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MARIOLOGY AND RECENT BIBLICAL LITERATURE

Chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium*, "The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of the Church," marks a mariological watershed. Henceforth all mariological study should begin with this document and proceed under its guidance along the path it has blazed. Our Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, declared when he promulgated *Lumen Gentium*: "With the promulgation today of the Constitution which has as its summit and crown a whole chapter dedicated to the Virgin, we can rightly affirm that the present session concludes with an incomparable hymn of praise in honor of Mary. In fact, this is the first time—and in saying this we are deeply moved—that an ecumenical council presents so extensive a synthesis of the Catholic doctrine on the place occupied by Mary most holy in the mystery of Christ and the Church."¹

The Council Fathers intended Chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium* to be a compendium of the Church's teaching on Mary's role in salvation history, i.e., in the economy of the redemption. Because of the biblical tone of the entire Constitution on the Church and of the Council's ecumenical concern, the Fathers wanted to base their Marian teaching on the sure foundation of the Word of God. Their use of Scripture in this chapter on Mary has been called a methodological lesson on the proper use of biblical texts in a doctrinal study.² The Fathers very prudently

¹ Allocutio Pauli VI ad conclusionem tertiae sessionis Concilii Vaticani II. Cf. also Pope Paul's discourse (March 16, 1965) to the theologians departing from Rome for the Mariological Congress in Santo Domingo, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 22-23 di marzo, 1965.

² E.g., P. Franquesa, C.M.F., *Uso del Antiguo Testamento en el capítulo VIII de la Constitución "Lumen Gentium,"* in *EM* 27 (1966) 213. Cf. also S. Bartina, S.J., *Uso del Nuevo Testamento en el capítulo VIII de la "Lumen Gentium,"* *ibid.*, 243-276; and R. Le Déaut, C.S.Sp., *Marie et l'Ecriture dans le chapitre VIII,* in *BSFEM* 22 (1965) 55-75.

abstained from settling disputed exegetical problems.³ The direction *confer* before a biblical reference (e.gr. cf. *Gen.* 3:15 in #55) is a deliberate methodological device to indicate that the Council did not desire to decide by its authority any philological or exegetical dispute concerning the text in question or the manner in which Mary is present in it, i.e., in the literal sense, in the fuller sense or only the typical sense.⁴ Only when the Fathers are convinced that their teaching is certainly founded on the literal sense of a text do they cite it and refer to it without the note *confer*. Attention is directed to this procedure in the *Relatio* concerning this chapter: "*Ex documentis biblicis illustratur progressus in revelatione de Maria; sed expresse notatur quod libri inspirati in Ecclesia catholica, sicut oportet, sub lumine plenae revelationis leguntur et secundum mentem Traditionis intelleguntur.*"⁵ Pastor Boegner, an observer at the Council, remarked about the eighty-first *Congregatio* which had discussed Ch. VIII: "I was moved to hear some Council Fathers affirm their hope that the Council would bring about a renewal of Marian doctrine by rooting it in a clear, and, I may add, more sober manner on the Scriptures."⁶

A few examples will illustrate this conciliar preoccupation with exactness in the use of Scripture. In response to the request of a number of Fathers, all the biblical quotations cited from the Vulgate were carefully checked with the original texts and, when necessary, corrected. After some discussion the Vulgate translation of the angelic salutation *gratia plena* was retained, because of its traditional use by the Church. But by prefixing *confer* to the Lukan reference the Council's intention not to decide the philological and exegetical controversy over the

³ Cf. Franquesa, *art. cit.*, 223-225. Some omissions of biblical references are, it seems, due simply to the inadvertence of the editors, e.g., the omission of all texts referring to the Nativity. Cf. Franquesa, *art. cit.*, 224, and L. Turrado, *Las citas de la Sda. Escritura en la constitución dogmática "Lumen Gentium" del Concilio Vaticano II*, in *Slms* 12 (1965) 658.

⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, cap. VIII, #54.

⁵ Cited by Turrado, *art. cit.*, 657.

