

The Second Vatican Council Then and Now

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Jared Wicks, S.J. *Investigating Vatican II: Its Theologians, Ecumenical Turn, and Biblical Commitment*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018.

Matthew Levering. *An Introduction to Vatican II as an Ongoing Theological Event*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017.

Thomas G. Guarino. *The Disputed Teachings of Vatican II. Continuity and Reversal in Catholic Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018.

ALL THREE OF THESE BOOKS understand the Second Vatican Council as a theological event, though they show this in various ways. Wicks shows it by noting the collaboration of bishops and theologians indispensable to the work of producing the Council's documents. Levering shows it by re-embedding each of the four constitutions in theological work contemporary with and enabling the teaching they deliver. Guarino demonstrates it by attending to the conciliar effort to remain strictly in continuity with prior definitive Church teaching on the priesthood, on Mary, and on the Church's relation to non-Catholic ecclesial communities and to non-Christian religions. He defends conciliar teaching on collegiality, on revelation, and on religious freedom as effecting at certain points a reversal of prior positions on these topics, but a reversal of non-definitive, non-infallible teaching. Guarino's task is an expressly dogmatic theological task, and understands the Council as a dogmatic theological event.

Is it worthwhile to stress the theological character of the Council?

Could it *not* have been a theological event? To be sure, some think the Council better described as a political event internal to the Church; its chief aim was a re-distribution of power in the Church from the Roman center to the episcopal and diocesan periphery. Here, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, is the focus in as much as it gives power to the bishops (chapter III) and power to the people (chapter II). Alternatively, could the Council not be better described as a cultural event? In this way, the *aggiornamento* John XXIII wanted consists chiefly in ecclesial adaptation to Enlightenment political and philosophical thought and the post-Enlightenment rise of the authority of historical studies. Think, perhaps, of George Weigel's recent history of the last two centuries of the Church.¹ In this way, the Council makes the Church come to more pacific terms with both the liberal state and the modern academy and the agnostic demand for religious toleration. So the cutting edge of the Council is *Gaudium et Spes*, together with the Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, and the Declaration on Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*—policy papers more than theological tracts. The “countersyllabus” these three documents comprise, in Joseph Ratzinger's phrase,² and the Church's re-location of herself in the modern world are the salient point of the Council. Or again, why is the Council not primarily an ongoing aesthetic event? The Council consigned the old liturgy and its forms to the museum, and enabled the Missal of Paul VI. And evidently, for most Catholics, it is the Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacro-sanctum Concilium*, that has made the most immediate and comprehensive impact on their ecclesial lives.

It is easy to recognize some truth in these other takes on the Council. However, if the Church be what she says she is, the Body of Christ, then power is not re-arranged except concordantly with the revealed institutional form of the Church, and so not without theological understanding and judgment. Again, she cannot alter her stance toward the world unless the new stance is measured by the commission to preach the Gospel to all nations and by the constraints this imposes on her relation to what is not her. Last, the Church can find no form of worship that is not the repre-

¹ George Weigel, *The Irony of Modern Catholic History: How the Church Rediscovered Itself and Challenged the Modern World to Reform* (New York: Basic Books, 2019).

² Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Sister Mary Francis McCarthy, S.N.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 381. Ratzinger means to contrast the conciliar product with Pius IX's 1864 *Syllabus of Errors*.

sensation of the central theological event of history, the Paschal Mystery. That is to say, none of the other views of the Council are possible without the Council being first of all a theological event—unless we think the Church really is just an expression of the will to power, or a cultural product of human history, or a sort of large-scale equivalent of the poetry and literature of the world functioning as Matthew Arnold thinks them to do. And in fact, the New Testament is quite clear that the Church is not of our building, that its liturgy is a gift of God just as was that of the Israelites, something ordained by God and not fashioned by gravers of metal, and that what she is to say to the worldly powers that be is, in the end, given her to speak by the Holy Spirit. This makes the Council a theological event, and so *Dei Verbum*, the Constitution on Divine Revelation, holds the first rank place among the conciliar constitutions. But each of the volumes under review pursues the theological character of the Council in its own way. I return to why the Council has to be an *ongoing* theological event (Levering) at the end of this review.

