

CONCILIAR RHETORIC: AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF CATHOLIC DEFENSE

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Recognizing that Christians cannot adequately understand the mysteries of faith from a single vantage point, Catholic theologians since Vatican II have been keen to emphasize the multidimensional nature of theological understanding. Avery Dulles convincingly argued that the diverse conceptions of the Church proposed by theologians throughout history have been complementary rather than contradictory.¹ Many theologians followed Dulles' multiple-models approach after the early 1970's when the book was first published.² The advantage of such a method has helped believers to understand the rich, in-depth quality of their faith.

One of the fields of theology which has not been discussed in the models approach, however, is apologetics – the art and science of defending the doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church. When the relevant passages in the documents of Vatican II are taken into consideration, a unique apologetical approach emerges that incorporates key advances as they have emerged historically from the Church's apologists. Each of these systems has its own particular strengths and weaknesses. By way of contrast, I will argue that the best way to defend the Gospel is to advance the integrated model of the Council. The interests and views of the apologists are shown to be complementary rather than competing according to conciliar teaching.

As the Catholic Church became increasingly aware of the plurality of thought patterns and the various ways in which inculturation takes place, Catholic bishops recognized that different needs and personality types require different approaches in evangelization. Believers come to the faith through different means. The integrated model of Vatican II helps apologists and evangelists recognize that although one approach might be appropriate in a certain context, it would be foolish to insist on that one system or use it as the exclusive means to reach persons situated in different circumstances and cultural contexts. Analogously, no single personality type carries that same credibility or effectiveness in all environs.

I. AN APOLOGETICS OF DECLINE AND RENEWAL

Some Catholics have a difficult time with anything that resembles a defense of the faith. Critics rehearse the same arguments that were levied against the manualist approach to apologetics that prevailed prior to Vatican II. This approach was merely one way to defend the faith. Because these generalizations are still heard today, the discipline as a whole gets a bad name. As Paul Griffiths has observed:

'Apologetics' has itself become a term laden with negative connotations: to be an apologist for the truth of one religious claim or set of claims over against another is, in certain circles, seen as not far

short of being a racist. And the term has passed into popular currency, to the extent that it has, as a simple label for argument in the service of a predetermined orthodoxy, argument concerned not to demonstrate but to convince, and, if conviction should fail, to browbeat into submission.³

The ‘fighting words’ of the apologist seem out of touch with Vatican II’s more inclusive, dialogic stance. The consequence of this anti-apologetical mindset is evident in theology curriculums in Catholic colleges across the United States. Apologist Peter Kreeft of Boston College writes: ‘My own college, the nation’s second largest Catholic university – and, I think, in most ways a very fine one – has a theology department that offers about fifty different courses each year; but for over a decade not one of them has been in apologetics’.⁴

Because of the negative connotations associated with ‘apologetics,’ I use the word ‘rhetoric’ in place of it when appropriate in this essay. ‘Rhetoric’ has a less defensive and/or narrow meaning, and it responds to the modern spiritual hunger for truth. ‘Conciliar rhetoric’ therefore refers to the Council’s vision of a defense of the faith, whether this be offensive or defensive grounds for embracing the Catholic faith. ‘Rhetoric’ – meaning ‘taking advantage of the available means of persuasion’ – gives Catholics more latitude in terms of what they want to introduce about the Church’s teachings.⁵ Further, it enables the enterprise of defending the faith to be less associated with the older style ‘Catechism’ question-and-answer format.

There are other reasons for a decline in Catholic defense. Imitating the Enlightenment philosophers’ search for indubitable certainty in what is known as classical foundationalism, rhetoricians from the Reformation til Vatican II generally sought to demonstrate the rationality of the Catholic Church through an orderly, step-by-step method. ‘Its presentation’, Benedict Ashley explains, ‘often suffered from two grave defects. First, it was developed in a *rationalistic* manner as if faith were the conclusion of a syllogism rather than a gift of God surpassing the mode of all human reason and involving not only the human intelligence but also the totality of the human person. Second, it was presented in a manner which neglected our pluralistic culture and contradicted our commitment to ecumenism’.⁶ Although the more narrowly-conceived pre-Vatican II apologetic approach proved fecund for a time, it carried epistemological weaknesses that rendered it inappropriate in a ‘post-Christian’ age – one in which the Church no longer holds the same authority in worldly affairs it once had and in which there is a greater variety of spiritualities or spiritual ‘options’ on offer.

The rise of biblical studies in Catholicism has also turned theologians away from a defense of dogma. Scriptural theology has almost become the norm for doing theology. Further, Thomistic philosophy – the staple of Catholic rhetorical methodology – became increasingly fragmented in the middle of the twentieth century.⁷ There were existential Thomists (J. Maritain, E. Gilson), transcendental Thomists (K. Rahner, J. Maréchal, B. Lonergan), orthodox or strict observance Thomists (A. Gardeil, R. Labourdette, R. Garrigou-Lagrange), eclectic Thomists, and Aristotelian Thomists (R. McInerney). To be a ‘Thomist’ could mean a variety of things. Fourth, if the rise of biblical studies and the intramural debates within Thomism were not enough, the burgeoning need to become more aware, concerned, and appreciative of historical and cultural contexts seemed to drive a stake through the classical apologist’s heart. Apologists naively thought they could defend the faith without considering the contingencies of time and place. Fifth, the emergence of the *nouvelle theologie* made steady headway into Catholic intellectual circles; this movement called for a *ressourcement* through the theologies and spiritualities of the

early Church Fathers. Some of the pioneering theologians of the *nouvelle theologie* included Jean Danielou, Henri De Lubac, Aloys Grillmeier, Yves Congar, and Louis Bouyer. Lastly, the liturgical movement, which began at the beginning of the twentieth century, also detracted from a longstanding emphasis on defending the faith.

Each of these factors led to serious reevaluation of apologetical method and, for a time, fomented a decline in active, rhetorical praxis. But as Avery Dulles observes, we are now witnessing ‘the rebirth of apologetics’.⁸ He is encouraged to notice that, while some Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and other Protestants depreciate the discipline of rhetoric, Evangelicals have been taking the lead in making first-rate presentations in reputable journals and other publications in defense of the faith. He is not completely in favor of the rhetorical style that Evangelicals have generally followed, however, for it seems to resemble the one-sided approach that prevailed in Catholic circles before Vatican II – which most Catholics now reject as ineffective for deeply inculcating the faith in a more holistic manner. Dulles cautions that the discipline now needs to be shaped according to the broader theological vision of the Council.