⁶ Pastor Boegner, in *La Croix* (Paris), Sept. 18, 1964.

precise meaning of *kecharitōmenē* was clearly noted. A like procedure and reserve is found in the Council's use of the Old Testament texts, *Gn.* 3:15; *Is.* 7:14; *Mi.* 5:2-3. I personally think that the Council quite clearly implies that Mary is present in these O.T. texts only in the fuller sense or in the typical sense. The Constitution speaking of the O.T. declares: "These earliest documents, as they are read in the Church and are understood in the light of a further and full revelation, bring the figure of the woman, Mother of the Redeemer, into a gradually sharper focus."⁷ It is "when looked on in this way" that Mary is "prophetically foreshadowed"⁸ in *Gn.* 3:15 and is "likewise" the Virgin who is to conceive and bear the Emmanuel. When some Fathers objected to the addition of *similiter* at the beginning of the sentence referring to the Emmanuel prophecy the Commission answered that the addition had been made in order to indicate the light by which the text of *Is.* 7:14 had been read.⁹ According to the context, this can only mean "in the light of a further and full revelation."

Only six biblical texts are actually quoted in Ch. VIII. Nineteen are referred to with the direction *confer*. There is a growing unanimity among Johannine exegetes, Protestant as well as Catholic, that the beloved disciple on Calvary is a symbol of all believers. Nevertheless, the Council excised from the proposed text of #58 the words *fidelium figurae*. Those who asked for this omission insisted that neither the text of *Jn.* 19:26-27 nor tradition offer a certainly probative argument that John on Calvary represented all the faithful. *Apoc.* 12 is ignored completely in the sentence about the Assumption. These omissions are an indication of the Council's careful use of the Bible in this Marian Chapter. But it would be erroneous and against the Council's wishes to conclude from this prudent reserve that biblical and dogmatic theology should ignore the fuller and the

⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, cap. VIII, #55.

⁸ Cf. Franquesa, *art. cit.*, 240.

⁹ Cf. Franquesa, *ibid.*

typical senses. The Council itself has read the Bible according to these senses as well as according to the literal sense. Moreover, in referring to Our Lady as "the exalted Daughter of Sion," and as "she who stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord" (the *Anawim*), the Council invites Catholic biblical scholars and theologians to exploit fully these rich veins of Marian doctrine. However, I do think that the conciliar reserve in the use of biblical texts contains a caution against reading into the literal sense teachings which the hagiographers never thought of.

A search of the more recent numbers of New Testament abstracts and several biblical journals yielded seventeen articles about Mary in the Scriptures. I have also mimeographed abstracts of most of the papers given at the Fourth Mariological Congress held in Santo Domingo in March 1965 which concentrated on Mary in the Scriptures, especially in the New Testament. These papers will be published; in fact they may have already been published. Some of the best papers dealt with biblical and theological methodologies and the tension in the relations of the exegetes and the mariologists, e.g. the excellent papers of P. Benoit, G. Phillips, E. Carroll and E. Maly.¹⁰ In this survey I shall confine myself to the articles and papers which treat of particular texts or questions of biblical theology that are of interest to Mariologists. Moreover, I shall comment only on those which, I think, offer something new or worthy of special attention.

R. A. Martin, writing on *The Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3:15*,¹¹ concludes that the LXX use of the masculine '*autos*' is the most ancient Messianic reading of the text. He rightly notes that this does not warrant the conclu-

¹⁰ P. Benoit, O.P., *Exegesis et theologia biblica*; G. Phillips, *De exegesi scripturistica et theologia dogmatica*; E. R. Carroll, O.Carm., *Praecipua problemata hodiernae dogmaticae relate ad exegesim*; E. Maly, *Praecipua problemata hodiernae exegeseos relate ad dogma*.

¹¹ JBL 74 (1965) 425-427.

sion that the Hebrew text is Messianic. It is evidence, however, that some Jews in the Third century B.C. were interpreting the passage as a messianic prophecy.

M.A. Poulain in his paper at Santo Domingo on the origin of the title "woman" given to Mary in John's Gospel,¹² showed the remarkable resemblances in vocabulary, structure and themes of *Gn.* 1-3 and *Jn.* 1:1-2:11. The evidence is so striking and cumulative that his conclusion seems well founded: "The presence of the word Woman to designate Mary, the Mother of Jesus, must be an allusion to her whom Genesis calls 'woman,' i.e., Eve, the mother of the living. As 'woman' Eve is the *vis-a-vis* of man, a helper like to him; thus as Woman, Mary is associated with the Son of Man in the accomplishment of his messianic work, in his vocation as the new Adam."

