

EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT
THOUGH NOTHING HAS CHANGED?

THE HISTORICAL DISCONTINUITY'S IMPORTANCE
FOR SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY
A RESPONSE TO MATHIJS LAMBERIGTS

I. INTRODUCTION: THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN HISTORICAL AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Prof. Lamberigts describes in his intriguing paper the many steps that were necessary both forward and backward in order to allow that a text that speaks in a friendly way about the Jewish people was integrated into an official document of Vatican II, namely in *Nostra Aetate* 4. Before this could happen, several attempts to alter the rather hostile attitude towards the Jewish Community that was expressed in the words of the Good Friday prayer had been offered without success. From the perspective of history, discontinuity cannot be denied in the case of *Nostra Aetate* 4.

But what do these historical changes mean if we look at them from a systematic point of view? This response argues that the historical success of this new approach to the Jewish people was only possible because there was also a change in the way in which the systematic framework for interpretation was understood: What was seen as the principal source of Christian truth? Was there a static or a dynamic understanding of tradition? Did the authorities accept the insights of people who were not members of the authoritative bodies of the Church, and how was this related to the question of normativity? Following the “story” of *Nostra Aetate* 4, we learn that a dynamic and complex understanding of concepts such as tradition and normativity was a precondition for allowing the text to be written as it now stands.

Not only was the application of a certain interpretation of systematic theological tools a precondition for historical change in the text, the historical event of an acceptance of a discontinuity in addressing the Jewish people within the official text of the Council also creates a kind of normativity for the interpretation of the tools. A strict circularity created between the historical event and the normativity of theological interpretation in the way described can only be avoided if it is embedded in a dynamic understanding of history.

The history of *Nostra Aetate* 4 clearly challenges the opposition between the two contrasting evaluations of Vatican II, either the “rupture interpretation”, or the “development interpretation”. The two positions are often, though not always, viewed by those who study the Second Vatican Council with either a benevolent or a sceptical point of view¹. With respect to the question of the normativity of tradition, the rupture interpretation claims that the teaching of Vatican II is not binding because it leaves the solid soil of tradition; whereas the development interpretation says that what seems to be a radical change is only seemingly a change, in reality it just spells out in a new way what has been said before; therefore the teaching of Vatican II is as much binding as the teaching of all councils held before it.

The question of the normativity of the teachings of Vatican II is in both cases directly linked to the question of continuity. In a pictorial image, one could express the question in the following way: Has Vatican II applied a completely new coat of paint and therefore ceased to follow the painting tradition; or was it only applying the paint to a new surface (i.e., to a new historical situation), so that *new* qualities of the *same* paint could be discovered and so were noticed by some people as changes in the colour?

By following the presentation of the history of *Nostra Aetate* 4 given by Mathijs Lamberigts, one notices that the case is more complicated than that. As he says, the distinction between the terms continuity and discontinuity cannot sufficiently explain what was going on from a historical point of view. The same is true if one looks at the development with systematic interest. Is not what happened tremendously important for our interpretation of the essential concepts of systematic theology? And if documents of the Council belong to the highest teaching authority in the Church, does the historical fact that this form of the text was accepted not also give normativity to this interpretation of the tools that made this possible?

II. WHO CAN BE AN AUTHOR OF CHANGING TRADITION?

The first steps toward promoting a friendly relationship with the Jewish people – deleting the words “perfidus” and “perfidia” in the Good Friday Prayer – were slowed down due to a discussion concerning who was

1. For a discussion of recent interpretations of Vatican II see G. WASSILOWSKY, *Das II. Vatikanum – Kontinuität oder Diskontinuität? Zu einigen Werken der neuesten Konzilsliteratur*, in *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift* 34 (2005) 630-640.

entitled to propose changes to a prayer that had had a long tradition of being used. The first answer, given in 1928, was that no private society is entitled to make such a proposal². When Pope John XXIII decided to change the text in 1959, he accepted what a large number of believers felt to be the proper expression of a Christian attitude towards the Jewish people and he likewise preferred this explanation over the claims of tradition to keep it unchanged. This acceptance, in spite of its 30 year delay since the changes were proposed, expresses through its sheer existence that the feelings of the faithful were given importance. This corresponds moreover to a shift in the ecclesiological understanding of lay people in the church. During the Council, the view was still defended by Cardinal Ruffini that, within the church, an actively teaching portion could be distinguished over against the passive, listening part. Much more importance was therefore given to lay people with respect to the experience of faith and to actively forming a living tradition of faith as an expression of the *sensus fidei* in the document *Lumen Gentium* 12 issued by the Council³.