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The aim of *Investigating Vatican II* extends beyond its modest title. Wicks wants to revitalize a Church in which many “emerging adult” Catholics are indifferent to Catholicism and have left the Church because “the transmission of Catholic convictions and values broke down during the years 1965 to 1985” (3–4). The cause of this catastrophe, for both individual souls and the Church as a whole, is that the Second Vatican Council was not received by their parents (and grandparents I would add), and “the uplifting and motivating influence of the council” passed them by (3). Wicks wants to effect a reception of the Council unto the renewal of Catholic life. He undertakes to do this, first, by recalling the original intention of John XXIII for the Council, which was to revitalize the Church in the same way as did the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. More at length, he proposes to do this by making us alive to the *theological* event the Council was (1), and where that theological event blossomed in *Dei Verbum*, and its simple but theologically comprehensive and pastorally moving evocation of the plan and point of revelation as culminating in the revelation of Trinitarian love in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, thence entrusted to the Church to guard and unfold. All will recognize the aim of this book as something entirely worthy of an apostolically minded Jesuit, if the pleonasm be forgiven.

Investigating Vatican II falls into two parts, and *Dei Verbum* dominates both halves. The five chapters of part 1, “Major Figures and Aims,”

treat: John XXIII's hopes for the Council (chapter 1); how theologians contributed to the Council (chapter 2); the pre-history of *Dei Verbum* (chapter 3; anticipated in attention to the constitution in chapter 2); and John XXIII's establishment of the Secretariat for Christian Unity under the leadership of Cardinal Augustine Bea and how the secretariat and the Council provided a new face of Catholic ecumenism (chapters 4 and 5). Part 2, "Outcomes," reviews the four sessions of the Council in chapters 6 through 9, and closes with an appreciation of *Dei Verbum*'s sixth chapter—the renewal of the Church John aimed at will be fulfilled according as Catholics follow the urgent exhortation of the Council (*vehementer exhortatur*) to discover Christ in Scripture (§25). But there is much about *Dei Verbum* in chapter 9 and chapter 6, too. The chapters of *Investigating Vatican II* often began as lectures at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Ohio or some other venue and there is some crisscrossing and repetition (which will be welcome for first readers of this material). However, Wick's expertise relative to *Dei Verbum*, founded on his extensive historical studies of the constitution, many of which were devoted to the work of Pieter Smulders, provides the golden thread, not only historically but also theologically, to the unity of the book.

Chapter 6 relates the Council's rejection of the draft schema *De fontibus revelationis* from the Theological Commission in November of 1962. This rejection was on the grounds that the schema did not measure up to John's ecumenical and pastoral hopes for a more accessible presentation of Catholic doctrine, and served as the catalyst that ultimately bound the majority of Council fathers to the spirit and agenda of John XXIII. It is an exciting story; it drives home the fact that the Council really was animated and governed by John's hopes and his spirit. And our appreciation of it gains by the biography Wicks sketches in chapter 1, which tells us why Giovanni Roncalli, called to the See of Peter, might think conciliar thoughts, and what those thoughts would be. The historian of the reception of Trent in the Diocese of Bergamo, the historian for whom Saint Charles Borromeo remained a convincing figure of reform, wanted similarly to rejuvenate the Church, to re-invigorate it with a more ardent pastoral zeal, a more fervent Christian life, a more zealous evangelical mission, a more accessible teaching (recall the *Catechism* mandated by Trent). John wanted his Council to do in the twentieth century what Trent did in the sixteenth. And therefore the failure of Catholics to receive the Council, which Wicks gives some explanation for in chapter 7, is all the more poignant. "It belongs to the complete history of Vatican II that this reception of the council's results ["the elegant and idealistic final documents"] did not occur in placid and peaceful times, but in a

cultural and ecclesial ambience fraught with difficulties" (185). The pill and the war in Vietnam, student revolt against the sexual mores and politics of their elders, all bound up in America with the quest for civil rights for African Americans and the violence it occasioned, overwhelmed not only a fair reception of the Council but the continuity of catechetical and pastoral practice presupposed to such reception.

