

Ecclesial Authorship, the Council, and the Liturgy: Reflections on a Debate between Ratzinger and Lefebvre

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Abstract

In the early 1980s, Cardinal Ratzinger and Archbishop Lefebvre undertook a correspondence concerning the reception of the texts of the Second Vatican Council and the liturgical rites promulgated by Pope Paul VI. In contrast to Lefebvre's hermeneutical emphasis on the individual drafters of the documents, Ratzinger proposed that these texts and rites should be understood not as the productions of individuals but as documents of the Magisterium and liturgical rites of the Church. In this essay, Ratzinger's distinction is explored further by appeal to the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, who offers helpful indications for understanding the respective roles of individuals and the Church as a whole in the development of liturgical and doctrinal expressions of the faith of the Church. The essay concludes by proposing a language of "ecclesial authorship" of magisterial and liturgical texts that emphasizes the continuity that abides in the reform and development of the Church's liturgy and doctrine.

Introduction

On 6 January 1966, acting in his capacity as Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre exhorted his brothers to study the texts of the Second Vatican Council with genuine devotion and to submit themselves to the will of God as expressed in the documents emanating from it:

But to profit by the labours of the Council—by the results achieved, which alone matter—we must study the texts with genuine devotion, i.e.

with the sincere desire to derive from them light for our intelligence, grace for our souls, and the guidance necessary for the right orientation of our personal and pastoral activity. (...) Let us pray to the Holy Spirit, through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to help us benefit largely by the graces of the Council and to submit ourselves fully to the holy will of God expressed in all the documents emanating from it.¹

As is well known, Archbishop Lefebvre adopted a different mode of speaking about the Second Vatican Council as the years progressed.²

In December 1982, Archbishop Lefebvre received a request from the Holy See asking him to agree to adhere to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and to recognize the liturgy promulgated by Pope Paul VI as legitimate and valid. On 5 April 1983, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre wrote the following words in response to this request:³

¹ M. LEFEBVRE, "Lettre de Mgr le T.R. Père au sujet de la rénovation de la congrégation / Letter of His Grace the Superior General on the renewal of the congregation [6 January 1966]", in: *Bulletin de la Congrégation* 50 (1966), 6-11, at 7-9. The English version offered here is that which appeared in the bilingual *Bulletin*. Throughout the rest of the year Lefebvre published a series of articles commenting on the Vatican II decree concerning the priesthood which provides a strikingly positive assesment of the decree: M. LEFEBVRE, "Avis du mois: Le prêtre et notre-seigneur Jésus-Christ dans le décret conciliaire Presbyterorum Ordinis / The Priest and Our Lord Jesus-Christ according to the Conciliar Decree Presbyterorum Ordinis, in: *Bulletin de la Congrégation* 50 (1966), 66-69, 104-107, 194-201.

² For an extensive bibliography of writings by and about Lefebvre, see P.J. ROY (ed.), *Bibliographie du Concile Vatican II*. Rome, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2012, 408-416. Cf. D. MENOZZI, "Opposition to the Council (1966-84)", in: *The Reception of Vatican II*, eds. G. Alberigo, J.-P. Jossua, and J.A. Komonchak, transl. by M.J. O'Connell. Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 1987, 325-348; P.J. ROY, "La première réception du concile Vatican II par les catholiques traditionalistes (1965-1969)", in: *Theologia semper iuvenescit : études sur la réception de Vatican II offertes à Gilles Routhier*, eds. M. Quisinsky, K. Schelkens, and F.-X. Amherdt (Théologie pratique en dialogue 39). Fribourg, Academic Press Fribourg, 2013, 53-98.

³ For one perspective on the context of this letter, see G. ROUTHIER, "The Hermeneutic of Reform as a Task for Theology", in: *Irish Theological Quarterly* 77 (2012), 219-243. Routhier's overall project is to show the relevance of the dialogue between Ratzinger and Lefebvre for interpreting Pope Benedict XVI's 2005 address to the Roman Curia, in which the Pope contrasted a "hermeneutic of discontinuity" with a "hermeneutic of reform." For a contextualization and critique of the Routhier's interpretation of the 2005 address, see G. D'COSTA, "Continuity and Reform in Vatican II's Teaching on Islam", in: *New Blackfriars* 94 (2013), 208-222, at 210; G. D'COSTA, "Interpreting the

The authors of the Reform [of the liturgy] themselves have affirmed that their aim was ecumenical, that is to say, designed to suppress, without affecting the doctrine, those things which are displeasing to our “separated brethren” (D.T.C. III tome des tables, art. œcuménisme du R.P. Boyer s.j., ancien secrétaire du Secrétariat de l’Unité) (art. de Mgr Bugnini o.r. 19 mars 1965). Now it is very evident that that which is displeasing to our “separated brethren” is the doctrine of the Catholic Mass. To satisfy them, they have instituted an equivocal, ambiguous Mass, the Catholic doctrine of which has been blurred. How can we thus think that this diminution of the expression of the faith has been inspired by the Holy Spirit? [...] As to the first paragraph concerning the Council, I voluntarily accept to sign it in the sense that Tradition is the criterion of the interpretation of the documents, which is also the sense of the note of the Council on the subject of the interpretation of texts. For it is evident that Tradition is not compatible with the Declaration on Religious Freedom, according to the experts themselves such as the Reverend Fathers Congar and Murray.⁴

Several months later, Cardinal Ratzinger, expressly acting in the name of the Holy Father, offered a nuanced response to these charges that merits further attention.⁵ In this paper, I will focus on Ratzinger’s critique

Interpreters”, in: *Vatican II: Catholic Doctrines on Jews and Muslims*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, 10-58.