Because the revival of Catholic rhetoric is still young and unsteady, it needs to be nurtured by scholars working in the mainstream. Arguing against popular-level apologetics such as is practiced by Karl Keating, Scott Hahn, and Patrick Madrid (who have largely taken their cues from Evangelicals), Richard Gaillardetz is one of few Catholic theologians who has described what a post-conciliar *apologia* should look like.⁹ William Cardinal Levada – the current Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith – has defended the use of classical apologetics, but wants to see it freed from its earlier epistemological shortcomings. For Levada, this can be reformulated in a way that is consistent with Catholic theology.¹⁰ What is lacking in most of these discussions is reference to the salient passages of the Council that speak about Catholic defense. An analysis of the Council might help resolve the tension some anti-apologists feel about defending the faith, and also help the newer apologists (e.g., Keating, Hahn, and Madrid) round out an approach that is more in line with Catholic Tradition.

II. MODELS OF CHRISTIAN RHETORIC

Throughout Church history, different rhetorical systems have emerged in response to the various challenges posed to Catholic doctrine.¹¹ Though there has never been a consensus on which way to categorize the approaches, they have been used by Christians of different denominations to address various purposes or audiences (and/or critics). Advocates of one system have sometimes castigated another as a means of demonstrating the superiority of their own method. Sometimes one approach overlaps with another; nevertheless, there are generally understood terms that can be deployed to distinguish the approaches. We elaborate on four apologetic systems: classical apologetics, evidentialism, experiential apologetics, and presuppositionalism.

(1) *Classical apologetics* is a step-by-step method for defending Catholicism. This tradition is prominent among Catholic thinkers and reaches back to the Church Fathers.¹² Following Augustine, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas, classical apologists maintain that each step presupposes and builds on more general assumptions necessary to demonstrate the possibility of rational faith. A classical apologist establishes the existence of God before he presents evidence for the divinity of Christ. For this group, it would not make

sense to argue for the Son of God unless there is a God who can have a Son and who could institute something like the Church.

God's existence can be proven apart from faith. The next step is to show that miracles are possible. After demonstrating the likelihood of miracles, the New Testament writings are then shown to be trustworthy. From the time of the Reformation Catholic apologists argued that the Catholic Church is the Church that best fits the four ecclesial attributes made prominent in the ancient creeds; this final step was used to demonstrate that no Protestant church could be the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, because none of them was sufficiently characterized by these four marks.

An indisputable strength of classical apologetics is a focus on the common ground between believers and unbelievers; thus, it reaffirms the importance of reason. Contemporary advocates include Peter Kreeft, Ronald Tacelli, Benedict Ashley, Brian Davies, and John E. Wippel.¹³ Richard Swinburne epitomizes the best work in contemporary classical apologetics.¹⁴ Evangelicals such as William Lane Craig, Norman Geisler, R.C. Sproul, and J.P. Moreland have appealed to classical apologetics in their published works.¹⁵

One of the weaknesses of classical apologetics is that it does not adapt Christianity to various life scenarios. Truth does not always guarantee relevance. Christianity is not just about what happened two thousand years ago to the person of Christ; it is also about what God is doing today through this individual person. It can thus seem somewhat impersonal. Second, its intellectual emphasis can make it unattractive to some people. Classical apologists rely fundamentally on *reason* to defend the claims of Christ. Thirdly, it has difficulty rebutting other perspectives; instead, classical apologists seek to overwhelm other religious claims simply through abundant arguments in Christianity's favor. Rhetoricians have also challenged the overly-propositional understanding of theology that classical apologists rely on; classical apologists are criticized for not appreciating the mysteries of faith as paradoxical and going beyond the propositional mode of understanding. An inscrutable deity cannot be put into a box and defended by reason alone. Many classical apologists ignore this problem and interpret proper Catholic defense as simply winning a debate.

(2) There is a long and reputable tradition of *evidentialism* in the Church. Instead of stressing *reason*, evidentialists muster *facts*. By way of rhetoric, there is no specific procedure here as in classical apologetics; there is no logically prior and necessary step before one proceeds to a conclusion for the faith; for evidentialists, anyone will perceive the truth of Christianity if they simply look at the evidence with an open mind. The evidentialist piles up scientific, archaeological, historical, sociological, psychological, and experiential facts in any combination that might prove profitable in a given instance. The evidence builds through many strands in an overall web of argument. One of the strengths of this method over classical apologetics is that it raises negative evidence to refute (or make less probable) the claims of other worldviews; it overlaps with classical apologetics in using evidence, but it tends to overlook the classicalist's use of philosophy.

Instead of speaking in terms of demonstration or proof, evidentialists tend to work through a cumulative case and/or inductive arguments.¹⁶ This realistic perspective is one of its strengths. Arguments are mostly esteemed as probabilistic, not conclusive. In contrast to experientialism, evidentialists stress the relevance of objective facts. Noted evidentialist approaches are offered by scientist-theologians such as Arthur Peacocke, Ian Barbour, John Polkinghorne, John Haught and Kenneth R. Miller.¹⁷ Wolfhart Pannenberg and John Warwick Montgomery are contemporary representatives of an historical emphasis on evidentialism.¹⁸

Like classical apologetics, evidentialism has points of vulnerability. First, it cannot make Christianity true for *any* person. It cannot show that Christianity is true for *today*. Second, many people are suspicious of evidence for the faith. Further, evidentialists presume that unbelievers are interested and willing to examine the evidence for Christ; finally, piling up evidence is not precisely the warmest way to win over the hearts of most people.

Classical apologists reply to the evidentialists that there are no such things as bare facts to be assessed. As Norman Geisler states: ‘facts and events have ultimate meaning only within and by virtue of the context of the world view in which they are conceived’.¹⁹ He adds: ‘evidence gains its meaning only by its immediate and overall context; and evidence as such cannot, without begging the question, be used to establish the overall context by which it obtains its very meaning as evidence . . . it is a vicious circle to argue that a given fact (say, the resuscitation of Christ’s body) is evidence of a certain truth claim (say, Christ’s claim to be God), *unless it can be established that the event comes in the context of a theistic universe*.’²⁰ That is, meaning always arises within an interpretive context. Apologists representing other systems point out that evidentialists in fact presume a theistic worldview.²¹ One cannot argue from the data unless there is an implicit philosophical framework already in place. As Sproul, Lindsey, and Gerstner explain: ‘Miracles cannot prove God. God, as a matter of fact, alone can prove miracles. That is, only on the prior evidence that God exists is a miracle even possible’.²²

(3) *Experientialists* appeal to human experiences of God and within the Christian community. Unlike classical apologetics and evidentialism, this rhetorical system is practical and more personally oriented. The experientialist is acutely aware that problems that prevent individuals from embracing the Gospel are often deep and psychological, and not merely intellectual; rhetoricians must confront these issues and address them as well. A salient aspect of experientialism is thus an emphasis on human holiness and the development of the entire person; one of the strengths of experientialism is that it takes seriously the limits of reason. Proponents are numerous in contemporary Catholicism and generally follow the line of thought of John Henry Newman and Maurice Blondel.²³ The strength of this approach lies in its popular appeal, and it is the most common path by which people come to faith (it is also the most emphasized apologetic model of the Council). Unlike the intellectualism of classical apologetics and evidentialism, the stress here is on the heart and lived experience within the community of believers.

