence of its sizeable corps of texts.<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI himself contributed to the discussion by introducing the distinction between “a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture” and “a hermeneutic of reform” in his Christmas-address to the Roman Curia on December 22, 2005. The pope advocates a hermeneutic of reform as a model that guarantees continuity of principles and allows “some kind of discontinuity” on the level of contingent matters which refer to specific concrete historical situations.<sup>2</sup> Although Benedict XVI’s observations are important in view of a sound interpretation of Vatican II, they do not supply, strictly speaking, a key to the documents of the council as a whole.

Searching for such a key, Christoph Theobald focuses on the principle of ‘pastorality’ from Pope John XXIII’s opening speech, which he considers to be closely connected to the principle of ‘ecumenicity.’ It implies that the dogmatic teaching in itself is and should be truly pastoral and truly ecumenical. By focusing on this principle, Theobald succeeds in connecting the initial concentration of the council on the Church, and

<sup>1</sup> Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2004); Karl Kardinal Lehmann, “Hermeneutik für einen künftigen Umgang mit dem Konzil,” in *Zweites Vatikanum—vergessene Anstöße, gegenwärtige Fortschreibungen* (Quaestiones disputatae 207), ed. Günther Wassilowsky (Freiburg-Basle-Vienna: Herder, 2004) 71–89; Christoph Theobald, “The Theological Options of Vatican II: Seeking an ‘Internal’ Principle of Interpretation,” *Concilium* (2005) 4, 87–107; Peter Hünermann, “The Ignored ‘Text’: On the Hermeneutics of the Second Vatican Council,” *Concilium* (2005) 4, 118–136; Peter Hünermann, “Der Text: Werden—Gestalt—Bedeutung: Eine hermeneutische Reflexion,” in *Die Dokumente des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils: Theologische Zusammenschau und Perspektiven* (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil Bd. 5), ed. Peter Hünermann and Bernd Jochen Hilberath (Freiburg-Basle-Vienna: Herder, 2005) 56–87; Gilles Routhier, *Vatican II: Herméneutique et réception* ([Montréal]: Fides, 2006); Wolfgang Thönissen, *Dogma und Symbol: Eine Ökumenische Hermeneutik* (Freiburg-Basle-Vienna: Herder, 2008) 107–124; Christoph Theobald, *La réception du Vatican II, I: Accéder à la source* (Unam sanctam, Nouvelle série 1) (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Benedictus XVI, “Ad Romanam Curiam ob omnia natalicia,” *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 98 (2006) 46–51. Pope Benedict grounds his distinction on Pope John XXIII’s well-known words which combine a concern for a pure and integral transmission of the substance of the doctrine of the faith with the possibility of a contextually appropriate way of presenting this doctrine.

items connected to it, as the main issue on the agenda (*Lumen gentium*) with the more fundamental theological and hermeneutical topics which were unfolded in the last session (*Dei Verbum* and *Gaudium et spes*).<sup>3</sup> Peter Hünemann focuses on the shape of the text. It has a specific genre: that of a constitutional text. These texts depict the fundamental gestures and the corresponding order of a society in a way that requires assent. However, this assent is of another nature than an unambiguous ‘yes’ or ‘no’ as a judgment in matters of faith requires. In the case of the council the constitution concerns the Church and her life. Therefore, according to him, it can be compared with the constitution of a state or with the Rule of St. Benedict.<sup>4</sup> Also Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger reflected on a valid key to Vatican II. He stated that it deliberately wanted to insert the discourse on the Church within and subordinate to the discourse on God, therefore proposing a truly theological ecclesiology.<sup>5</sup> According to Cardinal Ratzinger, the reception of Vatican II one-sidedly focused on *Lumen gentium* and disregarded its relation to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, which preceded it not only for pragmatic reasons, but also affirmed the priority of worship, which implies the priority of God, over the Church. In the light of this dynamic, *Dei Verbum* affirmed God’s

<sup>3</sup> Theobald, “The Theological Options of Vatican II,” 127–128; cf. idem, *La réception du Vatican II*, 695–887.

