



Gérard Philips and the Triumph of *Via Media*: A Historical Note on the Redaction of *Lumen Gentium*

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Abstract: This article aims to investigate the redaction aspects of the dogmatic constitution of the Vatican Council II on the mystery of the Church *Lumen Gentium*. It is hoped that this attempt will provide a good understanding of the spirit that worked behind the written text and the theological vision that accompanied its creation. In order to achieve this aim, the author presents the historical aspects of the redaction of the document, focusing his attention on the efforts of the main redactor of the document, Mons. Gérard Philips, to introduce a conciliatory approach, a *via media*, so that there would be no winners nor losers behind the successful realization of the document's writing. This article begins with a highlight of the essence of the Council as a peaceful process, as wished by Philips. The story continues with the remark on Philips' painful attempt to redact a new schema,—as the Council Fathers had rejected the original schema previously prepared by the doctrinal commission—due to the negative judgement by Fr. Sebastiaan Tromp, the secretary of the doctrinal commission, who said that the new proposal was “unworthy” of the Council. Yet, Philips' painful attempt complete the redaction process of the document in peace was ultimately successful, as the majority of the Council Fathers unanimously accepted the final draft of the document, which was subsequently issued as the key document of the Council.

Keywords: Vatican II, conciliar process, *via media*, Gérard Philips, *Lumen Gentium*

Gérard Philips, the president of the *periti* for the sub-commission that worked on the schema *De Ecclesia*, concluded his examination of the history of *Lumen Gentium* by affirming that the constitution, even in its genesis, already gave a general view of the mystery of the Church, revealing its depth and richness in a way that had seldom been done before. By revealing the depth and the richness of the mystery of the Church, the document offers a renewal which is rooted in the most ancient treasure of God's revelation of His love to mankind so that future generations will very easily measure the important meaning of the constitution (Philips 1966, 173).

Wanting to observe the above-mentioned important meaning of the constitution, this article attempts to investigate the redaction of *Lumen Gentium*, particularly with regard to its external aspect, i.e. from a historical point of view. It should be noted that the production of this key document of Vatican Council II was a dramatic process called “A Play in Six Acts” (Moons 2021, 78). It is hoped that this article sheds light on the historical background of *Lumen Gentium* as a conciliar document which proposes a contemporary reflection of the Church's identity as a mystery of

communion. In particular, the article will analyze its redacting method in order to get an insight into the inner spirit and the interior vision of the document as a fruit of the conciliar process.

The article focuses on the process of writing the document, particularly from the perspective of its redactor, Philips, in order to grasp the inner spirit and the interior vision of the conciliar work on *Lumen Gentium*, which is essential for understanding its nature. This particular perspective is valuable, considering that he was “arguably the most influential theologian at Vatican II,” to the extent that Yves Congar joked that Vatican II should have been named “Louvain I” referring to Philips’ university. However, despite his significant role in drafting the conciliar document, his contribution went largely unnoticed at the time, and is typically forgotten today (Weigel 2022).

This article, dedicated to investigating the redaction of *Lumen Gentium*, presents a sequence of narrations and ends with some concluding remarks. The first part of this article outlines the general redaction process which is characterized by the participation of opposite groups which were involved in a particularly strong dynamic, but which nevertheless managed to end the debate in a peaceful way. The second part describes the painful situation that Philips had to face after he was appointed as the new redactor for the new schema. The situation was caused by the fact that the first schema which was presented by Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, the leader of the commission which prepared the schema, had been rejected by the Council Fathers. Ottaviani at that time was furious because of the rejection. The third part presents the other side of the conflict, showing how Philips successfully managed to create a cordial atmosphere in the face of objections and fierce reactions from Fr. Tromp, the secretary of Ottaviani, and established a good cooperation between them. The fourth part shows the Philips’ special efforts characterized by the “conciliar approach” of *via media*. This article ends with some concluding remarks confirming the successful outcome of this approach in the final vote on the last schema, *De Ecclesia*, on November 21, 1964.

1. No Winners or Losers

During the creation of the dogmatic constitution on the Church, there were many difficult phases due to the diverse opinions of the Fathers and various schools of theology. The most difficult phase occurred during the third session (1964), when the Council had to formulate the meaning of collegiality in Chapter III. For this reason, Pope Paul VI communicated a Preliminary Explanatory Note (*Nota Explicativa Praevia*) that interpreted it. The principal author of the Note was Philips, as the Pope had ordered the doctrinal commission to prepare it (O’Malley 2013, 244; Alberigo 2007, 73–74; Schelkens 2006, 134–41).