⁴ Marcel Lefebvre to John Paul II, 5 April 1983, in D. MARCHAL, *Mgr Lefebvre: vingt ans de combat pour le sacerdoce et la foi 1967-1987*. Paris, Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1988, 131-134, here at 132-133. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own, although in some cases I have benefited from consulting the translations provided by Routhier. The version of the Lefebvre’s 5 April 1983 letter printed by Marchal includes references to specific texts of Boyer and Bugnini which are omitted from the version available on the *La crise intégriste* website, edited by Nicolas Senèze (<http://lacriseintegriste.typepad.fr/weblog/1983/04/lettre-de-mgr-lefebvre-%C3%A0-jeanpaul-ii.html>, accessed 12 June 2015). This is the version of the text cited by G. ROUTHIER, “The Hermeneutic of Reform as a Task for Theology”, 226n22 and 227n24. The version printed in Marchal seems more likely to be authentic, given the specific references to Boyer and Bugnini made by Ratzinger in his reply of 20 July 1983.

⁵ Ratzinger’s letter has appeared in partial English translation in G. ROUTHIER, “The Hermeneutic of Reform as a Task for Theology”, 228. Routhier’s excerpt focuses on Ratzinger’s response to the charges concerning the Council, but does not include Ratzinger’s comments concerning the liturgy.

of Lefebvre's appeal to experts such as Bugnini and Congar in his criticism of the official texts of the liturgy and the documents of the Council. After describing Ratzinger's arguments, I will explore how the thought of Thomas Aquinas might be used to support the arguments put forward by Ratzinger. I will conclude by proposing a way of synthesizing the perspectives of Ratzinger and Aquinas by emphasizing what I will call the "ecclesial authorship" of magisterial documents.

Ratzinger on the Authorship of Magisterial Documents

Although this is not the place for a full presentation Archbishop Lefebvre's views of the Second Vatican Council and the liturgical reform,⁶ or of the history of the negotiations between the Holy See and Lefebvre following the Archbishop's suspension *a divinis* by Paul VI in 1976 and the new attempts at reconciliation that occurred soon after the election of John Paul II in 1978,⁷ it is important to note the immediate context of this

⁶ The work of Philippe Roy-Lysencourt (whose earlier publications bear the last name Roy) on the role of Lefebvre at the Second Vatican Council as a member of the *Coetus Internationalis Patrum* has added much-needed nuance to our understanding of Lefebvre's influence and development in the post-conciliar period; see especially P.J. Roy, "La préhistoire du Coetus Internationalis Patrum: une formation romaine, antilibérale et contre-révolutionnaire", in: *La théologie catholique entre intransigeance et renouveau: La réception des mouvements préconciliaires à Vatican II*, eds. G. Routhier, P.J. Roy, and K. Schelkens (Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique 95). Louvain-la-Neuve, Collège Érasme, 2011, 321-354; P.J. Roy, "Le Coetus Internationalis Patrum et les juifs au concile Vatican II: Du chapitre IV de schéma *De Œcumenismo* à la déclaration *Nostra Aetate*", in: *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 88 (2012), 299-328; P.J. Roy, "Le Coetus Internationalis Patrum et le schéma *De sacra liturgia* au Concile Vatican II", in: *Questions liturgiques* 94 (2013), 37-75; P. ROY-LYSENCOURT, "Histoire du Coetus Internationalis Patrum au concile Vatican II", in: *Laval théologique et philosophique* 69 (2013), 261-279; P. ROY-LYSENCOURT, *Les Membres du Coetus Internationalis Patrum au Concile Vatican II: Inventaire des interventions et souscriptions des adhérents et sympathisants*. Leuven, Peeters, 2014. Further study remains to be done of the development of Lefebvre's views on the liturgy, but some light is cast on this subject by B. TISSIER DE MALLERAI, *Marcel Lefebvre*. Kansas City, MO, Angelus Press, 2004, 415-416, 464, 467.

⁷ For a recent study on the dialogue between Lefebvre and various representatives of the Holy See in the 1970s and 1980s, see G. ROUTHIER, "The Hermeneutic of Reform as a Task for Theology", 223-232. Routhier's narrative of the correspondence

exchange between Ratzinger and Lefebvre. Shortly after the appointment of Cardinal Ratzinger as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Archbishop Lefebvre wrote to Ratzinger on 11 January 1982 to request his assistance in the ongoing dialogue with the Holy See.⁸ This led to a series of exchanges between Lefebvre and Ratzinger that culminated on December 23, 1982 with a letter from Cardinal Ratzinger making a concrete proposal for regularizing the situation of Lefebvre and the members of the Fraternity of St. Pius X.⁹

On April 5, 1983, Lefebvre responded to the proposal in a letter directed to Pope John Paul II.¹⁰ In addition to making the statements concerning the liturgy and the Council quoted above, Lefebvre indicated that he saw three indispensable aspects to the resolution of the crisis: first, the liberty to celebrate the liturgy according to the liturgical books promulgated by Pope John XXIII; second, the reformation of *Novus Ordo Missae* in a way that would make it a more manifest expression of Catholic dogma; and finally, “a reform of the affirmations or expressions of the Council which are contrary to the official Magisterium of the Church, especially in

between Ratzinger and Lefebvre relies exclusively on the partial selection of this correspondence included on *La crise intégriste* website, and does not reference the list of unpublished letters between Lefebvre and Ratzinger found in D. MARCHAL, *Mgr Lefebvre*, 49-53. This omission gives the mistaken impression that Ratzinger re-initiated the dialogue with Lefebvre in December 1982, a year after the November 1981 resignation of Cardinal Ratzinger’s predecessor Cardinal Seper. In fact, Lefebvre himself initiated contact with Ratzinger in January 1982, and there was an extensive correspondence between Ratzinger and Lefebvre before the December 1982 letter. Although Routhier has done a valuable service in bringing attention to the importance of the correspondence between Ratzinger and Lefebvre, further work remains to be done to understand the historical nuances of Ratzinger’s role in the dialogue with Lefebvre in the early 1980s.