Notwithstanding his focus on *Dei Verbum*, Wicks also devotes considerable attention to John XXIII's concern for Christian unity and the role of the Secretariat for Christian Unity in the work of the Council (chapters 4 and 5). Readers should be aware that the attention given to ecumenism, like the attention given to *Dei Verbum*, also has deep roots in Wicks's prior scholarly and theological work, and he speaks here with polished and confident expertise. Many will thank him for making prominent the Council's express adoption of what must be an explicit presupposition of ecumenical contact and concern, and that is the recognition of the properly ecclesial character of non-Catholic Christian organizations (140–41, 178).

Wicks also brings into full light the Council's attempt to effect a *détente* and find some rapprochement with the modern world, the world of post-Enlightenment liberal cultural and political reality, with the Declaration on Religious Liberty, *Dignitatis Humanae*; and the Declaration on Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*; and the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (chapter 9). Ratzinger takes these three documents, as has been mentioned, as a kind of "counter-syllabus," exchanging the demeanor of the Church shaped by Pius IX for a friendlier face more open to engagement with the modern world (30, 101, 109–114, 231).

Wicks has much to say also about *Lumen Gentium* and the reform decrees implementing its dogmatic teaching (chapter 8). Still, the theological heart of the Council for Wicks is *Dei Verbum* (see 84–85), for the reception of the word of God is presupposed to the Church as an embodied response to its truth in faith (*Lumen Gentium*), as it is also to her worship (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*). Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) is theologically prior to the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), which is itself prior to worship (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) and to engaging the non-Catholic and non-Christian world (*Gaudium et Spes*) (222–23).

The argument for the necessarily theological character of the Council and the primacy of *Dei Verbum* is simple enough. The pastoral and evangelical hope of the Council depends ultimately on an expression of the Gospel, a formulation of the deposit of revealed truth, more accessible to the contemporary world and Christians within that world. This was Pope

John's directive at the opening of the Council, and was repeated in the instructions to the Council following the rejection of the draft schemas on the fonts of revelation and on the Church prepared in Rome, curial documents, as it were, composed under the direction of Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani. The rejection of these drafts was based not only on their form—too scholastic—but also on their content. But it took theological minds to discern this and bring it to expression. It took a historically informed theological mind to observe that the summaries of recent papal teaching that the draft documents instantiated were not worthy of a conciliar mode of expression, which should be constructed far more from the word of God itself than from a word of the Church, even in one of its highest and most authoritative forms (see 55 and the judgment of Yves Congar). This more accessible expression, a sort of *aggiornamento* of doctrine, would be based on the work and competence of those theologians who had by their efforts at *ressourcement* come to find a more biblical, more patristic, more liturgical style of expression.

Thus Wicks demonstrates the necessity of the close collaboration of bishop and theologian before and during the Council. Episcopal criticism of the first-draft schemas, unsuited to John's purpose, depended on the prior critical work of Karl Rahner and Ratzinger, of Congar and Jean Daniélou, Pieter Smulders and of Eduard Schillebeeckx (60–67). And the formulation of amended texts and new texts depended on these same and like-minded and similarly trained men: Daniélou and Congar for what became *Dei Verbum*, Gerard Philips and Congar for *Lumen Gentium*, Congar and Joseph Lécuyer and Willy Onclin (to take another illustration) for the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (73).

All of this collaboration of bishops and theologians is laid out in considerable length, clearly and helpfully, by Wicks. He introduces us to it in chapter 2 ("Theologians at Vatican II"), but it is a continuing theme throughout the book.