From the perspective of the development of theological reflection on the Church's government, it is important to note that this topic of collegiality holds particular significance as an emerging ecclesiological project, which, however, has not been completed during the Council period. The communication of the Preliminary Explanatory Note and its insertion at the end of the ratified document thus expressed the difficulty at that time to reach a neat formulation that could satisfy all parties which participated in the Council with regard to this important theme. From another perspective, the writings of Joseph Ratzinger, Umberto Betti, Johannes Cornelis Groot, Stanislaus Lyonnet, Joseph Hajjar, and Georges Dejaifve commenting on or trying to help understand the topic in *Lumen Gentium* Chapter III show how important it is to decipher it (Baraúna 1965, 731–850). Despite such ecclesiological difficulties, it is worth noting that this topic has a significant value seen from the future perspective of the Church (Tagle 1993, 149–60).

It is interesting to mention, e.g., an echo of the progressive voice on the topic of collegiality, presenting the positions of the opposite groups. Below is a quote that mentions the Note as “a tool” for those who opposed collegiality, that “they could—and would—use to interpret the chapter as a reaffirmation of the status quo,” saying:

The Note won the support of the minority for the chapter and for the schema, as shown in the final voting—only 5 negative votes out of 2,156 cast. The price for the virtual unanimity was high. No matter what the pope hoped to accomplish, he in fact gave those who opposed collegiality a tool they could—and would—use to interpret the chapter as a reaffirmation of the status quo. If there was anything about the Note that gave the leaders of the majority pause, it was the ready, even gleeful, support the doctrine of collegiality now received from Council Fathers who had done everything they could to scuttle it. (O'Malley 2013, 245)

Ultimately, however, the Council was significantly able to offer a very essential document of the Church regarding herself, characterized by the concept of “mystery.” It is noted that in *Lumen Gentium* the Council wants to offer a theology on the Church in the proper sense, by subordinating the discourse on the Church to the discourse on God (Ratzinger 2001; Thornton and Varenne 2008, 85–102). Although there were serious debates on some issues, it is important to quote the remark of Philips, the influential *peritus* responsible for the redaction of the constitution, regarding the process of the Council. Philips fondly remembers the peaceful essence of the conciliar dynamism during the sessions:

Thus the session, which had at times been very lively, ended with a peaceful gesture, which makes it impossible to speak of winners and losers, term which are in any case quite out of place in speaking of a Council. This will be clearer to future generations than it is to us. (Philips 1966, 137)

2. A Painful Attempt to Create a New Schema

On October 18, 1962, one week after the opening of the Council, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, archbishop of Milan and future Pope Paul VI, wrote a letter to Cardinal Amleto Cicognani, Secretary of State and closest collaborator of Pope John XXIII, lamenting the Council's lack of an organic plan of work. In his opinion, the Council should have been considering a unique topic, i.e. the Church. It should have been, in a certain sense, the continuation of Vatican I. Special attention should have been paid to the power of the episcopate and its relation with the Roman pontiff (Saranyana 2014, 10–11).

Several months before, in March 1962, Pope John XXIII had asked Cardinal Léon-Joseph Suenens, archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels, Belgium, who had criticized the prepared schemata, to write a plan, insisting that the Council's document should first address the inner life of the Church (*Ecclesia ad intra*) and then elaborate on the outer life of the Church (*Ecclesia ad extra*). Later, he suggested the title *Lumen Gentium* (Sullivan M. 2007, 90). Wanting to set the Council on a truly pastoral course, Suenens simplified the plan, which was ready at the end of April 1962. He shared it with his closest friends, such as Montini. In May 1962, Pope John XXIII told Cicognani to send it to some influential cardinals, so that they could offer their support when the right moment came. He also told Suenens to discuss it with several named cardinals (Suenens 1968, 88–105).

On the Council's first working day—October 13, 1962—Cicognani and Suenens agreed to draw up an alternative schema *De Ecclesia* (Wicks 2008, 78). Two days later, Suenens told Mons. Philips to do this work (Wicks 2008, 78). Suenens also told him that during the review in May and June 1962, leading members of the Council's central preparatory commission, one of whom was Cicognani, had sharply criticized the schema *De Ecclesia*. Their criticism was focused on the chapters on the Church Militant as a visible society, the membership of the Church, the episcopate, the ecumenism, and the Church-state relations (Wicks 2008, 76).

Meanwhile, Philips, a theologian from the Leuven Catholic University and a Belgian, like Cardinal Suenens, was chosen to be a *peritus* of the Belgian bishops. Suenens chose him because he saw him as a person who incarnated a certain *via media*. Such a personality would intimidate neither Cardinal Ottaviani nor Fr. Tromp, the persons responsible for doctrinal matters. As the *peritus* of the Belgian bishops, Philips would play a significant role in the writing of the alternative schema *De Ecclesia* (Volg Concilie, n.d.).