<sup>4</sup> Hünemann, “Der Text: Werden—Gestalt—Bedeutung,” 84.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Weggemeinschaft des Glaubens: Kirche als Communio: Festgabe zum 75. Geburtstag herausgegeben vom Schülerkreis*, ed. Stephan Otto Horn and Vinzenz Pfnür (Augsburg: Sankt-Ulrich-Verlag, 2002) 109. This sentence is verbally affirmed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the “Commentary on the Document *Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine of the Church*,” *Origins* 37/9 (July 19, 2007) 136–139 at 137. In his text Cardinal Ratzinger distances himself from Johann Baptist Metz’s observation that Vatican II, compared with Vatican I, has situated its discourse on God within the context of its ecclesiological discussions. Cf. Johann Baptist Metz, *Memoria passionis: Ein provozierendes Gedächtnis in pluralistischer Gesellschaft: In Zusammenarbeit mit Johann Reikerstorfer* (Freiburg-Basle-Vienna: Herder, 2006) 71, 109–110. At p. 71, Metz refers to Karl Rahner, *Schriften zur Theologie* Bd. XIV (Einsiedeln-Zürich-Cologne: Benziger, 1980) 287 ff. As more frequently occurs in Metz’ writings, his references are lacking in accuracy. In this case it is unclear whether he refers to the article on pp. 287–302 (“Theologische Grundintention des II. Vatikanischen Konzils”) or to the whole section on the Church (pp. 285–432) in this volume of Rahner’s *Schriften*. By the way, in the article on pp. 287–302, Rahner does not mention a reason for the aforementioned conciliar situating of its discourse on God within the context of its discussion of the Church.

gathering of the Church by his creative Word and *Gaudium et spes* presented worship in the shape of ethos, offered to the world.<sup>6</sup>

By doing so, they try to formulate a valid entrance into an understanding of Vatican II. This contribution may in some way be considered as an attempt to clarify a characteristic feature of what Hünemann calls a constitutional text: its internal structure which came about by using juxtapositions. Juxtaposition also clarifies the way in which Vatican II made its reform intentions concrete. As such it appears to be a methodological key to the council as a whole.

### 1. *Juxtapositions in the Council*

According to Walter Kasper juxtaposition belongs to the conciliar tradition. He notes this in a contribution on the hermeneutics of the council that originates from 1986.<sup>7</sup> Kasper emphasizes that Vatican II situates itself in the tradition of all previous councils. It wanted to be faithful to the given tradition and to renew it at the same time. Juxtaposition is an effort to make both intentions concrete and to give expression to them. As such, they witness to the Church's faith in her Spirit-guided diachronic unity and continuity.<sup>8</sup> But juxtaposition does not remove the inherent tensions between both intentions.

As such, juxtapositions are linked to the debates between those who were called the 'conservative minority' and the 'progressive majority' among the council fathers. One may ask whether this typology is really suitable. One notes that Kasper already distances himself from such a typology in the way he wrote about it more than twenty years ago.<sup>9</sup> However unfruitful this typology may be regarding the reception of the council, it helps, however, to identify two data that come together in juxtapositions. On the one hand one may discern two different perceptions of the Church's tradition, each with a peculiar emphasis; and, on the other hand, one may discern two different groups among the council fathers,

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the contribution of Gilles Routhier in the next issue, which takes the proclamation of the gospel and the unity of the Church as the key to the interpretation of the ensemble of Vatican II teachings.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Kasper, *Theologie und Kirche* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1987) 294.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

whose mutual relationship is characterized by the words ‘majority’ and ‘minority.’<sup>10</sup>