III. A STATIC VERSUS “LIVING” UNDERSTANDING OF TRADITION

Apart from the authorship of change, the history of *Nostra Aetate* 4 invites us to reflect upon the criteria that were used to justify the *nihil esse innovandum*⁴. More important than the criteria referred to by both sides was the hierarchy established between them. Pius XI who dissolved the *Amici Israel* in 1928 referred to the necessary concordance with the following sources of theological truth⁵:

- a) Holy Scripture
- b) Authorities that cannot fail, namely the Fathers of the Church
- c) Further Tradition and Liturgy
- d) The teaching of the church.

2. See M. LAMBERIGTS, *Discontinuity in the Teaching of the Roman Catholic Church: The Case of Nostra Aetate* 4, in this volume, 55-86, p. 58.

3. See P. HÜNERMANN, *Sensus fidei*, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* 9 (2006) 465-467; and ID., *Theologischer Kommentar zur dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche*, in P. HÜNERMANN – B.J. HILBERATH (eds.), *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, II, Freiburg – Basel – Wien, Herder, 2004, 263-582, pp. 383-384.

4. See LAMBERIGTS, *Discontinuity* (n. 2), p. 58, with footnote 15.

5. See *ibid.*, pp. 60-61: “...that the Amici Israel developed a way of acting and speaking that is contradictory to the Church’s opinion, the teaching of the Fathers and the Holy Liturgy...”.

A discussion on the hierarchy of these points of reference for Christian truth has accompanied most of the twentieth century⁶, as well as Pius XI, together with consultants and the Holy Office acting as advocates for the prevalence of the authority of the church over scripture and tradition⁷.

Similar positions can also be found in moral theological discourse after the Second Vatican Council. Otto Schilling writes in his handbook of Moral Theology that Scripture and Tradition can only be secondary sources for Moral Theology: they can be regarded as “material principles” only, while the most important source is the teaching and practice of the church as the “formal principle” of moral truth⁸. Giving priority to the Bible was not possible because, as the professor of Moral Theology teaching at Graz at the same time explained, this was seen to be a characteristic feature of protestant faith⁹. With respect to Moral Theology, it took Vatican II’s decree *Optatam totius* and some years of its reception until the Bible was accepted in the late sixties as an important source for the discipline¹⁰.

6. A remarkably elaborate study on tradition and its relationship to Scripture was conducted by Y.M.-J. CONGAR, *La Tradition et les traditions*, Paris, Fayard, vol. 1, 1960; vol. 2, 1963, and a German shorter version on the same topic: Y.M.-J. CONGAR, *Tradition und Kirche* (Der Christ in der Welt. Eine Enzyklopädie, IV/1b), Aschaffenburg, Pattloch, 1964.

7. See LAMBERIGTS, *Discontinuity* (n. 2), p. 60: “Pius XI not only approved the proposals of the Holy Office but even sharpened them”.

8. O. SCHILLING, *Handbuch der Moralthologie. I: Allgemeine Moralthologie und von den Sakramenten*, Stuttgart, Schwabenverlag, 1952, pp. 14-15: “Die Kirche hat das christliche Lebensgesetz autoritativ festzustellen und zu wahren, sie gewinnt die sittlichen Normen aus der Heiligen Schrift und der Tradition. *Lehre und Praxis* der Kirche, die Praxis, sofern die Lehre daraus erkennbar ist, bilden daher die nächste und zugleich die entscheidende Regel des Sittengesetzes (...), *Schrift und Tradition* die entfernte Regel. In erster Linie maßgebend ist also die offizielle kirchliche Lehre. Schrift und Tradition kann man daher auch als das *Materialprinzip* der Moral bezeichnen, die Lehr- und Leitungsgewalt der Kirche als *Formalprinzip*, weil das Lehramt den gesamten Stoff der Verkündigung aus der Schrift und Tradition entnimmt und hieraus die endgültige Lehre formt (...). Nicht zu billigen ist es, wenn man das Verhältnis umkehrt und die Heilige Schrift zur ‘vorzüglichsten Quelle’ und deren ‘religiös-sittlichen Inhalt’ der zum ‘gestaltenden Prinzip und Inhalt’ der ganzen Darstellung macht (*Tillmann*)”.