⁸ See D. MARCHAL, *Mgr Lefebvre*, 49. To my knowledge, this letter is not publicly available.

⁹ For a timeline and summary of this correspondence see D. MARCHAL, *Mgr Lefebvre*, 49-53.

¹⁰ A further lacuna in the website *La crise intégriste* and Routhier’s narrative of the Ratzinger-Lefebvre correspondence is a letter from Lefebvre to Ratzinger on March 2, 1983. Judging from D. MARCHAL, *Mgr Lefebvre*, 53, this letter apparently did not offer a direct response to the proposed declaration, leading Ratzinger to write again on March 29, 1983, requesting a response to the December proposal.

the Declaration on Religious Freedom, in the Declaration on the Church and the World, in the Decree on non-Christian Religions, etc.”¹¹

On July 20, 1983, Cardinal Ratzinger offered an extensive reply to Lefebvre’s charges.¹² The Cardinal’s letter is divided into three sections: Ratzinger first addresses the issues concerning the liturgy, then those concerning the Council, and concludes by raising concerns regarding the ambiguity of Lefebvre’s expression of obedience to the Holy Father. In each section, Ratzinger states that the Holy See does not insist that Lefebvre renounce his concerns about the Council and the new liturgy, but rather asks that Lefebvre articulate his concerns in a way that expresses a concrete obedience to the authority of the Church.

One theme that runs throughout the letter is the distinction between interpretations of liturgical and magisterial documents offered by private individuals, including by individuals who may have participated in the composition or redaction of the documents in question, and the interpretations offered by the Church herself by means of the official expressions of the Magisterium. In the section of the letter focused on Lefebvre’s concerns regarding the liturgy, after offering concrete instances in the revised liturgy that emphasize the sacrificial dimension of the Mass, Ratzinger makes the following observation:

You know equally that for the interpretation of the Missal, what is essential is not that which private authors might say, but only the official documents of the Holy See. The affirmations of Father Boyer and Msgr. Bugnini, to which you make allusion, are nothing but private opinions.¹³

¹¹ Lefebvre to Ratzinger, 5 April 1983, in D. MARCHAL, *Mgr Lefebvre*, 133.

¹² Ratzinger to Lefebvre, 20 July 1983, *ibid.*, 135-139.

¹³ Ratzinger to Lefebvre, 20 July 1983, *ibid.*, 135-136. Ratzinger goes on to stress the importance of article 2 of the preface added to the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* following the objections raised by Lefebvre and others in 1969 (the so-called “Ottaviani Intervention”). One element of article 2 that is particularly significant in light of later developments is the reference to *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*: “In this new Missal, then, the Church’s rule of prayer (*lex orandi*) corresponds to its constant rule of faith (*lex credendi*).” (Translation from International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-1979—Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts*, ed. T.C. O’Brien. Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1982, 466). In his 2007 *motu proprio* on the use of the pre-conciliar form

In the official documents of the Church, Ratzinger argues, there is no expression of a desire for “a reduction of the Catholic elements of the Mass, but on the contrary, [there is a desire] for a more rich presence of the tradition of the Fathers.”¹⁴ On the other hand, Ratzinger (citing the explicit approbation of John Paul II for this statement) acknowledges that offering critiques of the liturgical books is not *a priori* excluded. Further, Ratzinger suggests there is room to express a desire for a new revision of the liturgy, a desire that he likens to the pre-conciliar liturgical movement that had been able to hope for and prepare for a liturgical reform, and yet these critiques and expressions of desire for a new liturgical revision must not undercut obedience or cast doubt on the legitimacy of a form of the liturgy promulgated by the Church.

On the question of the compatibility of individual documents of the Second Vatican Council with the Magisterium of the Church, Ratzinger objects to Lefebvre’s claim that certain “affirmations or expressions of the Council (...) are contrary to the official Magisterium of the Church.”¹⁵ In response, Ratzinger compares the question of the critique of conciliar texts to that of liturgical texts:

Here, as with regard to the liturgical questions, it is necessary to note that—according to the varying degrees of authority of the conciliar texts—a critique of certain of their statements, made according to the general regulations for adherence to the Magisterium, is not excluded.

of the Mass, Benedict XVI declares that the *lex credendi* represented by the older and newer forms of the liturgy is identical despite the different forms of liturgical expression: “The Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI is the ordinary expression of the *lex orandi* (rule of prayer) of the Catholic Church of the Latin rite. The Roman Missal promulgated by Saint Pius V and revised by Blessed John XXIII is nonetheless to be considered an extraordinary expression of the same *lex orandi* of the Church and duly honoured for its venerable and ancient usage. These two expressions of the Church’s *lex orandi* will in no way lead to a division in the Church’s *lex credendi* (rule of faith); for they are two usages of the one Roman rite.” (BENEDICTUS PP. XVI, *Litterae apostolicae motu proprio data Summorum Pontificum* [7.VII.2007], in: *AAS* 99 (2007), 777-781, at 779; translation from http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20070707_summorum-pontificum.html, accessed 12 June 2015).

¹⁴ Ratzinger to Lefebvre, 20 July 1983, in D. MARCHAL, *Mgr Lefebvre*, 136.

¹⁵ Ratzinger to Lefebvre, 20 July 1983, *ibid.*, 137.