The last two chapters of the book return to *Dei Verbum*. Chapter 9 emphasizes that *Dei Verbum* supplies what the First Vatican Council left unfocused or as something simply presupposed in *Dei Filius*, namely, a statement of the very content of revelation: the content is Christ (§4; Wicks, 221), whose Gospel is handed on by the apostolic preaching, example, institution, and writing (§7). We meet Christ therefore in both the Scripture and the Tradition of the Church which together form one deposit of revelation (§9), which we know to be faithfully expounded by the magisterium (§10). Chapter 10 fruitfully contrasts the cautious and admonitory commendation of Scripture to theologians and laity of the

original schema *De fontibus* with the confident, even exuberant, exhortation of *Dei Verbum* to exegetes, theologians, and all the faithful to the study and use of Scripture so that all may be nourished in their life and work by the word of God. The Council was confident that the word of God will “speed on and triumph” (2 Thess 2:3; at §26). And so is Wicks. But for this to happen the Book must be opened, the Book must be read, and the Book must be meditated and studied and preached and made theologically active.

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For Levering, as for Wicks, the ultimate aim of the Council was to realize a more effective formulation of the truth of the Gospel, of the truth of Christ himself, both for the Church’s own renewal and for the conversion of the world. Imitating the 1985 extraordinary synod’s example, Levering wants to show this aim by a detailed review of the four conciliar constitutions. This is a review ordered to following the exhortation of Pope Francis unto “a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ” (*Evangelii Gaudium* §3; Levering, 3) and of achieving that “full participation in divine truth” that John Paul II described as the aim of the Council (4).³

The review of all four constitutions demonstrates how each one fosters this encounter with Christ and participation of the truth: *Dei Verbum* focuses on a personal and cognitive encounter with Christ, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on the active participation in the liturgy that makes Christ present, *Lumen Gentium* on the transparency of the human Church to the divine realities of which it is the sign and the instrument, and *Gaudium et Spes* on the orientation of human nature to the grace that alone can fulfill it (6).

This means that, as for Wicks, *Dei Verbum* is the theologically foundational document. For if the Church occupies the bulk of the output of the Council, counting up both *Lumen Gentium* and the reform decrees applying its teaching (as to bishop, priest, laity, religious, and so on), the Church is nevertheless a social and community-founding *response* to the revelation whose culmination is Christ. Moreover, both the interior reality of the *communio* of the Church and the institutional form unto the realization of communion with God and men are themselves outlined in revelation as part of its content. So, we have in Levering’s ordering of things, first, *Dei Verbum*, then the *immediate* response to revelation in praise and worship detailed by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, a response which is also to follow the

³ See Karol Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 15.

instruction of revelation. Third, the adoration and thanksgiving of Christians is more expeditiously enabled from the heart of a renewed Church as understood by *Lumen Gentium*. Fourth and last, a renewed Church with a renewed liturgy and a renewed possession of the revealed word of God can make a more convincing and urgent invitation to the modern world and modern man to address its griefs and realize its hopes in the light of Christ, and such is the project of *Gaudium et Spes*. Thus we have the first four chapters of the book on the four constitutions.

We do not appreciate Levering's work unless we measure the extent of his ambition, an ambition like unto that of Wicks. They both want to do what they think the Council itself wanted to do. And they would be perfectly satisfied with each other's characterizations of its aim. Like the Council, Levering seeks a renewal of the Church, a rejuvenation of the Church. Here is one of Levering's synthetic statements.

Such renewal or reform is nourished by love for the living Person of Jesus Christ [*Dei Verbum*], whose personal presence is mediated liturgically [*Sacrosanctum Concilium*] and doctrinally by the Church of the Holy Spirit [*Lumen Gentium*], and who calls us to share in his life and mission [*Gaudium et Spes*]. (19)

There you have Levering's book, and Levering's Council, in one sentence.