Monsignor Philips (1899–1972) was a priest of the diocese of Liège and, from 1967, of the new diocese of Hasselt. Having a notable diplomatic talent, Philips gained experience in the parliament as a Belgian senator. He was a co-opted senator for the CVP (Flemish Christian Democrat Party). He studied theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Immediately after teaching at the Minor Seminary of

Sint-Truiden and at the Major Seminary of Liège, he became a professor of dogmatic theology at the Leuven Theological Faculty (KU Leuven, n.d.).

Philips was the head of the Catholic Action in Flanders, which made him familiar with the problems and the role of the laity in the Church. He played an important role during the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate in Rome in 1957. As a senator of the Kingdom (1953–68), he developed a broad interest in social and political problems, and intensely studied parliamentary techniques. He held that when making policy, one should always know how to compromise (Lamberigts and Declerck 2012, 167). He was a correspondent member of the preparatory theological commission in 1960–1962, and he guided the writing of the *De Laicis* chapter of the schema *De Ecclesia*. Thus, to a certain extent, he was privy to the process from the very beginning (Wicks 2008, 76; von Teuffenbach 2006, 75, 586).

Being the *peritus* of the Belgian bishops, Philips worked as a key person formulating the ideas of the Belgian bishops. To be precise, it is worth noting that, from a broader perspective, the Belgian bishops and their *periti* made a great contribution during the Council. This “Belgian Squad” also included Cardinal Suenens, Bishops André-Marie Charue, Emiel De Smedt, Karel Calewaert, Guillaume Marie van Zuylen, Jules Daem, Charles-Marie Himmer, and Jozef Maria Heuschen, with Philips, Albert Prignon, Gustave Thils, Lucien Cerfaux, Charles Moeller, Philippe Delhaye, Béda Rigaux, Albert Dondeyne, Willy Onclin, and Victor Heylen as their *periti*. It is also worth noting a number of non-Belgian *periti* who collaborated closely with this “Belgian Squad”: Congar (French ecclesiologist), Aimé Georges Martimort (French liturgist), Roger Etchegaray (secretary of French Episcopal Conference), Albert Bonet (Catalan judge of the *Rota*), and Jorge Medina Estevez (Chilean canonist) (Lamberigts and Declerck 2012, 167).

Philips worked at the Belgian College in Rome, gathering ideas from Congar, Joseph Lécuycer, Giovanni Umberto Colombo, Karl Rahner, Henri de Lubac, Otto Semmelroth, Marcos McGrath, Ratzinger, Cerfaux, and Onclin. Yet, it was uncomfortable for him to write a text that would replace the draft of the doctrinal commission of which he was also a member. Moreover, once he did it, he was hurt by Cardinal Ottaviani who revealed and protested his text on December 1, 1962 in the aula, during the presentation of the schema *De Ecclesia*. On the one side, for Ottaviani the process was unfair and unacceptable because, in his capacity as the head of the commission, he had to present Philips’ schema that he disliked. While on the other side, Philips was unable to respond because he wrote the schema merely in fulfillment of his assigned duty (Wicks 2008, 76–78).

In fact, the first version of Philips’ schema was ready in late October 1962, and at the end of the first session the amended version was distributed in 300–400 copies and caused a violent reaction in the hall from Cardinal Ottaviani (Lamberigts and Declerck 2012, 175). There were critical moments in the discussion on the schema *De Ecclesia* during the first session (O’Malley 2013, 153–59).

Presenting the schema to the assembly, Ottaviani said:

Further, I'll tell you what I really think. I believe that I and the speaker for the commission are wasting our words because the outcome has already been decided. Those whose constant cry is "Take it away! Take it away! Give us a new schema!" are now ready to open fire. I'll tell you something you may not know: even before this schema was distributed—Listen to me! Listen to me!—even before it was distributed, an alternative schema had already been produced. Yes, even before the merits of this schema have been looked at the jury has rendered its verdict. I have no choice now but to say no more because, as Scripture teaches, when nobody is listening words are a waste of time. (O'Malley 2013, 153)

In his conciliar diary, Philips noted that this incident was the most painful for him (Schelkens 2006, 9, 86). Ottaviani himself believed that the schema would gain limited support, therefore he presented it with a lack of conviction. The supposed problems were the identification of the Catholic Church and the mystical body of Christ, and the excessive emphasis on the Church's dimension as a society, which would damage her dimension as a mystery. The interventions of the Council Fathers, some of whom were very influential, including Cardinals Josef Frings, Augustin Bea, Giacomo Lercaro, Suenens, and Montini revealed the need for serious revision of the work. Montini is thought to have briefly presented the content of his above-mentioned letter to Cicognani to the assembly (Saranyana 2014, 11).