Some experientialists testify to the way God has worked in their lives to introduce either themselves or others to faith. Existential experiences are reported as unmediated, self-authenticating encounters with God, which vindicate Christianity to those who have them. Some experiential apologists deprecate the use of rational argument; they scorn evidentialist and/or classical apologetics. These include Søren Kierkegaard, Rudolph Bultmann, and Karl Barth. Experiential arguments are sometimes used by evidentialists, but the experientialist wants to use experiential arguments alone; he is also not concerned to build a systematic, step-by-step case as in classical apologetics, but rather to persuade others by speaking directly to them about his powerful experiences.

For all of this method’s strengths, it is shortsighted in some respects (and possibly harmful in others). It downplays the use of objective evidence and the propositional mode of understanding doctrine. Though propositional knowledge may be a poor substitute for knowledge of God, it can still serve as a means to foster a personal relationship with God and with others; for this reason, in the absence of hard evidence, experientialism remains an inadequate model for apologetics. Experiences are never self-authenticating, and they

must be interpreted through a conceptual framework. Experiences are typically unverifiable and must be taken on faith alone by outsiders. For this reason, the hardheaded skeptic is unlikely to be persuaded by hearing the testimony of believers and how they came to believe in Christianity. Skeptics are free to reduce the powerful experience of the Church through a naturalistic explanation. Lastly, proponents of experientialism give short shrift to the primary sources of Christian theology (e.g., Scripture and Tradition) to the benefit of their unique experiences.

(4) Protestants who are sympathetic to rhetoric tend to embrace some form of experientialism, or are *presuppositional apologists*. The latter would include Gordon Clark, Carl Henry, and Cornelius Van Til.²⁴ In this view one must begin with the *presupposition* of Scripture and the Church's teachings in order to expose the errors of Christianity's critics. The assumption is that life, the universe, language, and history cannot make sense apart from the postulate of Christianity. Christian faith demonstrates itself to be true, therefore, by being the only world and life view that is coherent and livable. It is the only religion which embraces the truth of revelation that can broaden and intensify our understanding of humanity and the world. These apologists argue *transcendentally* in showing that all meaning and human thought presupposes the truth of Christian faith. As one presuppositionalist puts it: '[We] should present the biblical God, not merely as the conclusion to an argument, but as the one who makes argument possible'.²⁵ All the facts must be taken into account when comparing and contrasting worldviews; since Christianity is known to be true from the start, presuppositionalists seek to discover contradictions in the competing views. One of the strengths of presuppositionalism is precisely the recognition that we must begin with presuppositions; there is no such thing as a view from nowhere. Some advocates of this method have no problem including livability as one of the criteria for determining a truth claim. This point of view sits easily with experientialism.

Presuppositionalists frequently clash with advocates of classical apologetics, evidentialism, and experientialism; this has to do with the doctrine of total depravity which its advocates typically endorse. They accuse traditional rhetoricians for being too confident of what reason can demonstrate apart from the influence of divine revelation. Presuppositionalists are thus a type of fideist, and are not uncomfortable being labeled such. While some Catholics might think this makes presuppositionalism incompatible with Catholic theology, it can be utilized if understood in a certain way. As Avery Dulles observes: '... something analogous to this method may be found among Catholics who follow Augustine and Anselm, speaking of "faith seeking understanding." Many recent and contemporary Catholic apologists take over from Roussetot the idea that the credibility of the Christian religion, which apologetics seeks to demonstrate, can be seen only from within the posture of faith . . . Vatican II seems to endorse this style of argument'.²⁶

Unlike classical apologetics, which is typically framed towards positive conclusions, presuppositionalists limit themselves to refuting attacks and exposing errors within criticisms; it can therefore only show what is false, not what is true. The idea that Christianity is true by default does not seem a powerful rhetoric to those willing to think through the logic of this position. As one critic remarks: 'As commonly understood, presuppositionalism is guilty of a logical howler; it commits the informal fallacy of *petitio principii*, or begging the question, for it advocates presupposing the truth of Christian theism in order to prove Christian theism'.²⁷ Further, it is difficult to know whether the dialogue partners have all the necessary data to make a proper discernment between worldviews; how could one ever know whether one has the requisite evidence to make an

adequate assessment? Presuppositionalism seems to stymie intelligible discourse, since it presupposes that there is no common ground between its proponents and unbelievers; advocates of rational rhetoric therefore supplement the use of presuppositionalism, so as to provide common points of reference with those who do not share Catholic beliefs.²⁸

We have seen that proponents of one style of rhetoric lodge legitimate criticisms of others. Perhaps a combinatorial approach would be a good candidate to replace these strategies taken alone. Vatican II ratifies the distinctive strengths of each model; this suggests that each taken singly is inadequate, and that a holistic approach to Catholic defense would be welcome. According to Stephen Bevans and Jeffrey Gross, ‘Scholars of the Second Vatican Council point out that it is not enough simply to consult any of its texts that deal directly with a specific theme – e.g., church, revelation, liturgy – in order to understand how that theme was developed by the council: rather, they say, one needs to see how an individual theme is expressed throughout all sixteen council documents. This is *particularly* true in terms of . . . “evangelization” or “mission” . . . because in many ways it is a theme that is at the heart of what the council was about.’²⁹

III. IN DEFENSE OF CONCILIAR RHETORIC

Pope John XXIII originally called the Second Vatican Council to let some fresh air into the life of the Church. His intention was not to break off from Sacred Tradition. As Francis Martin writes: ‘It is, after all, not a council’s role to embark on new speculative teaching but rather to clarify and substantiate the Church’s traditional teaching and to elucidate the way in which it is a light to the pilgrim Church of the present and the future’.³⁰ Correct readings of Vatican II will therefore retain the older styles of Catholic rhetoric, but will supplement the weaknesses in these strategies.

According to the Vatican I document on faith and reason, *Dei Filius*, God reveals himself in a supernatural manner, conveying truths that go beyond the reach of human reason. This message is accompanied by the outward signs of miracles and prophecies which show the credibility of God’s revelation. Once this revelation is given to humanity, it is capable of being penetrated rationally in order for people to gain a greater understanding of it. This rhetorical style resembles the method of classical apologetics. Thus, although Vatican II did not elaborate on any rhetorical *style* in detail, this does not mean the Council Fathers did not see classical apologetics as unimportant or irrelevant. As M. John Farrelly rightly points out: ‘Vatican II gave primacy to the meaning of God and Jesus Christ but also insisted that reason, common human experience, and the historical value of the Gospels support our faith in the existence of God and his revelation through Jesus Christ’.³¹ One could mention other themes that did not have a prominent role in the Council: trinity, incarnation, pneumatology, harmartiology, protology, etc.; all of these doctrines still play a significant role in contemporary Catholic theology.