It is well-known which sources came together in the conciliar debates and found their way into the conciliar texts. Usually one mentions the biblical, patristic, and high scholastic *ressourcement* on the one hand, and the post-tridentine, and especially neo-scholastic theology, and ultramontane church life on the other. The majority of the council fathers had been educated in the post-tridentine Church and neo-scholastic theology, which is the so-called ‘younger tradition.’ At least initially it was considered to be ‘tradition’ *tout court* in the heart and the mind of many bishops; yet they welcomed the regained and refreshing insights from the ‘older tradition.’ The minority did not want the ‘younger tradition’ to be forgotten or disregarded.<sup>11</sup> However, not only biblical, patristic, or medieval sources supplied the council with incentives in view of reform and renewal. In this respect also we should mention the experiences that the fathers brought from their dioceses, especially in the areas of ecumenism and mission. What would have come of ecumenism, for instance, if the bishops had not brought concrete experiences with other Christians and their churches and ecclesiastical communities from their dioceses?

In juxtapositions both sources are joined. By doing so, the council inserted renewal into the well-known and likewise affirmed tradition. Juxtaposition may be considered to be the reform strategy of Vatican II. It manifests itself in the council in several ways.

First, juxtaposition can be discovered in a statement. A classic example is the well-known statement on the relationship between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood in *Lumen gentium* 10.<sup>12</sup> In this case, a renewed biblical awareness of the priestly features of the people of God as a whole (1 Peter 2,4–10; Apoc. 1,6; 5,9–10) is connected to Pope Pius XII’s attention to the essential difference between these kinds of priesthood, articulated in the encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947) and the allocution *Magnificate Dominum* (1954). In the statement a syntactical construction involving a main clause and a

<sup>10</sup> Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, 27–30.

<sup>11</sup> Kasper, *Theologie und Kirche*, 294.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Henk Witte, “The Local Bishop and Lay Pastoral Workers: A Newly Created Function in the Church and Its Impact on Episcopal Collegiality,” *The Jurist* 69 (2009) 89–92.

subordinate clause reflects the juxtaposition. This subordinate clause refers to the ‘younger tradition.’ The syntactical structure suggests that the subordinate clause has a concessive meaning (*licet*). However, does this imply that the council wanted to make a concession towards a worried minority in order to achieve as broad a consensus as possible? Or should the content of the subordinate clause be considered as a condition in the margins, which should not be neglected? Another well-known example of juxtaposition within a statement is the *subsistit in* statement in *Lumen gentium* 8. This sentence has the same syntactical construction. In it the same conjunction *licet* (although) functions as the link between a main clause which points to Vatican I and post-tridentine Catholicism and a subordinate clause that reflects ecumenical experiences.

Also the paragraphs of a given number in a conciliar text can be related to one another with the help of juxtaposition. An example is *Lumen gentium* 13 on the universality or catholicity of the Church. The first paragraph of this number outlines the more quantitative understanding of universality (*universalitas*), which was so often emphasized in post-tridentine apologetics, while its second paragraph sketches a regained communicative understanding of catholicity (*catholicitas*), which characterized the Church in patristic times.<sup>13</sup>

Sometimes a statement in itself does not show signs of juxtaposition. However, in examining its genesis one may discover that juxtaposition unquestionably played a role. In this respect the statement on the ‘hierarchy’ of truths (*Unitatis redintegratio* 11) is an example. In the two main texts that contributed to the insertion of this statement into the Decree on Ecumenism, the intervention of Archbishop Pangrazio of Gorizia on November 25, 1963<sup>14</sup> and *modus* 49,<sup>15</sup> one finds a reference to the obligation to believe all revealed truths. The awareness of a hierarchy of truths does not undermine this obligation at all, but this is said in a reassuring

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Henk Witte, “Orthodoxie en katholiciteit,” in F.A. Maas, H.P.J. Witte and P.A. Nissen, *Orthodoxie en belevend geloven: Symposium ter gelegenheid van het gouden priesterjubiläum van Ton Baeten o.praem., emeritus-abt van de Norbertijner Abdij te Heeswijk-Dinther* (Tilburg: Theologische Faculteit Tilburg, 2006) 25–49; Peter De Mey, “Is the Connection of ‘Catholicity’ and ‘Globalization’ Fruitful? An Assessment of Recent Reflections on the Notion of Catholicity,” *Bulletin ET* 13 (2002) 169–181; idem, “Eenheid in verscheidenheid: Het katholiciteitsbegrip van Vaticanum II,” in *De ‘K’ van Kerk: De pluriformiteit van katholiciteit*, ed. Peter De Mey and Pieter De Witte (Antwerp: Halewijn, 2009) 31–46.