3. "Concilio Indignum"

On February 26, 1963 the Philips' schema was chosen as the main text for the rewriting of *De Ecclesia*. He was named as the *peritus* for Bishop Charue and the president of the *periti* in the *De Ecclesia* sub-commission. On December 2, 1963, Charue was elected second vice-president of the doctrinal commission, and Philips was also appointed vice-secretary of the doctrinal commission. Thus, Charue and Philips were added to the existing *praesidium* of the commission, in which Ottaviani was the president, Michael Browne was the (first) vice-president, and Tromp was the (first) secretary. In his new position, Philips formally assisted Tromp, but in fact replaced him (von Teuffenbach 2006, 36; Lamberigts and Declerck 2012, 167).

Tromp described the situation with irony. Juridically, he was the first secretary, and Philips his adjunct, but actually Philips was the first secretary, and Tromp a clerk. A secretary would have been the first counsellor of the president, but Tromp had never been one, as the situation changed at the time. Ottaviani was juridically the president, but *de facto* it was Suenens *via* Charue. Thence, Tromp thought about resignation, but he decided against it, as he knew the Pope would not like it. Being

trapped in such a situation, he decided to help as much as he could, but in truth he considered the new design to be an “unworthy thing for the Council” (*Concilio indignum*) (von Teuffenbach 2006, 36–37; Wicks 2008, 79).

Tromp himself was known as a figure with “dictatorial” and “tyrannical” style, who led the work very strictly and defended his opinions with much vigor. While his numerous reports showed that he was very faithful in reporting different positions, they did not reveal any doubt or compromise (Komonchak 1995, 177–80; von Teuffenbach 2006, 32). He dominated the commission with his clarity, strength, and sharpness, along with his intellectual expertise as well as powerful vision and statements. He played his role with the temper of a “fascist” or “dictator”: he yelled, clapped his fist on the table, crushed those who opposed him, and it was clear that for him the less debate, the better (Congar 2012, 99).

Early on March 8, 1963, the situation changed significantly. Tromp raised a fundamental objection to Philips’ schema. As Philips answered the objection, Ottaviani agreed with him and paid no attention to Tromp’s difficulty. Ottaviani even finalized numerous other arguments and instructed Philips to revise the text in line with the remarks of the members (Wicks 2008, 78).

A definitive turning point came after Philips joined the doctrinal commission on December 2, 1963. A special type of cooperation developed between Philips and Tromp, who had known each since the 1950s. Tromp was certainly able to work with others, but he was so concerned about the fundamental matters that it was not easy for others to argue with him or realize their own ideas. He accepted other ideas only if he was sure that they could lead to the goal (von Teuffenbach 2006, 34).

When he worked with Philips, the division of labor functioned well. Entering into a new situation that demanded a certain self-denial on his part, Tromp still came to the meetings and participated in the work of the Council. He actually came up with many ideas and improvements, showing that in such a situation he was still a contributive theologian. But to a certain extent, the arrangement worked because Philips could get along well with the character of Tromp which was clearly discernible to others (von Teuffenbach 2006, 34).

It is worth mentioning that Tromp’s suggestion to use “*subsistit in*” to describe the presence of the Church of Christ in the Catholic Church (*LG* 8) is notable as one of the most debated words in *Lumen Gentium* (von Teuffenbach 2004; Becker 2005; Schelkens 2008; Sullivan F. 2008; Ocariz 2005; Welch and Mansini 2009). On June 29, 2007, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith mentioned this subject in a newly issued document entitled *Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church* (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 2007).

4. The Triumphant *Via Media*

Philips himself attributed his increasing credibility to his proficiency in Latin. This was confirmed by Tromp in early October 31, 1960, when he said that Philips was very good in Latin (*optimus*), although unfortunately he could not frequently come to Rome for the meetings because he resided in Leuven. Certainly, his experience in negotiating the formulas of proposals and amendments with opposing parties during his years as a senator in the Belgian Parliament also played a part (von Teuffenbach 2006, 103).

Having a central role in the writing of major texts, i.e. *Lumen Gentium*, but also *Dei Verbum* and *Gaudium et Spes*, it was not easy for Philips to gain this credibility. The difficulty came not only from working with Ottaviani or Tromp, but also from trying to reconcile the different parts of the assembly: the right and the left, the conservatives and the progressives, the minority and the majority. For some, he was a traitor to the preparatory commission. For others, he was too accommodating of the old vision of the Church. However, knowing that both parties would sometimes be dissatisfied with his work, he believed that God was leading him along a conciliatory path (Wicks 2008, 79).

For example, having a good new revision draft on the Church as the mystical body from Congar, he decided to retype and reword it so that he could present it as his own, because if those on the “right” thought that it came from Congar, they would react with too much distrust. However, in these endeavors, which led to criticism from both parties, he never said or defended anything that he did not believe to be true (Wicks 2008, 79; Schelkens 2006, 99, 124).