9. M. REDING, *Handbuch der Moralthologie. I: Philosophische Grundlegung der katholischen Moralthologie*, München, Hueber, 1953, pp. 206-207: “Es ist auffällig, dass es heute genug katholische Theologen gibt, die die Moralthologie auf die Offenbarung und die Tradition einschränken möchten. Ethische Arbeit ist nach ihrem Dafürhalten keine moraltheologische Arbeit, weil sie nicht aus der Bibel oder der Tradition, sondern bloß aus der Vernunft schöpft. Diese Auffassung ist offenbar von der evangelischen Theologie beeinflusst und bedeutet eine wesentliche Verengung des herkömmlichen katholisch-theologischen Horizontes”.

10. K. HÖRMANN, *Lexikon der Christlichen Moral*, Innsbruck, Tyrolia, 1969, says in his preface that he had to integrate into his dictionary of Christian Morality the insights of the past century, and especially of Vatican II, to which he counts the essential connection between Moral Theology and the Bible: “Es war mir völlig klar, daß dieses Lexikon

The reasons given by Pius XI and the Holy Office are linked to a series of assumptions or attitudes that characterise a static understanding of tradition and an interpretation of normativity along the lines of legal norms:

- a) The Bible and the Church Fathers as authorities should be understood literally and not interpreted further,
- b) The argument of continuity (long lasting tradition) should be given more weight than theological or political reasoning, and
- c) The Church's opinion, expressed in the canonical texts, is the highest authority (the original source of revelation is Tradition, not Scripture).

If one accepts these presuppositions, changes are unthinkable, and the task of the Church consists in procuring the continuation of its practice. Decisive authority has the task of making sure that nothing changes. Who does not obey or who starts questioning the norm, therefore automatically commits an error or breaks a rule.

An example taken from medieval church history can illustrate what such a rigid systematic approach brings about: At the Council of Constance, John Wycliff and Jan Hus were defending the view that the Holy Communion should be given to all Christians under both species, and they said that they would only accept arguments against their position which could be proofed by quotations from the Bible. One of their opponents, Jean Gerson, argued against them by stating that truth was not only to be found in the Bible, but also in the explanations of experts and in the traditions and customs in the Church. What was important to him was that the authority of the Church should be regarded as the first principle of biblical exegesis, just as the speculative sciences and morality have their own first principles which need to be accepted¹¹. Since Wycliff and Hus

sich all das zu eigen machen muß, was die Moraltheologen im Lauf der langen Geschichte ihrer Disziplin erarbeitet haben, vor allem aber den Einsichten vom wünschenswerten Charakter der Moraltheologie folgen muß, die die letzten Jahrzehnte gebracht haben, Einsichten, zu denen sich das 2. Vatikanische Konzil ausdrücklich bekannt hat. So war ich in diesem Werk besonders darauf bedacht, die wesentliche Verbundenheit der Moraltheologie mit der Bibel deutlich werden zu lassen (...)"

11. J. GERSON, *De necessaria communione sub utraque speciei*, in P. GLORIEUX (ed.), *Jean Gerson, Œuvres complètes*, 10, Paris, Desclée, 1973, 55-72, p. 58: *Scriptura Sacra in sua receptione ex expositione authentica, finaliter resolvitur in auctoritatem, receptionem et approbationem universalis Ecclesiae... juxta illud Augustini: Evangelio non crederem, nisi me auctoritas Ecclesiae compulsisset. Haec enim est infallibilis regula a Spiritu Sancto directa ... Et quia hoc est primum principium in fide tenendum, quo non credito non superest arguere contra sic negantem, sicut nec contra negantem prima principia in moralibus vel speculabilibus arguendum esse tradit Aristoteles additur consecutive quod Sacra Scriptura in expositione sua habet et habere debet in reverentia et auctoritate majori consuetudinem universalis Ecclesiae circa ea quae fidei sacramenta respiciunt et dispensationem ipsorum, quam auctoritatem doctoris unius particularis, etiam sancti.* See

refused to accept this, Gerson thought that there was no point for further discussion¹². Due to the static interpretation of Scripture and Tradition by the Authority of the Church, the proper theological question of Holy Communion under both species was not really addressed; rather principles and authorities stood at the centre of discussion.