You are even able to express the desire for a declaration or an explanatory development on this or that point. But you cannot assert the incompatibility of these conciliar texts—which are magisterial texts—with the Magisterium and the Tradition.¹⁶

Ratzinger then proceeds to distinguish between an individual finding difficulty with particular formulations of the Magisterium and an individual claiming that particular formulations of the Magisterium are inherently contradictory to other formulations of the Magisterium:

It is possible for you to say in a personal capacity, that you do not see this compatibility, and so request clarifications of the Apostolic See. But if, on the other hand, you affirm the impossibility of such clarifications, you set yourself profoundly in opposition to this fundamental structure of the Catholic faith, and in opposition to that obedience and humility demanded by the ecclesial faith to which you profess adherence at the end of your letter, when you invoke the faith which had been taught to you in your childhood and during your time in the Eternal City.¹⁷

Ratzinger concludes his treatment of the interpretation of conciliar texts by employing for a second time his distinction between private and ecclesial interpretation:

On this point it is necessary to address a remark already made earlier with regard to the liturgy: private authors, even if they were experts at the Council (like Fathers Congar and Murray, whom you cite) are not the authority charged with interpretation. Only the interpretation given by the Magisterium is authentic and authoritative, which is the interpreter of its own texts: for the conciliar texts are not the writings of such

¹⁶ Ratzinger to Lefebvre, 20 July 1983, *ibid.*, 137. The distinctions raised in this paragraph anticipate paragraphs 24-31 of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's 1990 Instruction *Donum veritatis*, which acknowledge the possibility of individuals raising questions concerning magisterial texts while maintaining an authentic obedience to the Church. Although *Donum veritatis*, signed by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and approved and published by order of Pope John Paul II, has generally been regarded as a response primarily to "progressive" concerns with magisterial teachings, it may also be marked by the experience of the dialogue between Ratzinger and Lefebvre.

¹⁷ Ratzinger to Lefebvre, 20 July 1983, *ibid.*, 137-138.

and such an expert or of anyone who had contributed to their genesis; they are documents of the Magisterium.¹⁸

The issue here is not that the influence of individual contributors is unimportant or that considering this factor is irrelevant for understanding the development of a conciliar text, nor is it that Ratzinger is unaware of the importance of the contribution offered by individuals such as Yves Congar to the documents of the Council. In his 1967 commentary on *Dei verbum*, for instance, Ratzinger wrote that “it is not difficult (...) to recognize the pen of Y. Congar in the text and to see behind it the influence of the Catholic Tübingen school of the nineteenth century.”¹⁹ The diverse theological traditions and perspectives that contributed to the composition of the texts are an important part of the dynamism and synthesis of the documents of the Second Vatican Council.²⁰ Nevertheless, Cardinal Ratzinger’s letter clarifies that while various individuals contributed to the genesis of conciliar or liturgical texts, they do not as individuals possess authorship of the final text or the ability to state definitively what the Church intends by the final text. While it is possible to recognize the importance of the contributions of an individual, the final text transcends the intentions of that particular individual and synthesizes his distinctive contribution within the wider vision of the Church herself.

¹⁸ Ratzinger to Lefebvre, 20 July 1983, *ibid.*, 138.

¹⁹ J. RATZINGER, “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation: Chapter II: The Transmission of Divine Revelation”, in: *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. H. Vorgrimler. Vol. 3. New York, Herder, 1969, 181-198, at 184. This text was originally published in German in *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil, Dokumente und Kommentare*. Part II. Herder, Freiburg, 1967. For further details on Congar’s material contribution to the texts of Vatican II, see J. WICKS, “Yves Congar’s Doctrinal Service of the People of God”, in: *Gregorianum* 84 (2003), 499-550.

²⁰ For an insightful treatment of the fruitful results of the tension between two perspectives on ecclesiology at the Second Council, for instance, see C. RUDDY, “‘In My End Is My Beginning’: Lumen Gentium and the Priority of Doxology”, in: *Irish Theological Quarterly* 79 (2014), 144-164, at 146-148.

Thomas Aquinas on Liturgy and Creed as Expressions of the Church

One way of exploring this principle articulated by Cardinal Ratzinger is to consider the question under the guidance of St. Thomas who, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, helps us to penetrate the mysteries of salvation “more deeply and to see their mutual connection.”²¹ In the present context, it is important to note at the outset that the concept of the Magisterium has developed in certain important ways since the 13th century, and that there are important nuances to the question of the relationship of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas to later magisterial developments such as the declaration of the dogma of Papal Infallibility at the First Vatican Council, and notably indeed, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.²² Further, it

²¹ CONCILIIUM OECUMENICUM VATICANUM II, *Decretum de Institutione Sacerdotali Optatum totius* (28.X.1965), in: *AAS* 58 (1966) 713-727, at § 16, transl. by N.P. TANNER, (ed.) *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*. Washington, Georgetown University Press, 1990, 956. Some recent proposals for using the writings of Thomas Aquinas to articulate the relationship between the Magisterium and theologians have received critical attention from the Magisterium itself: see CONGREGATIO DE DOCTRINA FIDEI, *Instructio Donum veritatis de Ecclesiali theologi vocatione* (24.V.1990), in: *AAS* 82 (1990) 1550-1570, at § 34, fn 27: “The notion of a ‘parallel magisterium’ of theologians in opposition to and in competition with the magisterium of the Pastors is sometimes supported by reference to some texts in which St. Thomas Aquinas makes a distinction between the ‘magisterium cathedrae pastoralis’ and ‘magisterium cathedrae magisterialis’ (*Contra impugnantes*, c. 2; *Quodlib.* III 4, a. 1 (9); *In IV. Sent.* 19, 2, 2, q. 3 sol. 2 ad 4). Actually, these texts do not give any support to this position for St. Thomas was absolutely certain that the right to judge in matters of doctrine was the sole responsibility of the ‘officium praelationis’.” For one example of an appeal to these three texts of Aquinas, see Y. CONGAR, “Bref historique des formes du *magistère* et de ses relations avec les Docteurs”, in: *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 60 (1976), 99-112, at 103; English translation in Y. CONGAR, “A Brief History of the Forms of the Magisterium and Its Relations with Scholars”, in: *The Magisterium and Morality*, eds. C.E. Curran and R.A. McCormick (Readings in Moral Theology 3). New York, Paulist Press, 1982, 314-331, at 318. For critical reflections on this footnote of *Donum veritatis*, see J. VAN LAARHOVEN, “Magisterium or Magisteria: A Historical Note to a Theological Note”, in: *Jaarboek 1990*. Utrecht, Thomas Instituut te Utrecht, 1990, 75-94.