The LXX translation of '*Almah* in *Is.* 7:14 by *parthenos* has never been explained satisfactorily. I think that a really satisfying, because well-founded, explanation is offered by Dr. Josephine Massingberd Ford of Notre Dame University. In an article on *The Meaning of Virgin* she examines the use of the term in Hebrew, Greek and Latin.¹³ She adduces convincing evidence from all three languages that the word does not always connote physical integrity. The adjective *parthenikos* is used in Jewish sepulchral inscriptions with reference to the husbands of women who had died in their first marriage, i.e., while married to the husband of their maidenhood. A certain Agentia lived in such a union nine years. These sepulchral inscriptions, Dr. Massingberd Ford concludes, cannot possibly refer to *virgines intactae* "because for the Jew the primary purpose of marriage was the procreation of children."¹⁴ The Hebrew use of *bethulah* shows the same peculiarity. Her argument from a com-

¹² M. Poulain, *Origine de l'appellation 'femme' appliquée à Marie dans l'évangile selon S. Jean* (abstract of paper delivered at Santo Domingo, March, 1965).

¹³ J. Massingberd Ford, *The Meaning of "Virgin,"* in *NTS* 12 (1966) 293-299.

¹⁴ *Art. cit.*, 294.

parison of the MT text of Joel 1:8 with the LXX is very convincing. "Here (a) the *bethulah* is married (and we may presume experienced *coitus*); (b) the LXX while changing *bethulah* to *nymphē*, has used *parthenikos* in the sense of 'first husband, husband of maidenhood.' Therefore, taking both texts together, we have an example of both a woman and a man as 'married virgins.'"¹⁵ Her conclusion concerning *Is.* 7:14 is very satisfactory. "As *bethulah* can mean a married girl, it made no difference whether the prophet used that word or '*almah* and, similarly, the Greek translation *parthenos* or *neanis* was equally ambiguous. Only the historic event of the virgin birth could secure the meaning of the prophecy, but it is interesting to note that the epithet for Mary in the early liturgies and in some of the Fathers is *aeiparthenos*, not merely *parthenos*: it seems that they did not think the latter term sufficient."¹⁶ The evidence adduced by Dr. Massingberd Ford destroys, in my opinion, the argument sometimes made from the LXX for taking *Is.* 7:14 as a prophecy in the literal sense of the virgin birth of Christ.

Three of the speakers at Santo Domingo wrestled with the problem of the extent of Mary's knowledge of the mystery of her child at the Annunciation. Did she know that she was consenting to become the Mother of God? Fr. Dominic Unger argued from patristic evidence that the affirmative is supported by a morally unanimous patristic teaching. He also finds this doctrine taught by Vatican II in these words of #53 and #56 of Ch. VII of *Lumen Gentium*: "At the message of the angel, the Virgin Mary received the Word of God in her heart and in her body, and gave life to the world. Hence she is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and Mother of the Redeemer." "The Father of mercies willed that the consent of the predestined mother should precede the Incarnation..." Commenting on Unger's paper in *Ephemerides Mariologicae*,

¹⁵ *Art. cit.*, 294.

¹⁶ *Art. cit.*, 299.

J. M. Alonso "dares to doubt that the thesis defended by Unger is met in any way in the words cited from Vatican II." "*Sabiendo muy de cerca la intención del esquema*" (from his personal knowledge of the intention of the schema), he assures Unger that the Council did not wish to enter into the question at all.¹⁷ He notes also that it is not clear from Unger's presentation whether the Fathers are arguing from Scripture.

René Laurentin in a paper on *Lk.* 2:50 reaffirmed the conclusion he had arrived at in his important study on the literary structure of *Lk.* 1-11.¹⁸ The Lukan narrative indicates that at the Annunciation Mary understood in a confused manner the divinity of her son because the angel's words insinuate the identification of Jesus with Yahweh. Laurentin characterizes this knowledge as "profound, confused, obscure," and implicit rather than explicit.