<sup>14</sup> *Acta synodalia* II, V, 687–689.

<sup>15</sup> *Acta synodalia* III, VII, 419.

way that is introduced with the conjunction *etiamsi* (Pangrazio) or *quamvis* (*modus* 49). It brings to mind the 1928 encyclical *Mortalium animos* that underlines the obligation to believe all revealed truths, regardless of their content, because of the authority of God who reveals them. In the genesis of the statement, this reference to the ‘younger tradition’ is linked to Thomas Aquinas’ insight about the difference between truths which belong to the order of the ultimate goal, and truths which belong to the order of the means of salvation.<sup>16</sup>

The relation between paragraph numbers or even between chapters of conciliar documents can be perceived as juxtapositions. An example is the seventh chapter of *Lumen gentium* which links renewed insight on the eschatological nature of the pilgrim Church, articulated in number 48, with the traditional eschatology of the neo-scholastic handbooks and with the practice of the veneration of saints at the end of the same number 48 and in the following numbers. Even documents as a whole can be considered to be in a juxtapositional relationship. In a sense, this might be said about the relation between *Unitatis redintegratio* and *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* and even about the relation between *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes*.

It would be interesting to enumerate a list of all the juxtapositions in the Second Vatican Council. A summary of the several issues of renewal the council initiated could function as a point of departure. For instance, Edward Schillebeeckx offered such a summary shortly after the council.<sup>17</sup> However, whoever engages in a more profound study of the documents of the council will discover even more juxtapositions.<sup>18</sup> Their number is not the most important question. What is more important is the question of how to interpret them. What has happened in this respect during the post-conciliar period?

<sup>16</sup> Henk Witte, “Alnaargelang hun band met het fundament van het christelijk geloof verschillend is”: *Wording en verwerking van de uitspraak over de ‘hiërarchie’ van waarheden van Vaticanum II* (Tilburg: Tilburg University Press, 1986) 45–57 and 82–91; idem, “Vatikanum II Revisited: Kontext und Entstehung der Aussage über die ‘Hierarchie’ der Wahrheiten,” *Bijdragen* 68 (2007) 445–477, especially 459–462 and 468–474.

<sup>17</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Het Tweede Vaticaans concilie* (Tielt/Den Haag: Lannoo, 1966).

<sup>18</sup> Xaverius Ochoa, *Index verborum cum documentis Concilii Vaticani Secundi* (Roma: Commentarium pro Religiosis, 1967) regrettably does not allow for a search for words as *licet*, *etiamsi*, *quamvis*, *autem*.



## 2. *Post-conciliar efforts to deal with juxtapositions*

In 1987, over twenty years after the council ended, Walter Kasper discerned three phases in its reception. After a first phase of enthusiasm (*Überschwang*), says Kasper, following Hermann Josef Pottmeyer, came a second phase of disappointment about reform and renewal not coming true. This phase was characterized by increasing polarization and paralyzing stalemates. Kasper saw a third phase dawning at the time which would return to the council itself and its documents in order to transcend the aforementioned stalemates and polarization.<sup>19</sup> Seventeen years later in 2004, Karl Cardinal Lehmann affirmed the phases Kasper discerned. However, he drew our attention also to a subsequent phase in which a new generation itself has to discover the impulses of Vatican II that are still valid.<sup>20</sup>

What happened as regards the phenomenon of the conciliar juxtapositions in particular during these phases? Several observations can be noted.