The development of a hermeneutic understanding of both the Bible and Tradition that allows for a development in the interpretation of the Holy Scripture and its understanding at a given time and place had started before Vatican II. Yves Congar dedicated two volumes to the question of “tradition and traditions”. In his chapter on Scripture and Tradition, located in the second book which covers theological reflection, he makes a clear plea for the sovereignty of Holy Scripture: “Scripture and Tradition”, he says, “are not at the same level. Scripture is absolutely sovereign: it comes from God, even in its form. It is the rule for Tradition and for the Church; neither the Church nor Tradition is a rule for it. What is more: Scripture is fixed...”¹³. Along the same line, the dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum* finally states that it is the task of the Church to give an authentic interpretation of the Bible, but that this does not signify that the Church is situated above Scripture; rather it listens to Scripture (DV 10). Eventually, in 1988, the *Motu Proprio* “*Ecclesia Dei*” in reaction to the non-acceptance of some aspects of Vatican II by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, finds clear words to express how Tradition cannot be understood as something static, but has the character of something that lives and develops itself (DH 4822)¹⁴.

IV. TRUTH EXISTING OUTSIDE THE CANONICAL TEXT TRADITION

The historical development portrayed by Lamberigts also shows that the first official rejection and the later acceptance of proposed texts were

also S. MÜLLER, *Theologie und Philosophie im Spätmittelalter: Die Anfänge der via moderna und ihre Bedeutung für die Entwicklung der Moraltheologie (1380-1450)* (forthcoming from Vienna University Press).

12. GERSON, *De necessaria communione* (n. 11), p. 59.

13. CONGAR, *La Tradition et les traditions II* (n. 6), p. 177.

14. H. DENZINGER, *Kompandium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehr-entscheidungen*, verbessert, erweitert und unter Mitarbeit von Helmut HOPING herausgegeben von Peter HÜNERMANN, Freiburg i.Br. – Basel – Wien, Herder, ³⁷1991, p. 1459: *Huius autem schismatici actus radix dignosci potest in ipsa aliqua imperfecta et pugnanti sibi notione Traditionis: imperfecta, quandoquidem non satis respicit indolem vivam eiusdem Traditionis, quae – uti clarissime docet Concilium Vaticanum Secundum – “...sub assistentia Spiritus Sancti in Ecclesia proficit...”*.

embedded in a concrete historical context: Political and historical reasons were decisive. It is therefore necessary to reflect upon the relationship between truth criteria, as, for example, concerning the compatibility of a text with tradition, and criteria for implementation that depend on political estimation and the application of prudence¹⁵.

But what is the systematic relevance of the fact that something can be regarded as truthful but cannot be implemented in magisterial teaching due to political reasons? The historical conditionality of the implementation or non-implementation of a text does not shed the light of relativity on the truth criteria; rather this fact makes clear that truth may exist and be pronounced without being implemented into official texts for some other reason than doctrinal doubt; and that there is some truth formulated and existing outside of canonical texts.

If one takes this example of the contingency of changes in canonical texts seriously, the opposite could also be remarked: Not only can truth exist outside canonical texts, but canonical texts can also come to a stage in which, in a given historical situation, they no longer express what is seen to be the truth of faith, but rather, due to some political circumstance, they cannot yet be changed. Does not the obligation rise from this observation to make sure that canonical texts are continuously checked as to whether or not they are still capable of expressing the truthfulness of tradition in each new context, just as liturgical texts undergo their processes of *aggiornamento*? Such an approach presupposes, however, that there is a “living” continuity in the Church that is based on Revelation and that its handing-on throughout history indeed keeps faith with this revelation. In contrast to the first arguments used, this understanding marks a clear shift from a literal and static understanding of the Bible and of Tradition to an understanding informed by hermeneutical principles¹⁶.