Stanislaus Lyonnet gave a short paper *De Annuntiatione in exegetesi*. He places the following among the Mariological truths which, he thinks, one can assert with serious probability are taught by Luke in the Annunciation pericope: the Child to be born of the Blessed Virgin Mary will be God's Son not only in some special sense but in the natural and proper sense, and therefore will be God.¹⁹ But Lyonnet is more reserved now on the extent of Mary's knowledge than in his previous writings. He declares: *Utrum vero hagiographus asserere intenderit Mariam Ss. tunc temporis iam plene perspexisse naturam divinam sensu proprio huius Filii nascituri, multo difficilius est dictu, nisi aliunde constiterit. Plerique exegetae hodierni negant aut saltem ad contrarium inclinant.*²⁰ The issue of *Estudios Marianos* titled *Mariologia en torno al Concilio* contains a long article

¹⁷ J. M. Alonso, C.M.F., *El IV Congreso Mariológico Internacional: Organización—Temática—Problemática*, in *EphM* 25 (1965) 239. D. J. Unger, O.F.M. Cap., *Utrum secundum doctores Ecclesiae Virgo Maria angelico nuntio Filium suum esse Filium Dei cognoverit*.

¹⁸ R. Laurentin, *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II* (Paris, 1957).

¹⁹ S. Lyonnet, S.J., *De Annuntiatione in exegetesi*.

²⁰ Lyonnet, p. 3 of abstract of his paper at Sto. Domingo.

by Marceliano Llamera, *¿Cuándo conoció la Virgen la divinidad de su Hijo?*²¹ This is an impassioned theological defense of the traditional thesis. The author takes for granted that this thesis is taught by the Gospel, and does not hide his impatience with those who call this into question, whom he stigmatizes as minimalists and erasmians. He is convinced that he has established his thesis by irrefutable theological proofs. I leave it to the theologians to evaluate his argumentation. Personally, I experienced more heat than light in the article. But I am concerned with a biblical question: can we conclude from the Lukan narrative of the Annunciation that Mary knew the divinity of Jesus when she pronounced her *fiat*?

Joseph Grispino summarizes the opinions of Catholic biblical scholars in a short article in *Ephemerides Mariologicae*.²² In recent years two opinions have been commanding the attention of Catholic New Testament scholars; that proposed by Lyonnet in 1954,²³ which was taken up and developed by Laurentin, and that expressed by D. Stanley in an article in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* for 1958.²⁴ According to the first opinion, the divinity of Mary's Son is insinuated to her in the angel's declaration that the Holy Spirit will come upon her and the power of the Most High will overshadow her and therefore her Child will be called Son of God. The expression "power of the Most High will overshadow you" is taken to be an allusion to Ex. 40:35 describing the glory of the Lord manifested in the cloud overshadowing the tabernacle of testimony. This opinion was warmly welcomed by many mariologists and a number of Catholic exegetes. (I myself championed this opinion in a paper I

²¹ M. Llamera, O.P., *¿Cuándo conoció la Virgen la divinidad de su Hijo?*, in *EM* 26 (1965) 141-230.

²² J. Grispino, S.M., *When Did Mary Learn That Her Son Was Divine?*, in *EphM* 25 (1965) 126-230.

²³ S. Lyonnet, S.J., *Le récit de l'Annonciation et la maternité divine de la Sainte Vierge* (Rome, 1956).

²⁴ D. Stanley, S.J., *Balaam's Ass, or a Problem In New Testament Hermeneutics*, in *CBQ* 20 (1958) 50-56 (esp. 52-53).