Maintaining such a conciliatory approach, he composed the new schema using the old one, as directed by Suenens. He considered it again, supplementing and improving it (Marchetto 2005, 110). The link between the two texts was evident, as he noted that 60 percent of the new text was taken from the previous one (Marchetto 2005, 125, 137). He tried to integrate the criticized conservative ecclesiology into the new schema, while cautiously adding new accents to it (Marchetto 2005, 49).

Philips noticed that in theology there are two normal and enduring tendencies: one more concerned with fidelity to the traditional statements of faith, the other more concerned with spreading its message in the new world. Sometimes their confrontation might cause more vivid arguments and even appear as a conflict (Philips 1963, 225). The two streams should not fight but unite by working on their shortcomings and broadening their horizons. He further noted that caution was needed, but the propensity for excessive emphasis on systematization was a bad counsellor. A theologian did not have to decide everything because he was the minister and not the master of truth. At the Council, the main invisible actor was the Holy Spirit, whom the Fathers addressed before they gave their *placet*. In the midst of agitated discussions, He ensured the harmony of the whole Church. In the midst of human

conflicts, only the faith of Christ would be victorious (Philips 1963, 238). This conciliatory stance of Philips was underlined by Marchetto in relation to the debate on the conciliar hermeneutics (Marchetto 2005, 155, 189).

Philips saw his drafting as the promotion of an ecclesiology of *communio* at a fundamental level. Having been teaching on the Church as communion since the 1930s, he argued that a Catholic distinctive mark was the effort to unite *communio* and juridical structures from a deeper perspective. On the one hand, the juridical elements of the Church were necessary to reaffirm a real episcopal authority in the Church and to combine episcopal collegiality with the legacy of Vatican I regarding the papal primacy, yet they should be framed in and moderated by a clear concept of communion. On the other hand, bishop's collegial solicitude driven by affectivity would leave the doctrine of collegiality incomplete if it were left without juridical rules (Wicks 2008, 79).

Philips was also well aware of the patristic inheritance and current trends of theology, even if he was not an original thinker like de Lubac, Rahner, and Congar (Lamberigts and Declerck 2012, 167). He approached the work carefully, using a language that was more ecumenical, less juridical, and based on the Scriptures so that it would be easier for everyone to understand and reach a consensus. He did not want to eliminate the first schema and propose his own, whereas Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx eliminated it and proposed their own observations (Marchetto 2005, 106–7). He made himself a Cyrenean, preparing the schema from the existing text and, after a proper rewriting, submitting it to the judgement of the Council Fathers (Marchetto 2005, 197). He simply mediated between different streams, giving a space to ideas using a conciliatory approach (Marchetto 2005, 215).

Philips shared the conviction that for a vital evangelization and living out one's faith, Christian doctrine should be deepened by turning to its early sources and thus making it more lucid in modern times (Wicks 2008, 79). However, he approached this with realism by developing solutions to gather a majority. Although he was criticized, he knew that it was not about triumphing over personal ideas, but about arriving at a consensus regarding what the Church today could accept as the expression of her common faith, without compromising on fundamental principles (Marchetto 2005, 226).

Despite the important achievements of scientific history and exegesis, Philips firmly believed that a conciliar text should not reflect the views of any theological school, but only the doctrine of the Church (Lamberigts and Declerck 2012, 168). A Council in its essence was not a congress of confronting tendencies of different schools, but a pastoral assembly of the bishops (Marchetto 2005, 315), hence it was impossible to speak of winners and losers (Philips 1966, 137).

In light of such a reconciliatory approach of its redactor, it is worth observing the creation of the last chapter of *Lumen Gentium* entitled *The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and the Church*, which was not without

controversy. Already in the preparation period, precisely during the work of the Preparatory Theological Commission, a major problem arose which divided the sub-commission working on the Marian doctrine into two opposing sides: either dealing with Mary in an independent schema or doing so in the context of the doctrine on the Church (Baraúna 1965, 1137). The way in which the Fathers and, of course, Philips as the redactor of the document solved this problem could arguably show the nature of the Council as a reconciliation of ways of being faithful to the revealed truth and then interpreting it within the historical path of the communion of the faithful.