15. See LAMBERIGTS, *Discontinuity* (n. 2), p. 78: “...but concrete situations prevailed over ‘tradition’ and ‘truth’”.

16. The hermeneutic dimension has also been discussed explicitly with respect to Moral Theology after Vatican II: see e.g. the recent study by A. THOMASSET, *Dans la fidélité au concile Vatican II: La dimension herméneutique de la théologie morale*, 2 parts, in *Revue d'éthique et de théologie morale* 263 (2011) 32-61; 264 (2011) 9-27. For general views on the discussions in Moral Theology after Vatican II see L. BRIAN, *Vatican II and the Roman Catholic Moral Theology*, in *Australasian Catholic Record* 80 (2003) 275-286; G. MANNION, *After the Council: Transformations in the Shape of Moral Theology and the ‘Church to Come’*, in *New Blackfriars* 90 (2009) 232-250; *La recezione del Concilio Vaticano II nella teologia morale. Atti del convegno Accademia Alfonsiana, Roma, 25-26 marzo 2004* (Studia moralia, Supplemento 2), Roma, Accademia Alfonsiana, 2004.

V. MORE THAN ONE TRADITION?

If we further follow the thought that some truth can exist outside the canonical text tradition, this leads us to the question of how many aspects of Christian truth can exist at a given point in time without forming part of the canonical tradition. Even if we agree that the main tradition is an assurance of Christian truth, in total there must be many traditions which claim different aspects of truth at the same time.

This is not only an observation from fifty years ago. This experience can still be made in discussions that gather people from different national and cultural backgrounds. For example, in a discussion on suicide in Central European countries, some colleagues may report that the most important question in connection with suicide in their country regards the influence of the devil on the desire of a person to commit suicide. Another colleague may stress the normative dimension of suicide being an *intrinsic malum*, equal to a mortal sin, and therefore to be integrated in one's pastoral teaching. A third colleague may make the case that suicide is not a moral but a medical category and rather needs to be evaluated in the context of psychiatry. The plurality of points of view may then lead to modifications and alignments or it may remain, depending on the continuing or changing traditions in interpreting biblical texts, cultural traditions and psychological insights.

The existence of different traditions does not cause problems as long as the question of normativity is limited to making sure that all traditions involved refer to the accepted normative sources. Given this fact, they can exist to a certain degree independent of each other. Yet if we look at normativity from the point of view concerning the unity of ecclesial teaching and of the Church as a community of believers, a certain competition of various traditions in their search for truth is unavoidable. Since the sources are not univocal, they allow for some plurality in their interpretation. Scripture cannot be understood simply as literal, but needs to be interpreted¹⁷. Yves Congar, for one, stressed that Scripture does not remain only a text when it is being read by a Christian, but the Holy Spirit operates through Holy Scripture, and by reading its text, the Spirit becomes the source of everyday life. The reading of the holy text finds its expression in the life of the Church as the Body of Christ. Therefore, Tradition and Scripture are not sources which are independent of each

17. See PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, *The Bible and Morality: Biblical Roots of Christian Conduct* (May 11th, 2008).

other¹⁸. Yet Congar also stressed that we can speak about Tradition only the way we speak about the Church, namely in a dialectical way, so that contrasting assertions can be made about it at the same time, contrasting assertions which nevertheless seen in their totality are true¹⁹. These tensions obviously cannot be resolved²⁰. Differences that exist synchronically need to be regarded as the natural ingredients of a process of searching for a truth that, seen from a later moment in time, may in some aspects be judged not to have corresponded to truth and therefore as not having caused agreement by true faith²¹.

VI. CONTENTS CAN CHANGE WHEN NEW THEOLOGICAL CATEGORIES ARE APPLIED

Systematic comments on this historical discontinuity show very clearly that we fall short if we frame the question of continuity and discontinuity with respect only to the historical fact that a certain text was changed. In order to allow for the fact that the new way of talking about the Jewish people became the authoritative normative line of the Church by being inserted in *Nostra Aetate* 4, central theological categories had to be re-interpreted, for example, the understanding of the church (as the body of Christ, as *communio*), the category of salvation history (salvation can operate also without the official structure of the church), of revelation (which is not an instruction but part of a hermeneutic process), of the vocation of lay people (which are called especially to meet with the challenges of their time and societies), exactly those shifts for which the Second Vatican Council is famous. All of these tools of theological