²² On the history of the concept of the Magisterium, see Y. CONGAR, “Pour une histoire sémantique du terme ‘Magisterium’”, in: *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 60 (1976), 85-98; English translation in Y. CONGAR, “A Semantic History of the Term ‘Magisterium’”, in: *The Magisterium and Morality*, 297-313. One may note certain tensions between Congar’s assertions regarding the magisterial activity of recent

should be recalled that there are some relevant issues that, although widely discussed by Thomas's contemporaries and successors, are not dealt with explicitly by Thomas himself, such as the possibility of conflict between a pope and a council or of the possibility of a heretical pope.²³ Finally, it should be emphasized that there are important distinctions both between the theology of Thomas Aquinas and Joseph Ratzinger and between their ecclesial experiences. Nevertheless, the thought of St. Thomas offers theological resources that are helpful for understanding Cardinal Ratzinger's distinction between the viewpoints of private authors and of the Magisterium of the Church.

Thomas deals directly with the relationship of councils and popes to the development of Christian teaching and worship in the final two articles of the first question of the *Secunda secundae*, where he discusses the modes in which the Church is able to arrange the articles of faith in a *symbolo* or creed. Although usually treated in contemporary scholarship with respect to Thomas's understanding of the Papal office, this discussion has a broader bearing on considerations of the Church's doctrine and worship. This follows from Thomas's understanding of creeds as texts that are often composed in Councils, published by authority of the Pope, and subsequently used in Christian worship as liturgical texts.

Earlier in this question, after stating that the material objects of faith should be divided into articles so as to draw out the interconnections be-

pontiffs and the contentions of *Donum veritatis* concerning the theological character of certain magisterial texts. On the relationship of Aquinas to the dogma of 1870, see Y. CONGAR, "Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Infallibility of the Papal Magisterium (*Summa Theol.*, II-II, Q. 1, A. 10)", in: *The Thomist* 38 (1974), 81-105, esp. 99-103. For a recent synthesis of the concept of the Magisterium, see A. DULLES, *Magisterium: Teacher and Guardian of the Faith*. Naples, Florida, Sapientia Press, 2007. On the question of the reception of Aquinas's thought on papal teaching authority more broadly, see U. HORST, *The Dominicans and the Pope: Papal Teaching Authority in the Medieval and Early Modern Thomist Tradition*. Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2006. For a thorough treatment of Thomas's understanding of Councils and of his use of their *acta* throughout his writings, see M. MORARD, "Thomas d'Aquin lecteur des conciles", in: *Archivum Franciscanum historicum* 98 (2005), 211-365.

²³ See U. HORST, *The Dominicans and the Pope*, 2.

tween one truth of the faith and another,²⁴ Thomas argued that although the substance of the articles of faith does not grow or change over time, implicit aspects of the faith can become more explicit.²⁵ This gradual development relies on the assistance of God, who guides the men who act as his agents in teaching the faith.²⁶ Just as it is only possible to assent to the faith with the grace of God,²⁷ so too the guidance of God is necessary for the sake of teaching and developing the implicit aspects of the deposit of faith.

In articles 9 and 10 of the first question of the *Secunda secundae*, Thomas articulates the role of the guidance of God and the teaching authority of the Church in developing modes of expressing the deposit of faith more explicitly. In article 9, Thomas considers the mode in which the Church is able to develop formularies that link the articles of the faith into a coherent whole, and in article 10 he considers the role of a Pope in convoking a council and promulgating a creed. In the *sed contra* of article 9, Thomas associates the teaching authority of the Church with the guidance she receives from God: “the universal Church is not able to err, because she is governed by the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Truth.”²⁸ From the principle that “a creed is promulgated by the authority of the universal Church,”²⁹ Thomas concludes that nothing unfitting can be contained in a creed promulgated by the authority of the Church.

In the *sed contra* of the following article, Thomas offers a further clarification about the promulgation of a creed, balancing the role of Councils and the role of Popes in the development of creeds:

The promulgation of a creed takes place at a general council (*synodo generali*). But a council of this kind may only be gathered by the author-

²⁴ THOMAS AQUINAS, *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 6, resp.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, q. 1, a. 7, resp. For an interesting perspective on the question of whether Thomas had an understanding of doctrinal development, see C. KACZOR, “Thomas Aquinas on the Development of Doctrine”, in: *Theological Studies* 62 (2001), 283-302.

²⁶ *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 7, ad 3.

²⁷ *STh* II-II, q. 6, a. 1, resp.

²⁸ *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 9, sc. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Aquinas are my own.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

ity of the Supreme Pontiff, as is stated in distinction 17 of the Decretals. Therefore the promulgation of a creed pertains to the authority of the Supreme Pontiff.³⁰

For Thomas, the purpose of a creed is to collect the truths of the faith in a mode that will make it easier to propose them to all believers.³¹ Responding to the question of why a creed is necessary at all when we already have the sacred Scriptures, Thomas argues that although the truths of the faith proposed in creeds are necessarily drawn from the fount of Sacred Scripture, creeds propose in a more explicit way the truth of faith which is contained in various modes in Scripture.³² As Thomas argues, extended study and labor are necessary to fully elicit the truth of the faith from sacred Scripture, whereas many people are occupied with other duties and are not able to have the leisure for study.³³ This passage parallels Thomas's argument in the first question of the *Prima pars* that although some truths concerning God could be known through the investigation of reason, it is fitting that they should be divinely revealed, because otherwise they would be known only by a few, after a long period of time, and with the admixture of many errors.³⁴

In the creed, truths already revealed in Scripture are gathered together by members of the Church who have the leisure to undertake study of this sort, and are then promulgated by the teaching authority of the Church. Although Thomas is clear that the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit in her exercise of this teaching authority, the composition of new creeds is not a matter of new revelations from the Holy Spirit, but rather of a further explication of what is already revealed implicitly.³⁵ This accounts for the possibility of multiple creeds being developed in the course of the Church's life which "differ only in that what is implicitly contained in one is explained more fully in another, on account of what was demanded by

³⁰ *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 10, sc.