After much debate, it was decided to write an independent schema entitled *De Beata Virgine Matre Dei et Matre Hominum*. The text was distributed to the Council Fathers during the first session of the Council on November 10, 1962 (Baraúna 1965, 1137). However, during the debates regarding the schema *De Ecclesia*, which had already taken place, some Fathers insistently expressed their desire to include the Marian text in the schema on the Church. This aspiration was not accepted by the coordinating commission which in January 1963 distributed the old schema on Mary, changing only the title—*De Beata Maria Virgine Matre Ecclesiae*. However, the desire to insert Marian doctrine in the schema on the Church continued to develop during the second session of the Council in 1963. The old schema on the Church itself, which was predominantly juridical and static, has been replaced with a new schema prepared by Philips, presenting the mystery of the Church in a harmonious and organic vision of God's salvific plan. With this new schema, it was then understandably possible to insert the Marian doctrine by presenting her person and her mission in the salvific plan of God, that is, Mary as a person privileged by God's mercy and a masterpiece of the work of salvation carried out by the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit (Baraúna 1965, 1138–2239).

It was particularly in this new context of debate of the second session that the assembly decided on the destiny of the text on Mary. On October 29, 1963, a vote was taken on whether the Fathers preferred that the schema *De Beata Maria Virgine Matre Ecclesiae* to be included in the schema *De Ecclesia*. Cardinal Franz König of Vienna represented those who wished to integrate the schema on Mary into that on the Church, while Cardinal Rufino Santos of Manila represented the opposing view of those who wanted a separate schema on Mary. The result was *placet* 1114 and *non placet* 1074, thus a slight majority was in favor of integrating the text on Mary with the text on the Church (Baraúna 1965, 1138; Ratzinger 1966, 59).

Following this decision, Carlo Balić, the main editor of the schema *De Maria*, and Philips as the main redactor of the schema *De Ecclesia* were chosen to edit the chapter on Mary that would become Chapter VIII of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (Hauke 2019, 20). They were chosen as representatives of the two tendencies that had emerged during the debate of the second session and in the vote of October 29, 1963. They drew up no less than five schemata, the last of

which appeared as *Textus prior* in the left-hand column of the schema printed after the meeting of the doctrinal commission in March 1964. A new, amended version was then approved by the doctrinal commission in June 1964 and appeared in the right-hand column as *Textus emendatus*, accompanied by a note that the doctrinal commission was unanimously of the opinion that this chapter should be placed at the end of the ecclesiological schema, as it provides a useful summary of the entire content of the latter (Komonchak 1999, 74–75).

It is noted that while the new text bears the marks of the alternating influence of Balić's and Philips' approaches, it shows a clear evolution toward a Mariology that is essentially biblical, christocentric, ecclesiological, ecumenical, and pastoral, seen from the perspective of salvation history (De Fiores 1988, 471). Such an approach has led to a better understanding of the status of Mary. Mariology which is integrated into ecclesiology means that the idea of the Church now encompasses the heavenly Church. The result is that the eschatological and the spiritual aspects of the Church are strengthened, and the nature of the Church, which is not exclusively bound to the temporal dimension, is now clearer. With this expanded picture of the Church, including those who have completed their earthly lives, the liturgy sees itself as being celebrated in communion with the saints. Furthermore, the inclusion of Mary in the nature of the Church sheds some light on the mystery of the Church, because Mary personifies the Church as God's servant that moves through history carrying the hope of the world for God's salvation (Ratzinger 1966, 60). The significance of the text was then confirmed by Pope John Paul II, who recognized it as "in a certain sense a magna charta of the Mariology of our era." (De Fiores 1988, 472)

Then, if one pays closer attention, one can see the broader scene of the reconciliatory role of Philips and *via media* in the redaction of the Marian text of *Lumen Gentium*, particularly as regards the use of the term *mediatrix*. The schema *De Beata Maria Virgine*, which discusses Mary's titles, states that "in Christ Mary is truly mediatrix" ("Maria enim in Christo est mediatrix") with a mediation that "comes from the divine gracious purpose and the superabundance and the virtue of the merits of Jesus" ("ex beneplacito divino et superabundantia ac virtute meritorum Iesu provenit")¹ (Hellín 1995, 669). Yet this Mariological plan, according to which the title should to be taught by the Council in a systematic way, inevitably had to be revised, as the vote on October 29, 1963 decided to include the Marian schema in the ecclesiological one instead (Coman 2023, 440).

As a matter of fact, from an ecumenical perspective, this particular title of Mary is considered ambiguous or false by Protestants (De Fiores 1988, 472), while among Easterners it is commonly used in their liturgical prayers (Coman 2023, 440). As for Catholics, there were significant attempts in some circles to highlight this Marian title as a new dogma. In 1950, participants of the First International Congress of

¹ All translations from Latin are the author's own.

Mariology proposed to Pope Pius XII that she be proclaimed “the Universal Mediatrix of God and of Men.” After Pope John XXIII convoked the Council in 1959, 382 bishops from all over the world asked the preparatory commission to include a definition of Mary’s mediatorial role in the Council’s agenda (Coman 2023, 424–25).