First, one may notice a reversal of the emphasis as regards the different parts that Vatican II placed together. Whereas the council gave expression to the emphasized part of a juxtaposition in a main clause, and to the other part in a subordinate clause, in the post-conciliar reception of such points by the magisterium, sometimes these relationships appear to be reversed.<sup>21</sup> This does not happen without a reason. A context-given development or debate can provoke such a reversal. An example can be found in the reception of the statement on the ‘hierarchy’ of truths. In number 4 of the June, 24, 1973 declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* regarding certain errors on the Catholic doctrine on the Church, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith declared that it is true that there exists a hierarchy of truths, but that all dogmas, as they are revealed, have to be believed with the same divine faith. The reversal of the juxtaposition is expressed in Latin by using the words *profecto* and *autem*.<sup>22</sup> The empha-

<sup>19</sup> Kasper, *Theologie und Kirche*, 190–191.

<sup>20</sup> Lehmann, “Hermeneutik für einen künftigen Umgang mit dem Konzil,” 86.

<sup>21</sup> Of course the council has also been received by theologians. A reversal of a juxtaposition can also be found in their work.

<sup>22</sup> *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 65 (1973) 402, nr. 4: “Exsistit profecto ordo ac veluti hierarchia dogmatum Ecclesiae, cum diversus sit eorum nexus cum fundamento fidei. Haec autem hierarchia significat quaedam ex dogmatibus inniti aliis tamquam principalioribus iisdemque illuminari. Omnia autem dogmata, quippe quae revelata sint, eadem fide divina credenda sunt.”

sis of *Mysterium Ecclesiae* on the revelation of all truths and the duty to believe them creates the impression of a regression to the position of *Mortalium animos* and a reduction of the statement on the 'hierarchy' of truths to a concession. What was going on contextually? *Mysterium Ecclesiae* articulated the magisterial position regarding Hans Küng's *Anklage* against the Roman use of infallibility. The debate he provoked shaped a new situation that accounted for this reversal.<sup>23</sup> Another example concerns the relation between the togetherness of the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood on the one hand and their essential difference on the other. In this case the shortage of priests along with the danger of a parallel lay clergy led to a reversal.<sup>24</sup>

Such a reversal of the relations within juxtapositions does not take away their inherent tensions. On the contrary, it confirms them. Moreover, it gives an impression of a change in the relationship between the majority and the minority and even suggests a return to a pre-conciliar state of affairs. That impression could be valid and justifies a critical assessment of the teaching at stake. From a hermeneutical point of view, what is going on in a specific ecclesial context necessarily always influences the understanding of, in this case, conciliar texts. At least, one cannot deny the influence of contextual developments or presuppose they are neutral. Does this imply that a reversal of the relations within a juxtaposition, by the very fact that it is proposed by the teaching authority as in the above mentioned cases, takes precedence? One cannot affirm and one cannot deny this question as long as the typical nature of a juxtaposition is not understood.

A second phenomenon concerns the development of the tensions given within juxtapositions into institutional perspectives. A well-known example is the polarity between *Concilium* and *Communio*. This polarity does not consist only in the existence of two periodicals, but also in the existence of two ecclesiastical networks of like-minded faithful with considerable influence on the Church's polity and theological education. One could consider it as the institutionalizing of the way in which *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes* are perceived to approach the relationship between the Church and the world, leaving open the question if this understanding is true. These documents are considered as representative of

<sup>23</sup> Witte, "Alnaargelang hun band met het fundament van het christelijk geloof verschillend is," 218–223.

<sup>24</sup> Witte, "The Local Bishop and Lay Pastoral Workers," 89–92.

two well-defined ways of thinking. *Gaudium et spes* is perceived as viewing the Church as having primarily a receptive relationship to history, society, and culture, to other Christian churches and ecclesial communities, and to other religions. However, *Lumen gentium* is considered as having as its point of departure a strong awareness of the Church's identity and looking at the world from that perspective.<sup>25</sup> One notices a similar phenomenon of institutionalizing in theology. Different disciplines are specialized in terms of the issues which *Lumen gentium* discusses, and in light of the topics and way of thinking exemplified in *Gaudium et spes*. Ecclesiology, strictly speaking, and pastoral or practical theology especially grew apart. However, there are exceptions, as, for instance, Elmar Klinger and Hans-Joachim Sander who focus attention on their interconnectedness.<sup>26</sup>