In this way, we find an important justification for how Levering presents each of the constitutions. Detailed review of the constitutions is prefaced in each case with an important work of theology contemporaneous with the drafting of the constitution. This lets us see the theological context apart from which it would be impossible to have an adequate historical understanding of the conciliar texts. So, chapter 1 matches *Dei Verbum* to René Latourelle's *Theology of Revelation* (French original, 1963), *Sacrosanctum Concilium* to Louis Bouyer's *Liturgy and Architecture* (1967), *Lumen Gentium* to Yves Congar's *True and False Reform in the Church* (French original, 1950), and *Gaudium et Spes* to Henri de Lubac's *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (French original, 1965). Readers of Levering will recognize the Levering Way: a target text (here, one of the constitutions) is illuminated by running it up against another text.

So, just as Henri de Lubac vindicates the unity of the economy of nature and grace by his teaching on man's natural desire for the vision of God, *Gaudium et Spes* teaches that man is not fully known except in the light of Christ and his call (§§10, 21–22). It is this anthropology that underlies the Council's confident embrace of the "new humanism" it perceives in modern culture (§§53–56) and its encouragement of cooper-

ation between the Church and the modern state, even while the Church must assert her freedom (§76). Both de Lubac and *Gaudium et Spes* understand that no one can realize himself as a person alone and separate from some human community, and that the perfect human community is the one that relates us to God, such that a world without God is a world against man (168–69).

It is ironic that Congar's *True and False Reform* can be taken by Levering to characterize the theological culture that produced *Lumen Gentium*, but so it was. The re-calibration of Catholic thinking on the Church Congar aimed at was in many respects realized in the constitution on the Church. Like John XXIII, Congar sees the need for catechetical and pastoral renewal (101). Congar recognizes the key role of the development of institutions and doctrine (98–100), but knows that development (*aggiornamento*) is not accomplished except from within tradition (*ressourcement*) (103–106). All this is exactly what we have when the constitution brings forward the patristic sense of the mystery and communion of the Church, the Church's holiness as the Body of Christ and its abiding need to purify the people of God. Then, too, there is the foundation of ecumenism laid in §§8 and 16 (for which there is Congar's *Chrétiens désunis*), the balance of episcopal and papal office, bringing forward the priesthood of the faithful (for which there is also Congar's *Lay People in the Church*), and the realization of the Church especially in the Mother of God (for which there is Congar's *Christ, Our Lady, and the Church*, not to mention de Lubac's *The Splendor of the Church*).

As Bouyer calls for the active participation of the laity in the liturgical celebration of the Church, especially the mass, so does *Sacrosanctum Concilium* begin by stating its aim to foster such participation. It can do so all the more confidently because of the work of such theologians as Bouyer who know the history of the gradual marginalization of congregational participation worked by both theology and architectural forms and judge it as a deformation of the Church's liturgy.

Still, with Levering's emphasis on encounter with Christ, following Francis, and possession of the revealed truth of Christ, keeping to the word of John Paul, the success of the Council, and so the success of the kind of appropriation of the Council for today Levering wants, stands or falls with the success of *Dei Verbum* in maintaining the unity of the Person of Christ and Gospel truth, and the impossibility of meeting the Person of Christ apart from the truth of Christ mediated by the propositions of doctrine and creed, Tradition, and Scripture. And in fact, this theme, and the importance of the sometimes neglected role of the proposition in the work of revelation, returns in Levering's treatment of *Lumen Gentium* and

occupies an important place in his fifth and concluding chapter.

Latourelle is concerned to think the reality of revelation in terms of three poles: the *word* of God; *testimony* to this word and to the event in which it is received; and personal *encounter*. The word of God is not only a vehicle of cognitive content, but in Christ especially, an encounter with a Person. The recorded witness to this cognitively rich personal encounter calls on the freedom of those who receive it and enables those who did not first receive it to possess both the cognitive content and the Person of Christ in the freedom of faith. So to speak, witness to the word, to the Person who speaks it, makes the original encounter "portable," able to engage other people originally absent. The word that mediates both the Person who speaks it and the truth he speaks can be further mediated by testimony so as to enable a further personal encounter and possession of the truth by those not originally present. Thus, if it is a mistake to think revelation concerns only truths and not personal manifestation, it is equally a mistake to think one can have the Person without the words, without the truths he speaks, as delivered by the original witnesses. Hence the point of Levering's title for this chapter: "Persons and Propositions: *Dei Verbum* in Context."