delivered at our 1960 Convention in Detroit.)²⁵ Today there is a growing unanimity among New Testament scholars, Catholics and Protestants, that the Annunciation narrative is a theology on the meaning of the Incarnation presented in a dramatic dialogue constructed by a very skillful use of Old Testament texts and allusions. The Evangelist is affirming his faith and the faith of the Church in the messiahship and divinity of Jesus, the fruit of Mary's virginal womb, whom she conceived through God's power when she surrendered herself in faith and obedience to the word of God. An ever-growing number of exegetes would deny that the Annunciation pericope tells us anything at all about Mary's knowledge of her Child's divinity at that time. David Stanley suggested that at the Annunciation Mary did not entertain the divinity of her Child. Stanley, who devotes only one small paragraph of his article to this problem, points to *Lk.* 2:50 as evidence "that *Lk.* is aware of Our Lady's ignorance of the mystery of Jesus' divinity."²⁶ Not all the exegetes would admit the force of this argument. It is my impression, however, gathered from conversations with the prominent Catholic New Testament scholars who participated in the Santo Domingo Congress, that they are sympathetic to Stanley's conclusion. I have been won over to this opinion principally because of the better understanding I have now of the literary genre of the Lukan Infancy Gospel and of the late date to which I would now assign the composition of the Third Gospel, ca. 80-90 A.D. In my 1960 paper I characterized the Annunciation narrative as "a stylized account of Jesus' conception, together with a reflection, probably Mary's own reflection, on the meaning of that central event of sacred history."²⁷ I still ascribe to this statement, but I now attach a different meaning to the phrase "probably Mary's own reflection." I am of the opinion today that the exegete can not answer the question—was Mary aware of the

²⁵ R. Kugelman, C.P., *The Object of Mary's Consent in The Annunciation*, in *MS* 11 (1960) 60-84.

²⁶ *Art. cit.*, 53.

²⁷ *Art. cit.*, 65.

divinity of her Child at the Annunciation? He is concerned with understanding a Gospel pericope which expresses the Church's faith and the evangelist's theologizing on the meaning of an event which happened eighty and more years before; an event which the evangelist presents in a literary form that is an anthology, or a mosaic, of O.T. citations and allusions. Even if, as *Lk.* 2:19, 51 probably insinuates, the reflections of Mary lie at the origin of the Lukan Infancy narratives, these reflections probably were the fruit of her contemplation, in the light of her Pentecostal faith, of the mystery of her Son's person. J. Grispingo, alluding to a statement of Alexander Jones that there is no really cogent scriptural proof against the opinion of Mary's ignorance of Jesus' divinity at the Annunciation, comments: "We may add that there is no strict *theological* objection to this view. The reasons of fittingness against it . . . are not strict dogmatic objections."²⁸ Grispingo gives the following evaluation of the position of this problem in modern Catholic scholarship: ". . . it is apparent that the majority of all Scripture scholars and mariologists both past and present answer affirmatively that Mary knew at the Annunciation of the divinity of her Son. They may differ in their explanation of *how* she knew this . . . It seems, however, that more mariologists rally to Loynnet's view than do Scripture scholars . . . Besides, more Scripture scholars will defend the last opinion (i.e., Stanley's) than will mariologists. As to the mode of discussion . . . mariologists are slightly more sympathetic to tradition and arguments of fittingness, and Scripture scholars are slightly more sympathetic to arguments from Scripture. A growing number of mariologists and Scripture scholars, especially the latter, do not defend the common, long-standing opinions . . ."²⁹ If we omit "slightly" from Grispingo's text, and also "mariologists" from the last sentence, I think Grispingo has summed up nicely the present position of Catholic biblical scholars on this question.³⁰

²⁸ *Art. cit.*, 130.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Cf. also on this problem, H. Langkammer, *The Soteriological Character*

Catholic exegetes and biblical theologians, following the lead of *Lumen Gentium*, are studying Mary's role as prototype of the Church. At Santo Domingo, H. Cazelles gave a profound and beautiful paper *De munere maternitatis in Maria et in Sion*. Mary's role in Scripture should be treated from the viewpoint of the continuity and unity of salvation as seen in the unique Incarnate Word. Scripture is the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the work of God the Creator redeeming His creation. Read thus, Scripture becomes the record of God's progressive production of the Church of Christ, and Israel and the holy women of Israel have an intimate relationship to Mary, the prototype of the Church. "Eve, Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel are figures of Mary, for these women were chosen in the history of the people to show the faithful how the king, the recipient through election and anointing of the promises and graces of the God of Abraham, would receive these promises and graces through the active cooperation of his mother."³¹ He sees this principle of continuity exemplified in the New Testament application to the Church of the O.T. texts referring to Sion. The application of what is said of the Daughter of Sion to Our Lady is a legitimate use of this principle. He treats in particular of the Daughter of Sion, the mother giving birth to a new people.