There can be no denying the official conciliar endorsement of rhetoric. Appealing to the central apologetics passage of the New Testament (1 Pet. 3:15), the bishops urge that ‘all the disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God, should present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Everywhere on earth they must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them’.³² In the *Declaration on Religious Liberty*, the Fathers state that ‘The disciple has a grave obligation to Christ, his Master, to grow daily in his knowledge of the truth he has received from him, to be faithful in announcing it, and vigorous in defending it

without having recourse to methods which are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel'.³³ Though Catholics can win unbelievers over to faith by their lifestyle, this would not mean that words and/or argument should not be included in the attempt to evangelize others.³⁴

The task of defending the faith is commanded by the Church, especially as believers become more accountable to God's standards of Christian discipleship. Christians 'are more perfectly bound to the Church by the sacrament of Confirmation, and the Holy Spirit endows them with special strength so that they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and by deed, as true witnesses of Christ'.³⁵ Catholics are not merely called to dialogue with non-Christians, but must seek to convert them to the Risen Christ.³⁶ The *Constitution on Divine Revelation* goes so far as to say that we must 'fight in defense of the faith'. Of course, this phrase is stressing the great lengths that we must go in order to preserve the Church's doctrine against the multitude of challenges that confront us.

And so the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved by an unending succession of preachers until the end of time. Therefore the Apostles, handing on what they themselves had received, warn the faithful to hold fast to the traditions which they have learned either by word of mouth or by letter (see 2 Thess. 2:15), and to fight in defense of the faith handed on once and for all (see Jude 1:3).³⁷

Believers have the duty to defend the faith, but the task of 'safeguarding' the Gospel is officially entrusted to the Magisterium: '. . . the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.' Moreover, 'This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed'.³⁸ Bishops are called to be both practical and theoretical defenders of the Church.³⁹

One of the great themes of *Gaudium et Spes* has to do with reading the signs of the times in order to effectively answer persons' deepest questions about God and humanity.⁴⁰ Hence, 'The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other'.⁴¹ In reading the culture, Catholics are not only called to engage outsiders with arguments, they must learn effective ways to do it. Method and context must therefore be taken into consideration for effective evangelization to take place:⁴² "within the requirements and methods proper to theology, [men and women] are invited to seek continually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of their times; for the deposit of Faith or the truths are one thing and the manner in which they are enunciated, in the same meaning and understanding, is another'.⁴³ In *Christus Dominus*, we read that bishops should present the Gospel in a way that is conducive to the modern mindset.⁴⁴

Some preliminary conclusions about the conciliar vision of rhetoric can now be drawn. First, Vatican II is concerned with defending the faith. Arguments and evidence can be used for the sake of reaching the lost if the appropriate circumstances allow for it. However, we are never to force our dialogue partners into a win-lose situation. Further, interreligious dialogue is not a substitute for apologetics. Conciliar rhetoric has a practical and theoretical component for purposes of the evangelization. We now turn, then, to the different ways the Council utilizes each model. Unlike the advocates of each rhetorical

style, Vatican II does not challenge the other viewpoints but includes them all within the broad range of her teaching. By implication, this means that at least certain versions of each model are compatible with one another.

IV. VATICAN II AND CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS

Even though the Council does not use the term ‘classical apologetics’ in any of its documents, it endorses some of the key elements of this method. In the first place, the use of verbal argument is necessary for the purposes of evangelization: ‘Christ, the great Prophet, who proclaimed the Kingdom of His Father both by the testimony of His life and the power of His words. . . does this not only through the hierarchy who teach in His name and with His authority, but also through the laity whom He made His witnesses and to whom He gave understanding of the faith (*sensu fidei*) and an attractiveness in speech so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life’.⁴⁵ Verbal discourse (and, by implication, friendly debate) is therefore encouraged for the sake of evangelization. There are many places in *Dei Verbum* where the Council Fathers insist that the faith must be preached in words (and not just in deeds). The direct implication is that by preaching one must give grounds for the things that are said. Because Christ taught with words, the faith must be taught and thus defended in the same way.⁴⁶ Appealing to this common sense approach to evangelization, *Gaudium et Spes* affirms that the more one loves in action, the more one will speak the truth.⁴⁷ Conciliar rhetoric, then, is seen as a form of compassion by evangelists:

Love and good will, . . . must in no way render us indifferent to truth and goodness. Indeed love itself impels the disciples of Christ to speak the saving truth to all men. But it is necessary to distinguish between error, which always merits repudiation, and the person in error, who never loses the dignity of being a person even when he is flawed by false or inadequate religious notions. God alone is the judge and searcher of hearts; for that reason He forbids us to make judgments about the internal guilt of anyone.⁴⁸

Following the lead of *Dei Filius*, the natural knowledge of God is reaffirmed in the Council.⁴⁹ Traditionally the Church has not held that individuals can know that God exists only through faith. That would be fideistic and contrary to Catholic rhetoric. The way that individuals can reason about God’s existence is by considering the things that have been made. Hence, the move will be from effect to cause, not through an innate awareness of the idea of God (as in the case with the ontological argument). The framers of *Dei Verbum* thus announce that: ‘God, the beginning and end of all things, can be known with certainty from created reality by the light of human reason (see Rom. 1:20); but teaches that it is through His revelation that those religious truths which are by their nature accessible to human reason can be known by all men with ease, with solid certitude and with no trace of error, even in this present state of the human race’.⁵⁰ Keeping in line with the Church’s tradition apropos to natural theology, the Church approves of the argument from desire to the truth of Christianity.⁵¹ People remain restless in their hearts until they experience the one true God. For example, if one begins with a proper understanding of the human person, Christian teaching is seen as the best fit for humanity.⁵² The bishops assert:

Above all the Church knows that her message is in harmony with the most secret desires of the human heart when she champions the dignity of the human vocation, restoring hope to those who

have already despaired of anything higher than their present lot. Far from diminishing man, her message brings to his development light, life and freedom. Apart from this message nothing will avail to fill up the heart of man: 'Thou hast made us for Thyself,' O Lord, 'and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee'.⁵³

Hence, the human person has a natural knowledge of God's existence, nature and providence over creation. This aspect of conciliar teaching is an indispensable element of classical apologetics, for this method begins with the truths of natural theology.