A third phenomenon concerns the expectation of integration that juxtaposition raises. According to Cardinal Walter Kasper, juxtapositions belong to the main difficulties of council hermeneutics. Many texts were perceived as an unmediated (*unvermittelt*) side by side presentation of 'conservative' and 'progressive' statements.<sup>27</sup> This lack of mediation raised the expectation that integration in theory and practice had to be done in the post-conciliar period. This view presupposes an image of the council as a meeting which didn't succeed in doing so, as if the resolving

<sup>25</sup> An example of the receptive relationship of the Church to the world etc. is the word 'in' in the title of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world. It says that the Church does not perceive itself as opposed to the world but rather as situated in a given setting. Cf. Hans-Joachim Sander, "Theologischer Kommentar zur Pastoralkonstitution über die Kirche in der Welt von heute," in *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil* Bd. 4, ed. Peter Hünermann and Bernd Jochen Hilberath (Freiburg-Basle-Vienna: Herder, 2005) 704–710. A distinct example of this approach is *Gaudium et spes* 44. That the distinction between *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes* is not as strict as is sometimes supposed is evident, for instance, in the second part of *Lumen gentium* chapter II that also articulates an open and receptive attitude of the Church to other Christian or non-Christian traditions. This was due to the preparatory contributions of Yves Congar among others. See also, for example, *Lumen gentium* 13, which reflects the intervention of Antonius Grauls, archbishop of Gitega on behalf of the bishops' conference of Burundi and Rwanda (*Acta synodalia* II, II, 69–70, 161–162, 260). He stressed the Church's fostering and taking to herself of "the ability, riches and customs in which the genius of each people expresses itself," insofar as they are good.

<sup>26</sup> Elmar Klinger, *Armut: Eine Herausforderung Gottes: Der Glaube des Konzils und die Befreiung des Menschen* (Zürich: Benziger, 1990). Concerning Sander, see his above mentioned commentary on *Gaudium et spes*.

<sup>27</sup> Kasper, *Theologie und Kirche*, 293–294.

of tensions in a harmonious synthesis belongs to what one may expect from a council.

Closely connected to this approach to juxtapositions is their perception as a form of compromise. Max Seckler, followed by Otto Hermann Pesch, discerned several types of compromise: compromise as an agreement concerning content (*Sachkompromiß*), compromise as a form of postponement or delay (*dilatorisches Kompromiß*) in which matters of faith were considered to be complementary rather than contradictory, but reaching a compromise during the council itself appeared to be impossible and was postponed, and compromise as ‘contradictory pluralism’ (*kontradiktorisches Pluralismus*). Juxtaposition is considered to be a compromise of the last type.<sup>28</sup> Pesch explains this type of compromise as a materially not entirely balanced result of group dynamics and negotiations.<sup>29</sup> This perception is in danger of reducing the council to a matter of higher church politics and negotiations between parties, and forgetting its nature as a gathering in the Holy Spirit in view of finding the truth. Therefore, it is with good reason that Peter Hünemann distances himself from this perception.<sup>30</sup> According to him, those in favor of this perception not only “tend to regard a stark contrast between majority and minority at the Council as a starting point of their interpretation,” moreover, they misconceive the genre of the texts of the council. They expect a genre, which has “the form of a law or a judgment” and don’t recognize its very nature as a constitutional text.

These phenomena of the post-conciliar period dealing with the juxtapositions in the corpus of texts of the council seriously challenge the interpretation of Vatican II. What possibilities may one discern in dealing with them?

### 3. Juxtapositions as a challenge to the interpretation of Vatican II

The challenge juxtapositions pose to the interpretation of the documents of the Second Vatican Council requires a systematic theological

<sup>28</sup> Max Seckler, “Über den Kompromiß in Sachen der Lehre,” in idem, *In Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft und Lehre: Theologie als schöpferische Auslegung der Wirklichkeit* (Freiburg-Basle-Vienna: Herder, 1980) 99–103, 212–215; Otto Hermann Pesch, *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil (1962–1965): Vorgeschichte–Verlauf–Ergebnisse–Nachgeschichte* (Würzburg: Echter, 1994<sup>2</sup>) 151–154. Cf. also Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, 28.