18. CONGAR, *La Tradition et les traditions II* (n. 6), pp. 179-180. For a recent discussion of the question of similarities and differences in the understanding of Tradition and Authority between Protestants and Catholics which cannot be developed further in this paper, I would like to refer e.g. to the publication of the protestant systematic theologian Matthias Petzoldt: M. PETZOLDT, *Kontinuität und Innovation theologischer und kirchlicher Lehre: Eine Thesenreihe*, in ID. (ed.), *Autorität der Schrift und Lehrvollmacht der Kirche* (Symposium zum 70. Geburtstag von Ulrich Kühn), Leipzig, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2003, 91-112.

19. CONGAR, *Tradition und Kirche* (n. 6), p. 147: "Genau wie von der Kirche kann man auch von der Tradition nur dialektisch sprechen, indem man von ihr zu gleicher Zeit scheinbar widersprüchliche Dinge aussagt, die dennoch zusammen wahr sind. Wenn wir sagen, daß sie im Innern des katholischen Lebens oder des Christentums besteht, so heißt das, daß sie an deren Paradoxen oder sogar Spannungen teilhat".

20. M. DELGADO, *Kontinuität und Innovation: Überlegungen zur Dialektik des Überlieferungsprozesses*, in *Lebendiges Zeugnis* 52 (1997) 287-304, p. 287.

21. See HÜNERMANN, *Theologischer Kommentar zur dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche* (n. 3), pp. 383-384, with reference to St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II q. 1 a. 3.

thought had to be developed further in order to make such an important change in the Holy Liturgy and in magisterial texts acceptable. Without the development of new theological and hermeneutic categories, such a change would not have been possible. This may also be the reason why the change of the text was then possible in a historically difficult situation. The *kairos* was prepared by the new framework of thought that became more important than historical or political circumstances.

VII. THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRADITION

The observations made with the help of the history of *Nostra Aetate* 4 show that it is the task of the members of the church to take responsibility for their tradition in the sense of keeping it a “living” tradition, fully enabling both its presence and its future. As in the case of moral questions, tradition is a helpful handrail for climbing the stairs, but it cannot free us from the task of building the stairs on which to walk into the future²².

Interestingly, the insight that we need to take responsibility for tradition, and that is expressed by living and annunciating tradition in its meaning for today, can be a driving force for both groups mentioned at the beginning: for those who want to develop theology and the Church in the line of Vatican II, and also for those who are reluctant to accept the entirety of those developments which it has motivated²³. But, paradoxically enough, from a logical point of view, the attitude of taking responsibility already presupposes the acceptance of hermeneutics and those interpretative tools that became authoritative by being applied to the texts of the Council. Without these tools, it would be impossible to throw doubts on the normativity of the Council at all: if tradition was still understood as a set of given texts which were officially promulgated by the Church and need to be understood literally and without allowing for questions, nobody would be entitled to dispute the authority of the

22. Cf. S. MÜLLER, “...nur Zwerge auf den Schultern von Riesen”: Reflexionen zum Rückgriff auf die Geschichte und zur Bedeutung des Rückgriffs für das Selbstverständnis der Moraltheologie, in G. DRÖSSER – R. LUTZ – J. SAUTERMEISTER (eds.), *Konkrete Identität: Vergewisserungen des individuellen Selbst* (Moderne – Kulturen – Relationen, 10), Frankfurt a.M., Peter Lang, 2009, 83-99.

23. The Second Vatican Council has also raised the question of in which way councils are normative elements of tradition. See e.g. F.X. BISCHOF, *Steinbruch Konzil? Zu Kontinuität und Diskontinuität kirchlicher Lehrentscheidungen*, in *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 59 (2008) 194-210.

Second Vatican Council, because the mere fact of it having taken place would be enough to prove its normativity.

Once we understand the Second Vatican Council as an authoritative expression of a Church which was formulating answers in a given historical context by interpreting its sources and traditions, the normativity of its teaching not only refers to its contents, but also to the way in which the contents and aims of the Council were formulated. Both the interpretation of given sources and traditions by using a wide range of theological tools and the aim of answering to contemporary challenges have become normative ingredients for our living tradition.

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