The Clergy Review has an article by J. Blenkinsopp on *The Bible and The People: Mary, The Church and The Kerygma*.³² The apostolic age, he points out, fixes our attention almost exclusively on the faith and obedience with which Mary heard and responded to God's word.

Before concluding, I would like to single out for special mention the very original paper of A. Feuillet on the text of *Jn. 16:21* and the spiritual maternity of Mary proclaimed by Jesus on Calvary. The papers of M. Schmaus, *De praesentatione*

of Mary's Fiat, in *Studii Biblici Franciscani Liber Annus*, 15 (Jerusalem, 1964-1965) 293-301.

³¹ H. Cazelles, *De munere maternitatis in Maria et in Sion* (abstract of paper, p. 2).

³² CR 50 (1965) 629-633.

(*oblatione*) *Jesu in templo*; of A. Malo, *Maria in ambitu catechesis apostolicae*; of B. Rigaux on the so-called anti-Marian passage of Mark; and of A. Spindeler, *Ebed Yahweh et Ancilla Domini* merit the special attention of mariologists.

Ecumenical considerations influenced the Council's decision to reject the proposed special schema on Mary in favor of a chapter in the Constitution on the Church. The wisdom of this decision is already becoming manifest. Our separated brothers are reassessing their position on Our Lady and coming to appreciate better her unique role in the economy of the redemption. John Macquarrie, professor of Systematic Theology at Union Theological Seminary, New York City, observes in his recently published *Principles of Christian Theology* that Mary has a place both in Christology and Ecclesiology; in the former, because of the significance of her free consent to the Incarnation; in the latter, because Scripture portrays her as the prototype of the Church. Chapter 17 of his book, *The Church*, contains a section titled *The Blessed Virgin Mary*. Macquarrie begins by assuring his readers of strong Protestant background, "who fear anything that savors of what is wrongly called 'mariolatry,'" that "everything that will be said in this section will, so far as I can judge, have a sound scriptural basis"³³ Mariologists will find the following paragraph especially interesting:

"How then is the Blessed Virgin presented to us in these incidents or mysteries that are related in the gospels? It seems to me that the best clue to the interpretation of her place in the New Testament teaching is afforded by the title 'Mother of the Church' . . . 'Mother of the Church' is the title which Pope Paul VI proclaimed as appropriate to the Blessed Virgin when he adjourned the Vatican Council in 1964, and I believe that this particular title, more than any other, provides an interpretation of Mary's place on which Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Angli-

³³ J. Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York, 1966) 351.

cans, and Protestants could agree."³⁴ The title, he declares, has a firm scriptural basis in *Jn.* 19:26. He makes an interesting suggestion about Mary, the prototype of the Church, when treating of the Visitation incident. The N.T. keyword "blessed" is applied to Mary both in Elizabeth's greeting and in the *Magnificat*. This suggests that Mary possesses all the qualities set forth by Jesus in the Beatitudes. "So the blessedness of the Virgin adumbrates the blessedness of the Church—no earthly happiness, but a 'likeness to God' which means a participation in God's self-giving love, or, to put it in other words, the ministry of reconciliation."³⁵ His remarks on Mary's *station* at the Cross offer a penetrating insight into the role of suffering in the life of the Church. The conclusion of his Marian section deserves to be quoted. "It seems to me, however, that it is precisely a renewed theological consideration of the issues involved that will increasingly lead Protestants (as it has led some of them already) to abandon their negative attitudes toward Mary, and to join with their Catholic brethren (and with the New Testament) in a glad *Ave Maria!*"³⁶

If Catholic exegetes and theologians follow the path pointed out in Ch. VIII of *Lumen Gentium*, Mariology will cease to be a scandal and stumbling block to our separated brothers, and the day will soon dawn when they will join us in hymning Mary's praises.³⁷

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³⁴ *Op. cit.*, 353.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, 354.

³⁶ *Op. cit.*, 355.

³⁷ J. Blenkinsopp, *art. cit.*, 629, remarks that Ch. VIII of *Lumen Gentium* "may prove to have been the most important of all the steps the Council had taken towards eventual reconciliation between the Churches."