The Church boldly favors the use of human reason: 'In her loyal devotion to God and men, the Church has already repudiated and cannot cease repudiating, sorrowfully but as firmly as possible, those poisonous doctrines and actions which contradict reason and the common experience of humanity, and dethrone man from his native excellence'.⁵⁴ Indeed, rational argument should not be dismissed in light of the problem of atheism – whether it is of the critical or practical variety. Indeed, the Church 'courteously invites atheists to examine the Gospel of Christ with an open mind'.⁵⁵ This passage provides an endorsement of classical apologetics (and could be used to support the Council's endorsement of evidentialism as well). Subsequent endorsements of rational uses of rhetoric will also be seen in encyclicals such as *Fides et Ratio* and Benedict XVI's lecture at the University of Regensburg.⁵⁶ Similarly, in *Optatum Totius*, the Council affirms that seminarians must study *philosophy* for the purposes of defending the doctrines of Catholicism: 'The history of philosophy should be so taught that the students, while reaching the ultimate principles of the various systems, will hold on to what is proven to be true therein and will be able to detect the roots of errors and to refute them'.⁵⁷ Hence the study of philosophy should be designed to foster a rhetorical spirit in those men studying for the priesthood.

V. VATICAN II AND EVIDENTIALISM

Elements of evidentialism are also upheld in the conciliar documents. By viewing science, history, psychology, and human beings in the correct way, it becomes easier to perceive the truth of the Gospel message. According to *Gaudium et Spes*: 'When man gives himself to the various disciplines of philosophy, history and of mathematical and natural science, and when he cultivates the arts, he can do very much to elevate the human family to a more sublime understanding of truth, goodness, and beauty, and to the formation of considered opinions which have universal value'.⁵⁸ Interpreting the secular world in Catholic terms is an important theme of the entire Council.⁵⁹

In the *Decree on Priestly Formation* the bishops remark that recent findings in the social sciences can provide an effective means to win people over to religious vocations.⁶⁰ The use of science can therefore be used for evangelical purposes. In the *Declaration on Christian Education* it is said part of developing a Catholic view of the world, the cosmos, and human beings will include skills to defend Catholicism.⁶¹ According to the Council:

A Christian education does not merely strive for the maturing of a human person as just now described, but has as its principal purpose this goal: that the baptized . . . learn not only how to bear witness to the hope that is in them (cf. Peter 3:15) but also how to help in the Christian formation of the world that takes place when natural powers viewed in the full consideration of man redeemed by Christ contribute to the good of the whole society.⁶²

One of the roles of faculties in Catholic schools is to teach the various aspects of theology and the other sciences in order to foster a deeper understanding of revelation, its plausibility, and internal coherence.⁶³

An affinity for the use of historical evidence is found in *Lumen Gentium*: ‘The Miracles of Jesus also confirm that the Kingdom has already arrived on earth: “If I cast out devils by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you”. Before all things, however, the Kingdom is clearly visible in the very Person of Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, who came “to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many”’.⁶⁴ Christ’s life is apologetical in the sense that he testifies to the reality of the Kingdom.⁶⁵ A historical approach to Jesus’ life can therefore help one to see the truth about God and his love for humanity. Seen in this way, Christ’s life is apologetical. A historical and theological study of the person of Jesus can convince others that his message is indeed trustworthy. Christ himself gave compelling evidence of the truths he preached.⁶⁶ As the bishops explain in another place: ‘It is common knowledge that among all the Scriptures, even those of the New Testament, the Gospels have a special preeminence, and rightly so, for they are the principal witness for the life and teaching of the incarnate Word, our savior’.⁶⁷

Dei Verbum affirms the historicity of the Gospels. However, this would not mean that the Gospels are straightforward, historical reports, but that they are reliable at the core: ‘Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy held, and continues to hold, that the four Gospels just named, whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day He was taken up into heaven (see Acts 1:1)’.⁶⁸ In corroboration of this point, the bishops announce that the Evangelists’ original intention in writing the Gospels was transposed from their recollections of the original eyewitnesses’ beliefs to relay the truth about Jesus Christ.⁶⁹

A historical and sociological study of the Church’s influence upon the world might be persuasive to inquirers.⁷⁰ Conversely, ‘it must be admitted that the temporal sphere is governed by its own principles, since it is rightly concerned with the interests of this world. But that ominous doctrine which attempts to build a society with no regard whatever for religion, and which attacks and destroys the religious liberty of its citizens, is rightly to be rejected’.⁷¹ Although the Christian faith has a positive effect upon the world and culture in which it is situated, philosophies and religions that are antithetical to Christianity tear down the fabric of society.

VI. VATICAN II AND EXPERIENTIALISM

Experientialism is the premiere model of the Council. Like a splash of cool water, this model compensates for the heavy intellectualism of the other models. Perhaps the pastoral concern of the bishops provides the reason for this emphasis at the Council. In *Gaudium et Spes*, we read: ‘The People of God believe that it is led by the Lord’s Spirit, Who fills the earth. Motivated by this faith, it labors to decipher authentic signs of God’s presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires in which this People has a part along with other men of our age’.⁷² The witness of a holy life makes the faith more believable.⁷³ Indeed, as Catholics we are ‘living witnesses to him’.⁷⁴ Mother Church ‘exhorts her children to purification and renewal so that the sign of Christ may shine more brightly over the face of the earth’.⁷⁵

Apostolicam Actuositatem insists that all persons are called to testify to the Lord's presence by the manner of their life: 'The very testimony of their Christian life and good works done in a supernatural spirit have the power to draw men to belief and to God'.⁷⁶ Impelled by the love of Christ, those who have faith and seek to advance the kingdom inevitably draw men to Christ.⁷⁷ The evidential power of human holiness is repeatedly maintained.⁷⁸ Pastors should remember that in their daily conduct and concern for the members of the parish they testify to the Gospel to the world. In so doing, outsiders will judge whether the Christian message is indeed worthy of belief.⁷⁹ Unless priests are personally holy, they will be ineffective as Catholic evangelists.⁸⁰ The best apologetic for winning persons over to join religious communities is seen in the life of its members.⁸¹

The Church itself is a sacrament which points to the Savior, especially when it radiates with prayer and holiness in the context of liturgical worship.⁸² *Presbyterorum Ordinis* states: 'The ecclesial community by prayer, example, and works of penance, exercise a true motherhood toward souls who are to be led to Christ. The Christian community forms an effective instrument by which the path to Christ and his Church is pointed out and made smooth for non-believers. It is an effective instrument also for arousing, nourishing and strengthening the faithful for their spiritual combat'.⁸³ Similarly, the liturgy is capable of building people up so that they might shine forth as a reason for outsiders to become Catholic.⁸⁴ When believers fail to live up to their calling, this can serve as an anti-sacrament, repelling outsiders to faith.⁸⁵ In *Perfectae Caritatis* it is said that a materialistic way of life can detract from the *apologia* of religious communities.⁸⁶ For instance, the response to outsiders should not be on providing sophisticated philosophical refutations, but on living a life that can convince persons to think in spiritual terms: 'Since in our times, different forms of materialism are spread far and wide even among Catholics, the laity should not only learn doctrine more diligently, especially those main points which are the subjects of controversy, but should also exhibit the witness of an evangelical life in contrast to all forms of materialism'.⁸⁷