As regards this critical issue of Mary as Mediatrix, André Scrima, a Romanian orthodox monk and theologian who was the personal representative of Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople at Vatican II (1964–65), proposed a short document on the orthodox interpretation of Mediatrix, suggesting not to dogmatize the mediatorial role of Mary. Such an attempt would be unnecessary as in Eastern Christianity the title of Mediatrix is mainly used in the liturgical and contemplative devotion. Furthermore, it would also risk being ecumenically damaging and likely to provoke further divisions. This document was written on October 3, 1964. It was initially received by Philips on the following day before being disseminated among the Council Fathers (Coman 2023, 422–23, 434–35).

From his own position, Philips tried to soften the “maximalist” formula of Balić out of concern for ecumenical sensitivities and under the indirect influence of some non-Catholic observers. The formula of Balić in the initial schema says that it is “[. . .] not without cause that the Most Blessed Virgin is called by the Church the Mediatrix of every grace” (“*Ita non immerito ab Ecclesia beatissima Virgo gratiarum Mediatrix nuncupatur*”) (Hellín 1995, 666). This expression was softened by Philips, who said that “her cooperation and mediation in the order of grace endures incessantly” (“*eius in ordine gratiae cooperatio et mediatio indesinenter perdurat*”) (Hellín 1995, 584). While clearly confirming Mary’s role, here Philips deliberately omitted the title of Mediatrix. However, on June 9, 1964 the commission decided to reintroduce the word Mediatrix in the Marian chapter, so that the text would obtain final approval during the third session of the Council (Coman 2023, 428–29). The text for the third session of the Council read: “Therefore B. Virgin Mary in the Church was also accustomed to be adorned with the title of Mediatrix, as well as with others” (“*Propterea B. Maria Virgo in Ecclesia, praeterquam aliis, etiam titulo Mediatricis condecorari consuevit*”) (Hellín 1995, 586–88).

After the text was presented at the third session, many tendencies emerged from the Council Fathers, which were reported in the text that was distributed at the fourth session. The first tendency wanted to retain the affirmation of the word Mediatrix. This opinion underlined the use of the title in the piety of the people as well as in ecclesiastical documents. The second tendency was to remove the title, noting that it could cause ecumenical difficulties. The third tendency mentioned that the title functioned not in the sense of theological systematization but in the devotion of the people, as it was used in the Eastern liturgy to invoke Mary, together with her other titles. The Fathers that supported the third tendency argued that this option would not cause controversy. After evaluating these diverse opinions, the commission unanimously chose the third proposal enumerating various titles by which the

Blessed Virgin was invoked. The third proposed text thus read as follows: “Therefore B. Virgin in the Church is invoked with the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adiutrix, Mediatrix” (“Propterea B. Virgo in Ecclesia, titulis Advocatae, Auxiliatricis, Adiutricis, Mediatrix invocatur”). Although it was accepted by the majority of the Council Fathers, the commission noted that there were still some redactional suggestions from the Fathers regarding the third text (*placet iuxta modi*), but since it would be difficult to accommodate all of them, the commission suggested to the Fathers to adopt in the fourth text the wording of the third text in its current form, believing that the proposed text was actually achieved through *via media* and would mostly obtain the agreement of all the Fathers (Hellín 1995, 586–89).

In fact, behind the scenes, the Commission must have taken some careful steps to arrive at this particular theological position *via media*. It was noted that the idea of placing the word Mediatrix in the context of liturgical piety, rather than proposing it as a doctrine, had grown in the minds of Catholic theologians and Council Fathers after long discussions. Previously, this idea was proposed by Moeller at the meeting of the doctrinal commission on September 22, 1964. It was seen as a feasible solution to one of the most central and difficult problems of the Marian chapter. For his part, as the main redactor of the schema on the Church, Philips asked for time to reflect on such an idea. After several weeks of consideration, which led him to recognize this proposal as a viable solution, in early October 1964 Philips sent a memorandum to the Pope asking his opinion on the three options that had recently been expressed at the Council regarding the title of Mediatrix. The Pope seemed to favor the third solution, which was to retain the title in the text but to place it in the context of piety and prayer, together with other liturgical titles. Philips then brought the matter before the doctrinal commission on October 15, 1964 and asked its members to vote. The third alternative was accepted, with 22 votes in favor and 3 against. This result led the commission to propose the third solution *via media* to the Council Fathers. Finally, on October 27, 1964, the text was approved by the Council Fathers with 1559 *placet*, 521 *placet iuxta modum* and 10 *non placet* (Coman 2023, 439–40). When the time came for the last vote regarding the Marian chapter as a whole on November 18, 1964, the text gained 2096 *placet* out of 2120 (Hellín 1995, xxxi).