Is this realization of the necessary role of the proposition in the encounter with the Person of Christ also asserted in *Dei Verbum*? Commenting on the prologue's declaration that "it wishes to set forth the true doctrine of divine revelation and its transmission," Levering writes: "Such true doctrine could be set forth only if revelation itself, within the community established by the self-revealing God, communicated doctrinal truths" (34). And summing up the most important, second paragraph of the constitution:

The truths that God reveals for our salvation are summed up in Jesus Christ, who reveals God to us and who invites us to share in his life of wisdom and self-giving love. Of course, this does not mean that we can know the Person, Jesus, in a nonpropositional way, since the human act of knowing cannot bypass propositional judgments. Furthermore, Jesus' own propositional teaching and the apostles' teachings about him inform and instruct our personal encounter with Jesus. (36)

Levering defends this view vigorously against contemporary attempts to downplay the importance of the objective value and time-transcending character of the propositional of revelation making it clear that loss of the proposition, or thinking the propositions can be mutually incoherent,

makes for the loss of the Person (48–49). I will return to this when I take up the question of why the theological event of the Council must be an *ongoing* event.

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A presupposition of Catholic unity is apostolicity, which entails the diachronic identity of Catholic tradition, as Levering recognizes. Thomas Guarino undertakes to manifest this identity in *The Disputed Teachings of Vatican II*. Of course, without the absolute agreement of the doctrine of the Council with prior definitive doctrine, the Council could not be a theological event in a Catholic sense at all, but would be radically a-theological.

For just this reason, *Dei Verbum* is as important for Guarino as for Levering and Wicks. Guarino does not overtly rank and relate the constitutions as Wicks and Levering do. But *Dei Verbum* is foundational to his undertaking in three ways. First of all, its teachings on the material sufficiency of the Scriptures for Catholic doctrine, on scriptural inerrancy, and on the historicity of the Gospels are all issues relative to the continuity of conciliar teaching with prior teaching. Second, the constitution treats the nature and transmission of revelation, which is the framework within which all of Guarino's discussion takes place. Third, *Dei Verbum* recognizes the fact of doctrinal development (§8), the key to Guarino's adjudication of many of the accusations that the Council broke with prior Tradition.

Guarino's first chapter introduces us to two accounts of development, first that of Vincent of Lerins, and second that of Cardinal Newman, accounts he is well-equipped to deal with, given his monograph on Vincent and his long engagement with fundamental theological topics over the years. The second chapter also takes up in more detail the nature of doctrine itself, already introduced in chapter 1. But chapter 2 also has a word about analogical predication and metaphysical participation. This is because Guarino thinks to understand many of the disputed teachings of the Council and their relation to previous magisterial teaching by invoking a Thomist understanding of analogicity and participation. Following Congar, he thinks that such fundamental Thomist principles are underneath much of the conciliar teaching, even if they are not expressly appealed to and if the Scholastic machinery of primary and secondary analogues does not appear on the surface of the text. Surely this is a sound instinct. Where it is a matter of stating the relation between two or more things that are partially the same and partially different, he is on firm, not

to say incontrovertible, ground. And this will give him strong reasons to understand much of the disputed teaching of Vatican II as developments and not novelties.