<sup>29</sup> Pesch, *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, 151.

<sup>30</sup> Hünemann, “The Ignored ‘Text,’” 119 and 128–129.

rather than a historical theological approach to the council. After all, the main question of a historical theological approach pertains to what is 'old' and what is 'new' and how the one leads to the other.<sup>31</sup> Such an approach would result in a repeated awareness of the composition of a given juxtaposition, and an affirmation of its inherent tensions. A systematic theological approach can point to a way of dealing with juxtapositions which shows interesting prospects. As in exegesis, the historical critical method must be completed by using other methods of reading and interpreting Scripture, thereby integrating the strength of the historical critical method with a perspective that also surpasses it.

In this respect, Cardinal Lehmann gives us three very valuable indications.<sup>32</sup> First, he recommends reading the texts in their comprehensive complexity and not reducing this complexity to a well-determined perspective, which, after all, cannot avoid an eclectic reading. Secondly, he asks us not to overlook the tensions within a statement, but to hold them together, regardless if these tensions are raised by the subject matter the council discussed or by the process of dealing with it. Thirdly he asks us not to read the texts as the solution of a problem, but as guard-rails "which set boundaries from outside in order to mark the inner space all the better in which a solution must be found in the future."<sup>33</sup> What could he mean by such an understanding of juxtaposition as "marking the inner space"?

Cardinal Lehmann suggests reading the juxtaposed tensions within a text as limitations that open an inner space. His suggestion presupposes that a doctrinal statement contains not only a positively affirmed doctrinal content, but also a rule. Here we touch the question of what is the actual status of doctrine. Christoph Theobald asks, "Is doctrine not rather *one* way of establishing, in different contexts, conditions under which the kerygmatic or pastoral event can be truly produced, in all its dimensions, at the very heart of tradition?"<sup>34</sup> On the one hand rules are not to be violated, and on the other, they specify the space for creativity. Some-

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Hermann Joseph Pottmeyer, "Kontinuität und Innovation in der Ekklesiologie des II. Vatikanums: Der Einfluss des I. Vatikanums auf die Ekklesiologie des II. Vatikanums und Neurezeption des I. Vatikanums im Lichte des II. Vatikanums," in *Kirche im Wandel: Eine kritische Zwischenbilanz nach dem Zweiten Vatikanum*, ed. G. Alberigo, Y. Congar & H.J. Pottmeyer (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1982) 89–110.

<sup>32</sup> Lehmann, "Hermeneutik für einen künftigen Umgang mit dem Konzil," 76–77.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 77: "... die nach Außen hin abgrenzen, um besser den inneren Raum zu markieren, innerhalb dessen die Lösung erst noch gefunden werden muss."

<sup>34</sup> Theobald, "The Theological Options of Vatican II," 96.

thing similar happens in liturgy. With the help of the theology of the Lutheran liturgical theologian Gordon W. Lathrop, Steffen Lösel characterizes Christian worship as a whole, composed of a few basic elements with a biblical basis, “set next to or juxtaposed to each other in a purposeful, creative and dialectic tension: various biblical texts being read out loud, a public act of interpretation, a bath, a simple common meal, intercession for the world, and the sending out of food to feed the poor, to name just the central ones.” According to Lösel, this structure of the liturgy allows us to see, “how the Holy Spirit addresses the Christian assembly in and through human words and symbols, without ever being identified with any one of the holy things.”<sup>35</sup>

This parallel to juxtaposition in liturgy raises the question of how to deal with the open space and the tensions in statements of the council. Should we fill in the space or feel the space? Some examples may help to give us some indications.