Under the greater theme of holiness are more specific themes such as the witness of the saints:⁸⁸ In the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, the Council Fathers write:

When we look at the lives of those who have faithfully followed Christ, we are inspired with a new reason for seeking the City that is to come and at the same time we are shown a most safe path by which among the vicissitudes of this world, in keeping with the state in life and condition proper to each of us, we will be able to arrive at perfect union with Christ, that is, perfect holiness. In the lives of those who, sharing in our humanity, are however more perfectly transformed into the image of Christ, God vividly manifests His presence and His face to men. He speaks to us in them, and gives us a sign of His Kingdom, to which we are strongly drawn, having so great a cloud of witnesses over us and such a witness to the truth of the Gospel.⁸⁹

The witness of martyrdom,⁹⁰ the domestic church,⁹¹ and celibacy⁹² all help in the Church's case for faith. Poverty and charity also serve as motives of credibility.⁹³ Sacred art has a persuasive effect on observers of Catholic worship. In *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, sacred art and architecture is thought to be fruitful for evangelism.⁹⁴

When the Church manifests the four ecclesial attributes (oneness, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity), this can provide compelling evidence for Catholicism.⁹⁵ The writers of *Unitatis Redintegratio* insist that divisions within the Body of Christ becomes anti-sacramental, destroying the Church's witness before the world: 'Such division . . . damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature'.⁹⁶ In its *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church* the Council asserts that: 'The division among Christians damages

the most holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature and blocks the way to the faith for many'.⁹⁷ But when the Church is truly one, she becomes effective in the case for faith. Christians should anticipate the one visible church of God so that the world might be converted to the Risen Christ.⁹⁸ To be sure, the fact that local churches could share common aspirations for unity counts as evidence of the Gospel.⁹⁹ Unity is a significant concern of the Council for the sake of evangelism.¹⁰⁰ Collaborating together in united action is an effective means of effectively reaching the world with the Good News.¹⁰¹

VII. PRESUPPOSTIONALISM AND VATICAN II

It is imperative to teach Catholic doctrine correctly so that the world might come to believe in the one true Savior.¹⁰² False doctrines can destroy belief, but accurate presentations of Catholicism can make it easier for persons to see the inner-rationale of Catholic beliefs. 'Therefore, following in the footsteps of the Council of Trent and of the First Vatican Council, this present council wishes to set forth authentic doctrine on divine revelation and how it is handed on, so that by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may believe, by believing it may hope, and by hoping it may love'.¹⁰³ By contrast, teaching false doctrines (or living hypocritically) will ruin the Church's witness for the sake of converting the world: 'To the extent that they neglect their own training in the faith, or teach erroneous doctrine, or are deficient in their religious, moral or social life, they must be said to conceal rather than reveal the authentic face of God and religion'.¹⁰⁴

Because all Scripture is divinely inspired and is useful for refuting error (2 Tim. 3:15-17), it is also useful for evangelical purposes. The Council Fathers contend that hearing Scripture can open up the minds of its hearers in order for them to be receptive to the Holy Spirit:

For in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets His children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life. Consequently these words are perfectly applicable to Sacred Scripture: 'For the word of God is living and active' (Heb. 4:12) and 'it has power to build you up and give you your heritage among all those who are sanctified' (Acts 20:32; see 1 Thess. 2:13).¹⁰⁵

A form of presuppositionalism thus seems to be upheld. By hearing and understanding the Scriptures the light of supernatural faith is bestowed on unbelievers and believers.¹⁰⁶ The proclamation of the Gospel is therefore capable of drawing men and women, regardless if they believe or not, to faith.¹⁰⁷ The framers of *Presbyterorum Ordinis* also declare that preaching the word of God should not be abstract and overly generalized, but should address the particular circumstances that people commonly face in the world (in order to persuade them unto deeper faith).¹⁰⁸ If preachers exposit God's word accurately, then this can open up the eyes of unbelievers. 'Taught by the word and example of Christ, the Apostles followed the same way. From the very origins of the Church the disciples of Christ strove to convert men to faith in Christ as the Lord; not, however, by the use of coercion or of devices unworthy of the Gospel, but by the power, above all, of the word of God'.¹⁰⁹ A passage in *Dignitatis Humanae* expresses the same understanding of presuppositionalism: 'They followed the example of the gentleness and respectfulness of Christ and they preached the word of God in the full confidence that there was resident in this word itself a divine power able to destroy all the forces arrayed against God'.¹¹⁰

Negatively speaking, the Church denounces false philosophies such as scientism. For human ‘intelligence is not confined to observable data alone, but can with genuine certitude attain to reality itself as knowable, though in consequence of sin that certitude is partly obscured and weakened’.¹¹¹ *Gaudium et Spes* is the only document which provides arguments against unbelief.¹¹² Marxist atheism, for example, holds that humanity is thwarted from true liberation by believing in God because it focuses our attention on things above, not on things of this earth.¹¹³ The Council Fathers respond: since human life does not end at the grave, all persons are held accountable for their actions during their earthly life. In the end the scales of justice will finally be balanced, and righteousness will prevail over evil. Every evil will therefore be transformed for the greater good. Hence, every decision that is made by Christians in this lifetime has eternal significance because there is something to hope for in the end. As a result, Christians should make decisions that run against contrarian pressures and embrace acts of extreme self-sacrifice in this world for the greater good.¹¹⁴

VIII. INTEGRATING MODELS

Vatican II presents distinctive elements of each of the four systems. The Council’s stress on reason (classical apologetics), facts (evidentialism), experience (experientialism), and Scripture (presuppositionalism) are all evident. What we do not see is an exclusive stance to any single apologetic model. The vision of conciliar rhetoric should help theologians to recognize there is no single way to defend the Church. By implication, there must be ways in which the styles work harmoniously together. It is certainly not a coincidence that a kaleidoscopic picture of doctrine and practice is presented at Vatican II. As the Magisterium became increasingly aware of the challenges associated with globalization, she also recognized that the individual needs of persons are not all alike. Different thought patterns within each culture will demand different rhetorical approaches for the purposes of evangelism. People come to faith through different means.

Even the most sophisticated apologists tend to gravitate to those methods that have personally affected them the most. Given the person-relative nature of evangelism, rhetoricians should try to match their methods with the kind of person they are in dialogue with. Someone with an academic background who is capable of processing empirically based evidence might be influenced by evidentialism. Someone who struggles emotionally with the Church’s claims should not be introduced to classical apologetics, but might be attentive to the warmth of the community of believers. Confused individuals might be relieved by classical apologetics. Catholics must now consider intangible factors such as attitude, aptitude, personality, and background experiences when presenting their case for faith. They must also recognize that questions are often framed in different ways and so must be answered in ways that might further a constructive conversation.