Conclusion

In other scenes of the Council—precisely on July 7, 1964, and afterwards on October 24, 1964—Pope Paul VI consulted Philips on the thorny issues of collegiality of the episcopate and its relationship with papal authority. On November 22, 1964, a day after the approval and solemnly promulgation of *Lumen Gentium*, the Pope offered him a chalice, symbol of communion, to recognize his great contribution to

the writing process of the dogmatic constitution on the Church (Lamberigts and Declerck 2012, 168). The final vote on the entire schema *De Ecclesia* itself took place on November 21, 1964 and was an extraordinary achievement, as there were 2151 *placet* and only 5 *non placet* (Hellín 1995, xxxi).

Cardinal Medina Estevez, who was a young Chilean *peritus* working closely with “the Belgian Squad,” including Philips, during the Council, testified in a letter of December 7, 2001 that Philips was a learned, wise, discreet, quiet, conscientious priest with a very remarkable breadth of vision, and whose intellectual honesty demanded respect, even from people who did not share his beliefs (Lamberigts and Declerck 2012, 168). Philips himself worked in the doctrinal commission until October 25, 1965, when a serious heart attack forced him to stop any activity and urgently return to Belgium (Lamberigts and Declerck 2012, 167–68).

Thanks to his particular method of conciliation, as well as his role and commitment to the Council, the task of ecclesiological renewal could be accomplished by Vatican II, while guaranteeing the continuity of the original message of faith in the Church. Due to the part he had played in the Council, he is called “a man of the Council” (*homo conciliaris*) (Lamberigts and Declerck 2012, 167–68; Marchetto 2005, 314). As a “conciliar man” he played an unique yet important role as “the strength in the weakness” (*la force dans la faiblesse*) (Grootaers 1998, 412–19). One can see in him the triumph of *via media*, i.e. the continuity of doctrine on one hand, and the spirit of the renewal on the other hand, united by a conciliatory approach. Through his humility while facing conflicting parties and through his dedication as a true son of the Church, he contributed significantly to making the pilgrim Church in the modern world a path worth following.

As shown during the Council of Vatican II, *via media* as Philips’ way is a particular expression of the ministry of a theologian exercised in the Church and for the Church. While the strong emphasis on the nature of the Church as communion in the document of *Lumen Gentium* was formulated thanks to his approach of *via media*, one can also see that Philips placed himself exactly at the heart of the Church. With this spirit, through his special role during the Council, he made a significant contribution to the life of the Church as a whole.

Philips himself insisted that a conciliar text should reflect only the doctrine of the Church and not the views of any theological school. Such a view thus places a theologian not as a master but as a minister of God and the Church. He integrates his vocation as a professional with the products of his work on the one hand, and his own life as a man of the Church on the other hand. His calling as a theologian is to serve the Church of his time, which is still in her journey of hope, living in the world in need of dialog, sharing and reconciliation. Therefore, more than merely being “a man of the Council,” Philips, or any true theologian, is “a man of the Church.” With his work during the Council and his position as a theologian, he tried to unite God’s children who had been divided throughout history.

Like Philips, theologians today should be, first and foremost, men and women of the Church as well as men and women of communion. More than being professionals, they are especially called to be men and women of faith living the *sensus fidelium* within the one, holy, and catholic Church, whose secure foundation are the Apostles. Therefore, today's theologians could learn from Philips how to participate in the mission of the Church while doing their work.

Considering the theologians' vocation as ministers of the Church, it follows that theology as their proper work is essentially a form of ministry for the Church. The conciliary way of *via media* that Philips took, or any other way and any other method used by any true theologian, seen from this perspective, should be viewed as a tool compatible with the realization of the purpose of the work itself, which is to serve the Church. Just as workers integrate their tools of work with their life, their spirit and their intention, theologians should also integrate their method of work and their theology with their life of service to the Church. Being ministers of the Church, they serve the Church and try to do their best, using their theology as a tool of service to the Church.

Philips himself noted that there were two normal and enduring tendencies in theology. The first tendency was fidelity to the traditional statements of faith, and the second tendency was concerned with spreading its message in the new world. Sometimes their confrontation might have caused vivid arguments and even conflicts. Nevertheless, in her journey throughout history since her birth on the Pentecost, the Church has gone through various situations and faced various problems. Today, 60 years after the Council of Vatican II, and also 1700 years after the Council of Nicaea I, there are still lessons to be learned. The Spirit of God guides His Church in His own way. Sometimes, He leads her through a Council with anathemas, and other times through a Council that integrates. Once with Athanasius' style, and at another time with Philips'. Faith and fidelity to the Church are expressed throughout history in different ways. It is the task and vocation of today's theologians to discern and serve with the same love of true ministers and servants of the Church.

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