³¹ *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 9, resp.

³² *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 9, ad 1.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *STh* I, q. 1, a. 1, resp.

³⁵ See *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 9, ad 2; III, q. 64, a. 2, ad 3.

the arguments of the heretics.”³⁶ In the course of time, a truth of faith that is emphasized in one creed might not need to be emphasized in another creed due to a change in circumstances.³⁷

In the reply to objection 3 of article 9, which questions the fittingness of an individual with unformed faith to pronounce the words of the creed, Thomas makes an important observation that complements his statement that a creed is promulgated by the authority of the universal Church: “The confession of faith is handed down in the creed as if from the person of the whole Church, which is united through faith.”³⁸ Thomas’s use of the phrase “*ex persona Ecclesiae*” in this context parallels his notion, ultimately derived from St. Cyprian, that one can recite the Our Father even if one is struggling to forgive one’s neighbor, because this prayer is made not in one’s own person but in the person of the Church.³⁹ The concept of speaking “*in persona*” or “*ex persona Ecclesiae*” is more broadly used by Thomas to indicate the way in which individuals participate in the liturgy, with the exception of such cases as the form of the sacrament of the Eucharist, that is the words of consecration, which are spoken “*in persona Christi*,” in contrast to the other parts of the Mass which are spoken “*in persona Ecclesiae*.”⁴⁰

This liturgical dimension is important for understanding Thomas’s conception of creeds because of his emphasis on the fact that creeds are recited by the Church in a liturgical context. This is the case both with the Nicene Creed, recited on Sundays and major feastdays, and also with the

³⁶ *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 9, ad 2.

³⁷ *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 9, ad 4. As an example of this, Thomas argues that the descent of Christ into hell was not carried over from the Apostles’ creed to the Nicene Creed because there was no error concerning this point among the heretics of the fourth century.

³⁸ *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 9, ad 3.

³⁹ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Expositio in orationem dominicam*, as cited in B.-D. MARLIANGEAS, *Clés pour une Théologie du Ministère: In Persona Christi, In Persona Ecclesiae* (Théologie Historique 51). Paris, Édition Beauchesne, 1978, 100. Marliangeas shows that in this argumentation Thomas is following in the line of St. Albert the Great (*In III Sent.* d. 30, *expositio textus*) and St. Cyprian (cf. *PL* 4,540).

⁴⁰ See the overview given by B.-D. MARLIANGEAS, *Clés pour une Théologie du Ministère*, 89-146. Marliangeas notes (97-98) that Thomas almost exclusively uses language of “*in persona Christi*” with respect to the Eucharist, although he certainly thinks that Christ acts through the priest in each of the sacraments.

so-called Athanasian Creed, used in the medieval liturgy on Sundays at the office of Prime.⁴¹ With respect to the Athanasian Creed, Thomas observes that although an individual composed the creed, it has been incorporated into the Western liturgy by the authority of the Pope and thus transcends the (pseudonymous) authority of Athanasius as Patriarch of Alexandria. Sensitive to the fact that the Athanasian Creed appears to be composed more in the mode of doctrinal writing than a creed strictly speaking, Thomas suggests that the Church accepts it into the liturgy not simply because it was written by Athanasius, but because it is true:

Athanasius did not compose a declaration of faith in the form of a creed, but rather in the mode of a doctrinal exposition, as appears from his very way of speaking. But since this doctrinal exposition concisely contained the whole truth of faith, it was received by the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, so as to be considered as a sort of rule of faith (*quasi regula fidei*).⁴²

For Thomas, just as the Holy Spirit guides and preserves the whole Church in matters of doctrine, so too does he preserve and guide the Church in matters of liturgy.⁴³ In the context of his sacramental theology, Thomas frequently relies upon the authority of the custom of the Church

⁴¹ *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 9, obj. 6 and ad 6 (Nicene Creed); II-II, q. 1, a. 10, obj. 3 and ad 3 (Athanasian Creed). For a list of references to liturgical creeds in the *Summa Theologiae* and *Summa contra Gentiles*, see *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Opera Omnia iussa edita Leonis XIII P.M.*, t. 16: *Indices*. Rome, S. Sabina, 1948, 177 (Apostles' Creed), 194 (Athanasian Creed), 207-208 (Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed). For the appearance of creeds in the other works of Aquinas, see the indexes of sources in each of the other Leonine volumes. For the history and text of the Athanasian Creed, see J.N.D. KELLY, *The Athanasian Creed: The Paddock Lectures for 1962-3*. London, Adam and Charles Black, 1964; J. PELIKAN and V.R. HOTCHKISS, "The Athanasian Creed: Quicunque Vult, 5th-6th C.", in: *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003, 1:673-77.

⁴² *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 10, ad 3. As T.C. O'Brien notes in his translation of this question, the Athanasian Creed seems to have become "accepted simply in practice, not by any formal act." See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae, Faith (2a2ae. 1-7)*, transl. by T.C. O'Brien. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1974, 31:57; cf. 31:52-53. Nevertheless, Thomas's argument more broadly stands with regard to the relationship between the liturgical use of a creed and the Church's appropriation of its doctrinal content.