From this discussion of conciliar rhetoric we have seen that Christians are not only called to provide answers to skeptics’ questions and challenges, they must become answer bearers. They must learn to respond with swift feet and gentle hands (experientialism) rather than use words and arguments alone (classical apologetics and evidentialism). But it must be remembered that if one is holy, then they will use every means at their disposal to reach the lost, not just ways that exclude the mind and verbal persuasion; holiness may be *more* than rational, but is certainly not *less* than rational. Conversely, if one uses rational argument, then this can become a means by which the Spirit sanctifies believers and

outsiders (and the Catholic herself). The Tradition of the Church, the historical context of Vatican II, and the documents themselves testify to the fact that rational understandings of rhetoric remains an indispensable component to discipleship and evangelism.

Christian presuppositions will always affect the apologist (presuppositionalism). One cannot begin with *every* Christian belief from nowhere. According to orthodoxy, some of the mysteries of faith can be known by all normally functioning individuals without the help of divine, authoritative revelation (e.g., God's existence, objective truth). At this point the philosophy of classical apologetics trumps the strict use of Reformed presuppositionalism. However, some uses of presuppositionalism can provide Catholics with the recognition that we must begin with Scriptural and ecclesiastical presuppositions. For all people interpret reality in a way that is consistent with their presuppositions, including unbelievers. Nonetheless, it is commonly assumed that presuppositions can change through arguments and lived experience. Even if the apologetic mandate demands that Christians work with a certain set of presuppositions, this would not have to mean that the Gospel is irrational (or that evidences in favor of Christian faith cannot be trusted). Perhaps the Gospel is true and the evidence is trustworthy. As C.S. Lewis, that doyen of twentieth century rhetoricians, wrote: 'I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen – not only because I see it, but because of it, I see everything else.'¹¹⁵ It is possible that Christians know the truth about God *because* of faith, not in spite of it. Again, what is needed to help one determine this is the careful weighing and assessing of the evidence. And this assessment is where the evidentialist and the classical apologist are again needed.

Classical apologists provide positive arguments for the Gospel. Presuppositionalists and evidentialists can complement the classicalist with negative arguments, demonstrating where competing viewpoints are fallacious or shortsighted. The classicalist complements the evidentialist by providing the necessary philosophical framework that is needed for more curious observers of the Church. Proceeding with logical steps can be supplemented with the probabilistic evidences given by the evidentialist. The experiential apologist complements all three of these approaches, both negatively and positively, by providing an existential means of persuasion to outsiders and by reinforcing the commitment of lukewarm believers. The experiential and the theoretical side of conciliar rhetoric will provide a holistic approach to Catholic defense which is surely more effective than using one rhetorical style in dialogue with all persons in every situation. Undoubtedly one method should be privileged for a particular audience; this would not mean, however, that it should become the only method in the arsenal of the evangelist. Now, in the post-conciliar era, we must recognize the importance of integrative rhetorical systems.

Notes

1 Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York, Doubleday, 1974).

2 Some other examples would include Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992); Sallie McFague, *Models of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1987); Kevin W. Erwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2005); Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. exp. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002).

3 Paul J. Griffiths, *An Apology for Apologetics: A Study in the Logic of Interreligious Dialogue* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), p. 2.

4 Peter Kreeft, *Fundamentals of the Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1988), p. 15

5 I am indebted to an anonymous referee from the *Heythrop Journal* for recommending that I use the word 'rhetoric' instead of 'apologetics' in this essay.

6 Benedict M. Ashley, *Choosing a World-View and Value System: An Ecumenical Apologetics* (New York: Alba House, 2000), x.

7 Gerald McCool, *The Neo-Thomists, From Unity to Diversity: The Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992); idem, *The Neo-Thomists* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994).

8 Avery Dulles, 'The Rebirth of Apologetics', *First Things* No. 143 (May 2004), pp. 18–23.

9 Richard Gaillardetz, 'Do We Need a New(er) Apologetics?', *America* (February 2, 2004). http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=3390 (accessed online on September 15, 2010). See also Richard Gaillardetz, 'Apologetics, Evangelization, and Ecumenism Today', *Origins* Vol. 35: No. 1 (May 19, 2005), pp. 9–15. See also Thomas P. Rausch, *Reconciling Faith and Reason: Apologists, Evangelists, and Theologians in a Divided Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), pp. 35–52.

10 For the full speech by the Cardinal, see <http://www.zenit.org/article-29086?l=english> (accessed on September 15, 2010).

11 For discussion on the various apologetic systems, see Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, rev. and exp. ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2005); Gordon R. Lewis: *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims: Approaches to Christian Apologetics* (Chicago: Moody, 1976); Stephen Cowan, (ed.), *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000); Bernard Ramm, *Varieties of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1961).

12 Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, p. 359.

13 Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli, *Handbook of Catholic Apologetics: Reasoned Answers to Questions of Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2009); Benedict M. Ashley, *Choosing a World-View and Value System: An Ecumenical Apologetics*; John E. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000); Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

14 Richard Swinburne, *Is There a God?*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); idem, *Was Jesus God?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); idem, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

15 William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008); J.P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1987); Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1988); R.C. Sproul, John H. Gerstner, and Arthur W. Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1984).

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18 Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation', in Wolfhart Pannenberg, trans. David Granskou, *Revelation as History* (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 123-158; idem, *Jesus – God and Man*, trans. L.L. Wilkens and D.A. Priebe (London: SCM, 1968); John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (Canadian Institute for Law, Theology & Public Policy, Inc. October 1978), idem, *History and Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House, 1987).

19 Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, p. 95

20 Ibid., p. 95.

21 W. Stanford Reid, 'Subjectivity or Objectivity', in E.R. Geehan (ed.), *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1993), p. 409. Cf. Mark M. Hanna, *Crucial Questions in Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), p. 100; Carl Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 6 vol. (Waco, TX: Word Press, 1976–1983), 1:231.

22 Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics*, p. 146.

23 John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); Maurice Blondel, *Action (1893): Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); idem, *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma*, trans. Alexander Dru and Illyd Trethowan (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

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25 John M. Frame, 'Presuppositional Apologetics', in Stephen Cowan, (ed.), *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), p. 220.

26 Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, p. 362.

27 William Lane Craig, 'A Classical Apologist's Response', in Stephen Cowan, (ed.), *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), p. 232.