Cardinal Lehmann presented an example in his opening speech at the 2007 autumn gathering of the German Bishops’ Conference. In his speech he commented on the question of the *subsistit in* as a result of the *Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.<sup>36</sup> The example concerns the much disputed statement that the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure (*Lumen gentium* 8). Read as juxtaposition this statement requires us not to deny the teaching of the subsistence of the Church of Christ in the Catholic Church, for instance by denying or relativizing this teaching on the one hand, nor to deny the teaching of the presence of many elements of sanctification and of truth outside the Catholic Church on the other. The latter would be the case, if one would deny the presence of elements of salvation and of truth in other churches or ecclesiastical communities or when one would con-

<sup>35</sup> Steffen Lösel, “Guidance from the gaps: The Holy Spirit, ecclesial authority, and the principle of juxtaposition,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 59 (2006) 140–158 at 154. Lösel refers to Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1993); idem, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999); idem, *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Karl Kardinal Lehmann, “Zum Selbstverständnis des Katholischen: Zur theologische Rede von Kirche: Eröffnungs-Referat bei der Herbst-Vollversammlung der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz am 24. September 2007 in Fulda,” [http://dbk.de/imperia/md/content/pressemitteilungen/2007-2/2007-065a\\_eroeffnungsreferat-lehmann.pdf](http://dbk.de/imperia/md/content/pressemitteilungen/2007-2/2007-065a_eroeffnungsreferat-lehmann.pdf).

sider the position of the Catholic Church in a similar way without any differentiation. How can the open space in between both teachings do its work? At the second ‘Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning’ Conference at Durham, January 2009, Ormond Rush offered a valuable example. He discussed the Catholic teaching on *sensus fidei* and *consensus fidelium* in *Lumen gentium* 12, and sought the involvement of other churches and ecclesiastical communities in the process of finding truth on the basis of the teaching that elements of sanctification and truth are found outside the Catholic Church.<sup>37</sup>

*Lumen gentium* 8 offers another example. It contains a sentence full of tension, although in a sacramental sense rather than as the tension between a majority and a minority as other juxtapositions manifest. The council here articulates the well-known analogy between the Church and the mystery of the incarnate Word. According to the council, “the society structured with hierarchical organs and the Mystical Body of Christ, are not to be considered as two realities, nor are the visible assembly and the spiritual community, nor the earthly Church and the Church enriched with heavenly things; rather they form one complex reality which coalesces from a divine and a human element.” The council does not clarify how to understand this “one complex reality,” or its coalescence from a divine and a human element, positively. The comparison to the Chalcedonian dogma on Christ’s two natures can be of some help here. The short formula “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation” contains four rules. It puts into words four don’ts, four boundaries we may not violate. It asks us not to confuse the divine and the human elements, as they differ. It asks us not to change the one into the other. It asks us not to divide the elements which are divine and those which are human. And it asks us not to think of them as remote from each other to such a degree that they never can come into contact.<sup>38</sup> When these four don’ts are respected and analogically applied to the Church, the structure of her sacramentality is disclosed.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Second Vatican Council is full of juxtapositions. They characterize the debates during the council and the way in which it phrased its faith insights. Juxtapositions could be understood as a trace of unre-

<sup>37</sup> The contribution from Rush is not available on the congress website ([http://www.centreforcatholicstudies.co.uk/?page\\_id=224](http://www.centreforcatholicstudies.co.uk/?page_id=224)), visited December 6, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Wiel Logister, *Contouren van God* (Averbode: Altiora, 2004) 214–220.

solved conflicts between a majority and a minority at the council. In this understanding they appear to be contradictorily formulated compromises between tensions which the council was not able to surmount at the time. However, they also run the risk of being inverted in the post-conciliar period and of being understood as a regression into an earlier ecclesial mindset. Reflection on the very nature of juxtapositions, however, shows a third way. Juxtapositions also function as rules. The contents that are joined in them are to be held together and respected. Each of the juxtaposed contents is not to be rejected. They invite us to keep the space open between the differing positions they articulate. Keeping this space really open, sometimes against our natural inclination to reduce tensions, may be a key towards a fruitful dealing with juxtapositions and the reform intentions of Vatican II.