⁴³ *STh* II-II, q. 172, a. 1, ad 4.

in liturgical matters,⁴⁴ while nevertheless recognizing that the liturgy is open to development by the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in fidelity to the institutions of Christ.⁴⁵ As St. Thomas states in the midst of a discussion of the institution of the sacraments:

The apostles and their successors are God's vicars in governing the Church which is built on faith and the sacraments of faith. Wherefore, just as they may not institute another Church, so neither may they deliver another faith, nor institute other sacraments: on the contrary, the Church is said to be built up with the sacraments which flowed from the side of Christ while hanging on the Cross.⁴⁶

Trusting in the Holy Spirit's guidance of the Church, we are thus able to give great weight to the custom of the Church, even to the point of raising her above the authority of individual Christians of great historical importance:

The custom of the Church has very great authority and ought to be jealously observed in all things, since the very doctrine of catholic doctors derives its authority from the Church. Hence we ought to abide by the authority of the Church rather than by that of an Augustine or a Jerome or of any doctor whatever.⁴⁷

Despite the fact that individuals such as Augustine, Jerome, and Athanasius deeply influence the formulation of the Catholic faith, as private individuals they are not able to decide matters of faith. As Thomas makes clear in the context of a discussion of the prohibition of the composition of further creeds in the acts of several early councils,

⁴⁴ For a list of further references within the *Tertia pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, see L. WALSH, "Liturgy in the Theology of St. Thomas", in: *The Thomist* 38 (1974), 557-583, at 560n4.

⁴⁵ See *STh* III, q. 66, a. 6, ad 4; III, q. 80, a. 10, ad 5; III, q. 80, a. 12.

⁴⁶ *STh* III, q. 64, a. 2, ad 3; translation from THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, transl. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York, Benziger Brothers, 1947, 2:2368.

⁴⁷ *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 12, resp.; transl. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2:1223.

This prohibition and sentence of the council was intended for private individuals, who have no business to decide matters of faith: for this decision of the general council did not take away from a subsequent council the power of drawing up a new edition of the symbol, containing not indeed a new faith, but the same faith with greater explicitness. For every council has taken into account that a subsequent council would expound matters more fully than the preceding council, if this became necessary through some heresy arising. Consequently this belongs to the Sovereign Pontiff, by whose authority the council is convoked, and its decision confirmed.⁴⁸

For Thomas Aquinas, then, the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit in the development of both liturgy and doctrine, although in both domains she must remain faithful to the divine gifts of the deposit of faith and the divinely instituted sacraments of faith. Private individuals may play a role in the development of these domains, but their contributions are rightly ordered by collective gatherings such as councils of bishops and by the authority of the Pope. Thus, although Thomas's context and mode of speaking differ from that of Cardinal Ratzinger, many of his ways of thinking about the development of modes of expression of the faith in doctrine and liturgical domains support the contention of Cardinal Ratzinger that it is essential to consider the Church's collective authority as distinct from that of the individual members of the Church, while acknowledging the important role of the bishops and most especially the Bishop of Rome in the exercise of the Church's proper authority in doctrinal and liturgical matters.

Ecclesial Authorship

Having considered Ratzinger's suggestion that liturgical and conciliar texts can only be given definitive interpretations by the Church, and not by private individuals, and Thomas's understanding of the balance of Pope and councils and the interrelation of dogma and liturgy, I will now attempt to articulate a concept of what might be called "ecclesial authorship," which I propose as a way of synthesizing these perspectives.

⁴⁸ *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 10, ad 2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2:1179; cf. I, q. 36, a. 2, ad 2.

The texts of the Second Vatican Council possess authority as formal statements of the faith of the Church on account of having been approved by the Council Fathers and promulgated by Pope Paul VI.⁴⁹ Although the development and articulation of the documents of the Council depended on the contributions of a large number of bishops and theologians during the course of the Second Vatican Council, the final documents are not the products of individuals who contributed to them, but are collective expressions of the Church's Magisterium. In other words, in contrast to interpretations that emphasize the authorship or intentions of the individuals who contributed to their composition, we can instead speak of the "ecclesial authorship" of the texts of the Second Vatican Council, articulated in the course of the conciliar process under the assistance of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁰ This in turn means that the documents are to be rightly interpreted by recourse to the Magisterium of the Church, rather than by the individual members of the Church. Because the statements of the Council are statements of the teaching office of the Church, they should be interpreted according to the mind of the Church, their true author, and not according to the implicit or subsequent intentions or explanations of the individuals who contributed to their formulation.⁵¹

The authority of the Magisterium is exercised in name of Jesus Christ, and yet "this teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly,

⁴⁹ Cf. CONCILIUM OECUMENICUM VATICANUM II, Constitutio Dogmatica *Lumen gentium* de Ecclesia (12.XI.1964), in: *AAS* 57 (1965,) 5-75, at § 22. It is helpful in this light to consider the formulas of promulgation for the Conciliar texts; see G. ALBERIGO, "Una cum patribus". La formula conclusiva delle decisioni del Vaticano II", in: *Ecclesia a Spiritu Sanctu edocta: Mélanges théologiques Hommage à Mgr Gérard Philips*. Gembloux, Duculot, 1970, 291-319.

⁵⁰ Cf. CONCILIUM OECUMENICUM VATICANUM II, Constitutio Dogmatica *Dei verbum* de Divina Revelatione (18.XI.1965), in: *AAS* 58 (1966), 817-836, § 8; the translations of this document offered here and below are taken from http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html (accessed 12 June 2015).