- 28 Cf. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 4. Cf. Vatican Council II, *Optatum Totius*, 15.
- 29 Stephen Bevans and Jeffrey Gross, *Evangelization and Religious Freedom: Ad Gentes, Dignitatis Humanae* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), p. 3.
- 30 Francis Martin, 'Revelation and its Transmission', in Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering, (ed.), *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 55.
- 31 M. John Farrelly, *Belief in God in Our Time* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 46.
- 32 Unless stated otherwise, I will be using the online edition of the Vatican II documents in this essay. These can be accessed at www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/, (accessed online on September 15, 2010), *Lumen Gentium*, 10.
- 33 *Dignitatis Humanae*, 14.
- 34 *Lumen Gentium*, 11, 19, 23, 24, 25, 28.
- 35 *Lumen Gentium*, 11.
- 36 *Ad Gentes*, 30, 39, 39, 40.
- 37 *Dei Verbum*, 8.
- 38 *Dei Verbum* 10.
- 39 *Christus Dominus*, 13.
- 40 *Gaudium et Spes*, 10, 11, 12, 41.
- 41 *Gaudium et Spes*, 4
- 42 *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 6, 13, 25, 27; *Ad Gentes*, 10, 20, 21; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 10, 17; *Perfectae Caritatis*, 20.
- 43 *Gaudium et Spes*, 62.
- 44 *Christus Dominus*, 13.
- 45 *Lumen Gentium*, 35.
- 46 *Dei Verbum*, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25; *Ad Gentes*, 15, 25; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 6, 11, 13, 14.
- 47 *Gaudium et Spes*, 92.
- 48 *Gaudium et Spes*, 28.
- 49 *Dei Verbum*, 3; *Nostra Aetate*, 2.
- 50 *Dei Verbum*, 6. Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 12
- 51 *Gaudium et Spes*, 18.
- 52 *Gaudium et Spes*, 21, 36, 41, 41, 45, 58.
- 53 *Gaudium et Spes*, 21.
- 54 *Gaudium et Spes*, 21.
- 55 *Gaudium et Spes*, 21.
- 56 John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 67. See also Pope Benedict XVI, 'Faith, Reason and the University Memories and Reflections', Lecture at the University of Regensburg, Germany, September 12, 2006. Can be found online at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html (accessed September 15, 2010). See also Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), 'Relativism: The Central Problem for Faith Today', *Origins* Vol. 26 No.20 (October 31, 1996), p. 316.
- 57 *Optatum Totius*, 15. Cf. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 5.
- 58 *Gaudium et Spes*, 57.
- 59 *Lumen Gentium*, 36; *Gaudium et Spes*, 21, 43, 76; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 14, 16, 19, 20; *Gravissimum Educationis*, 1.
- 60 *Optatum Totius*, 2
- 61 *Gravissimum Educationis*, 3, 10, 12.
- 62 *Gravissimum Educationis*, 2.
- 63 *Gravissimum Educationis*, 11.
- 64 *Lumen Gentium*, 35.
- 65 *Lumen Gentium*, 5. Cf. *Dei Verbum*, 4; cf. *Dignitatis Humanae*, 11; *Ad Gentes*, 9.
- 66 *Gaudium et Spes*, 3.
- 67 *Dei Verbum*, 18.
- 68 *Dei Verbum*, 19.
- 69 *Dei Verbum*, 19
- 70 As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 812, remarks: 'Only faith can recognize that the Church possesses these properties from her divine source. But their historical manifestations are signs that also speak clearly to human reason. As the First Vatican Council noted, the "Church herself, with her marvelous propagation, eminent holiness, and inexhaustible fruitfulness in everything good, her catholic unity and invincible stability, is a great and perpetual motive of credibility and an irrefutable witness of her divine mission"'. For more on this apologetic see the following works, Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2004); Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (New York: Random House, 2006); idem, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-hunts, and the End of Slavery*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Thomas E. Woods, *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization*, (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing Company, 2005).
- 71 *Lumen Gentium*, 36.

- 72 *Gaudium et Spes*, 11.
 73 *Lumen Gentium*, 4, 10, 31, 33, 35, 36.
 74 *Lumen Gentium*, 12.
 75 *Lumen Gentium*, 15.
 76 *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 6.
 77 *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 4.
 78 *Christus Dominus*, 15; *Perfectae Caritatis*, 5; *Optatum Totius*, 2; *Ad Gentes*, 8, 11. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 5, 29.
 79 *Gaudium et Spes*, 43.
 80 Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 21, 24, 25, 26, 28, 41. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 12.
 81 *Perfectae Caritatis*, 24.
 82 *Lumen Gentium*, 9.
 83 *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6.
 84 *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 2, 7, 33, 47, 59, 60; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 16; *Ad Gentes*, 15.
 85 *Gaudium et Spes*, 43. Cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4
 86 *Perfectae Caritatis*, 14.
 87 *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 31.
 88 *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4.
 89 *Lumen Gentium*, 60.
 90 *Gaudium et Spes*, 21; *Ad Gentes*, 24. *Lumen Gentium*, 42, 50.
 91 *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.
 92 *Ad Gentes*, 18; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 16; *Lumen Gentium*, 13, 33, 43; *Optatum Totius*, 10.
 93 *Lumen Gentium*, 8. Cf. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 17, 21; *Gaudium et Spes*, 21, 88. Cf. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 8; *Ad Gentes*, 6, 12, 36; *Perfectae Caritatis*, 1, 11
 94 *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 122, 127.
 95 *Gaudium et Spes*, 43, 45, 76, 92; *Optatum Totius*, 9; *Ad Gentes*, 4, 8.
 96 *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1, cf. 12.
 97 *Ad Gentes*, 6.
 98 *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1
 99 *Lumen Gentium*, 23.
 100 *Lumen Gentium*, 23, 28. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 8; *Ad Gentes*, 21, 23; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 16; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 27.
 101 *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 20, 23.
 102 *Gaudium et Spes*, 21.
 103 *Dei Verbum*, 1.
 104 *Gaudium et Spes*, 19.
 105 *Dei Verbum*, 21.
 106 *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 4.
 107 *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 4.
 108 *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 4.
 109 *Dignitatis Humanae*, 11.
 110 *Dignitatis Humanae*, 11.
 111 *Gaudium et Spes*, 15.
 112 Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 33.
 113 *Gaudium et Spes*, 20. See also 22: 'Such is the mystery of man, and it is a great one, as seen by believers in the light of Christian revelation. Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from His Gospel, they overwhelm us'.
 114 *Gaudium et Spes*, 21, 34, 39, 43.
 115 C.S. Lewis, 'Is Theology Poetry?', *Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000), p. 21.

In the act of Catholic faith, reliance on testimony goes out indivisibly to Christ and to the Church through which he continues his mission in the world. Do you want to read the rest of this chapter? Request full-text. Citations (1). References (0). Conciliar Rhetoric: An Integrated Model of Catholic Defense. Article. Apr 2011. Erika Lindemann: "Rhetoric is a form of reasoning about probabilities, based on assumptions people share as members of a community." Philip Johnson: "Rhetoric is the art of framing an argument so that it can be appreciated by an audience." Andrea Lunsford: "Rhetoric is the art, practice, and study of human communication." Thomas B. Farrell: "Rhetoric is an acquired competency, a manner of thinking that invents possibilities for persuasion, conviction, action, and judgments." (The Norms of Rhetorical Culture, 1993). Richard E. Vatz: "This [is the] sine qua non of rhetoric: the art of linguistically or symbolically creating salience.