

## Appendix IV

# GALATIANS AT VATICAN COUNCIL II

One of the great advances for Catholics that came from the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) was a rediscovery of the importance of Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church, something that the Reformers of the 16th century had recognized as a deficiency in the Church at the time. Thus, during the Council, based on the scholarship of theologians, biblical exegetes, and patristic scholars, the Council’s final texts utilized biblical citations with great frequency. Galatians gets its fair share of attention in several conciliar documents, of which the principal ones are mentioned here.

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium* [1965]) explicitly cites Galatians five times amid other cross-references to the letter. Two key citations are found early in the Constitution (§6) when reference is made to Paul’s use of Jerusalem “above” as “our mother” (Gal 4:26). The Constitution takes this as a reference to the Church, conceived also as the “spotless bride” (cf. also Rev 19:7; 21:2). The text goes on to mention the Pauline notion of “new creation” (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17) in recognition that this has been accomplished by Christ’s death and resurrection (§7). Later in the same section (§7), it further draws attention to the necessity of Church members being “formed” in Christ, using the Pauline expression (Gal 4:19). In a section on the duties of laity (§38), the Constitution invokes Paul to insist that laity must nourish the world through “spiritual fruits” that come from a life lived in accordance with the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22; the Constitution uses the plural “fruits” rather than the singular “fruit” found in the Galatians text!). Finally, at the beginning of the chapter on the Blessed Virgin Mary (ch. 8), the Constitution also explicitly uses Galatians 4:4 to draw attention to Mary’s role in the incarnation, and thus her involvement in the mystery of salvation by being chosen to be the Mother of the Savior (§52).

The Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio* [1964]) cites Galatians 1:6–9 in a footnote (§3 n. 15) by admitting that “certain rifts” arose in the early Church, “which the Apostle strongly censures as damnable” (1 Cor 1:11). This comment provides the obvious explanation for the present need for ecumenism, after centuries of scandalous divisions within the Church.

The Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* [1965]) references Galatians twice in two different contexts. One is tied to the call for priests to act kindly toward people, not because they want to please them but because Christian doctrine and life command it. Paul's insistence on his own avoidance of wanting merely to please people is given as an example (§6 n. 22; Gal 1:10). The second occurrence is found in the section on the call to priestly holiness (§12), where the text explicitly quotes Galatians 2:20, which has so often inspired many Christians throughout Church history.

Galatians appears in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes* [1965]) in a section on "the dignity of the moral conscience" (§16) and the call to love of God and love of neighbor. The text cites Galatians 5:14 (§11), which is one of the rare instances in Paul where allusion is made to Jesus's moral teaching.