⁵¹ This should be compared to the *Nota Praevia* of *Lumen gentium*, which speaks of interpreting the Council according to the Mind of the Council. The *Nota Praevia* is invoked as an interpretive key in the proposal offered to Lefebvre by Ratzinger in December 1982; cf. D. MARCHAL, *Mgr Lefebvre*, 128.

guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit.”⁵²

Just as the Magisterium itself relies on and is joined together with Tradition and Scripture, so too individual pastors and theologians who act as instruments in the work of the Magisterium must be formed by assiduous study of Scripture and Tradition, both in the course of their initial theological formation⁵³ and throughout their lives.⁵⁴ As the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith observed in 1973, the charism granted to those who exercise the teaching office of the Church “does not dispense them from studying with appropriate means the treasure of divine Revelation contained both in Sacred Scripture which teaches us intact the truth that God willed to be written down for our salvation and in the living Tradition that comes from the Apostles.”⁵⁵ The guarantee of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit given to the disciples in Mt 10:19-20 does not remit the need for human study and contemplation, for “if man, instead of doing what he can, were to be content with awaiting God’s assistance, he would seem to tempt God.”⁵⁶

As Pope Francis observes in *Lumen fidei*, “The great medieval theologians and teachers rightly held that theology, as a science of faith, is a participation in God’s own knowledge of himself.”⁵⁷ For Thomas Aqui-

⁵² *Dei verbum*, n. 10. As the paragraph goes on to explain, the Magisterium itself then has a vital relationship with both Scripture and Tradition: “sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God’s most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and (...) all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.”

⁵³ See *Optatam totius*, n. 16.

⁵⁴ See CONCILIUM OECUMENICUM VATICANUM II, *Decretum Presbyterorum ordinis de Presbyterorum Ministerio et Vita*, (7.XII.1965), in: *AAS* 58 (1966), 991-1024, at § 19.

⁵⁵ SACRA CONGREGATIO PRO DOCTRINA FIDEI, *Decl. *Mysterium ecclesiae* circa Catholicam Doctrinam de Ecclesia contra nonnullos errors hodiernos tuendam* (24. VI.1973), in: *AAS* 65 (1973), 396-408, at 400-401, § 3; translation from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19730705_mysterium-ecclesiae_en.html (accessed 12 June 2015).

⁵⁶ *STh* II-II, q. 53, a. 4, ad 1.

⁵⁷ FRANCISCUS PP., *Litt. Encycl. *Lumen fidei** (29.VI.2013), in: *AAS* 105 (2013), 555-596, at 579, § 36, translation from http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html (accessed 12

nas, one of the “great medieval theologians” whom Pope Francis cites in the encyclical, “sacred doctrine essentially treats of God viewed as the highest cause—not only so far as He can be known through creatures just as philosophers knew Him (...) but also as far as He is known to Himself alone and revealed to others.”⁵⁸ The teaching of the Magisterium thus flows from what God has revealed to us about himself and which has been handed down by the apostles and put into writing in the form of Scripture and the monuments of Tradition.⁵⁹

Conclusion

The correspondence considered here between Cardinal Ratzinger and Archbishop Lefebvre, undertaken on Cardinal Ratzinger’s side expressly at the request of Pope John Paul II, brings to the fore certain important issues concerning the reception of the texts of the Second Vatican Council and the liturgical rites promulgated after the Council by Pope Paul VI. In contrast to Archbishop Lefebvre’s inclination to interpret the conciliar and liturgical texts on the basis of statements of individuals who played a role in their genesis, Cardinal Ratzinger emphasized that these texts and rites should not be considered the writings or productions of individuals, but rather as documents of the Magisterium and liturgical rites of the Church. Cardinal Ratzinger’s distinction is supported by the testimony of St. Thomas Aquinas, who offers helpful indications for understanding the respective roles of individuals and the Church as a whole in the development of liturgical and doctrinal expressions of the faith of the Church. By emphasizing the ecclesial authorship of magisterial and liturgical texts, rather than the role of individuals in their composition, we are able to see

June 2015). In paragraph 7, Pope Francis states that “these considerations on faith—in continuity with all that the Church’s magisterium has pronounced on this theological virtue—are meant to supplement what Benedict XVI had written in his encyclical letters on charity and hope. He himself had almost completed a first draft of an encyclical on faith. For this I am deeply grateful to him, and as his brother in Christ I have taken up his fine work and added a few contributions of my own.”

⁵⁸ *STh* I, q. 1, a. 6.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Dei verbum*, nn. 7-10.

more clearly the continuity that abides in the development of the Church's liturgy and doctrine and to affirm that only the Church herself can offer a definitive interpretation of texts that she has promulgated in the more recent and more distant past. This continuity derives both from the Church as the subject or author of these texts and liturgical rites, as well as from the fact that in both her teaching and her worship the Church is and must be faithful to the deposit of the faith and the divine institution of the sacraments bestowed upon her by Christ.

Individuals who contribute to the exercise of the Magisterium are called to be at the service of the truth, not to craft their own messages and agendas. In the context of describing the preaching office of bishops, St. Augustine powerfully articulated the need to preach Christ's message rather than our own: "He himself will help me to say true things, if I don't just say my own thing. If I do just say my own thing, I shall be a shepherd feeding myself, not the sheep; but if what I say is his thing, then it is he who is feeding you, whoever may be speaking."⁶⁰ Christ, "though unseen, presides at the Councils of the Church and guides them."⁶¹ Individual pastors and theologians involved in the exercise of the Magisterium or in the development of the Church's liturgy play a role in articulating the message and worship of Christ, but must humbly submit themselves to the guidance of Christ and his Spirit if they are to serve as living instruments and servants of Christ.

⁶⁰ AUGUSTINE, *Sermo* 46.2: PL 38,235; translation from *Sermons II (20-50) on the Old Testament*, transl. by E. Hill (Works of St. Augustine III/2). Brooklyn, New City, 1990, 263.

⁶¹ PIUS PP. XII, Litt. Encycl. *Mystici Corporis Christi* de Mystico Iesu Christi Corpore deque nostra in eo cum Christo coniunctione (29.VI.1943), in *AAS* 35 (1943), 193-248, at 216; translation from http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi.html (accessed 12 June 2015).