After chapter 3 addresses such issues as development, *ressourcement*, and *aggiornamento* head on, chapter 4 applies participationist thinking with great success to the conciliar teaching on the priesthood, on Marian mediation, and on the ecclesial character of non-Catholic Christian churches and communities. As to the priesthood, while Christ is the true and perfect priest in himself, the priesthood of the faithful and the priesthood of ministerial priests participate in this priesthood, and to be sure, in different ways: the priesthood of the faithful and the priesthood of ordained priests differ not only in degree, but in essence (*Lumen Gentium* §10); both, however, share in the priesthood of Christ and are named from his priestly fullness. As to mediation, the unique and as it were per se mediator of all grace is Christ who merits this grace condignly and who in virtue of his divinity distributes it efficiently. But the uniqueness and originating character of his mediation does not preclude that Mary and the saints (and priests, for that matter) share in it. Mary so cooperates with the saving activity of her Son that she is justly called the *mediatrix* of salvation and grace (*Lumen Gentium* §62).

Thinking of the Church and other Christian communions—that is, thinking of *Lumen Gentium* §8 and the Decree on Ecumenism—we have another convincing deployment of the logic of participation and the use of analogical names. The Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, indeed, but not in such a way that there is no ecclesial reality outside the visible confines of her communion. According as and to the measure that they share evangelical truth and possess the means and accoutrements of salvation such as baptism and prayer—according as they possess ecclesial “elements of sanctification and of truth”—they participate in the ecclesiality that exists fully only in the Catholic Church. While Catholics are fully incorporated into the Church, and non-Catholics not so fully, still, they really participate in the one Church, as it were, by degrees (see *Lumen Gentium* §§14–15). So we may speak of entire non-Catholic churches or communities sharing in the life and truth of the one Church and so sharing in her, formally and not metaphorically. This is all to the good, I think.

Guarino also wants to extend this pattern of understanding to the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions (*Nostra Aetate*) and to the modern world (*Gaudium et Spes*). It is evident that there is a real relation of sharing and participation in revealed truth between Judaism and Christianity, of course, where the same revelation is given to the Church and Judaism but in its fullness only to the Church. And when the Council

recognizes the presence of truth and goodness in non-Christian religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, Guarino wants to say much the same thing, although he recognizes “that Judaism’s participation in the truth of divine revelation differs not only in degree but in essence from the participatory relationship of other religions” (112). The Catholic Church is then the *primum analogatum* also relative to non-Christian religions, and they share in her reality according to the elements of truth and goodness to be found in them (113–14). “Other religions, insofar as they are vessels of God’s truth and goodness, are *formally and intensively* related to the church of Christ” (113; Guarino’s emphasis). This way of speaking raises the question of whether other religions may be thought of as “repositories of divine revelation,” although Guarino knows the Council did not speak in that way (119).

On Cardinal Newman’s understanding of revelation, the other religions may in fact be repositories of revelation, especially insofar as they represent in their moral teaching what is congruent with the subjective revelation of conscience and represent in myth and sometimes darkly anticipate the atoning sacrifice and death of one man for the sake of others. But they cannot be repositories of revelation that comes to us with publically and historically ascertainable certainty *as* revelation. That description of things belongs only and exclusively to Christianity and its forerunner, Judaism. Just so, it is a mistake to count Christianity as analogically related to other religions under the over-arching category of “religion.” Of course we may choose so to do if we are sociologists of religion or constructing some “history of religions” in the style of Wilhelm Bousset. But if we are theologians, thinking of things so seems to rub off too much of the distinctive character of Christian revelation and worship as something that comes down to us from above. What is missing from the discussion, to my mind, is the role of the natural virtue of religion in constituting non-Christian religions.

For of course all truth and every good thing comes down to us from above (James 1). But they do not come down to the differing religions in the same way, and this, for me, makes it hazardous to speak of non-Christian religions as “participating” in Christianity or the Church. Sometimes the true and the good things come down to us bound up with the very act of creation and the creation of human nature. But sometimes they come down to us with a flash, with a trumpet crash. Some of what comes down to us in this way, in Christianity, includes what we might naturally know of God, our nature, and the moral law, but could know only with difficulty. But, in addition to the naturally knowable truths about God and the moral law that are revealed (see Pius XII’s *Humani Generis*), there

are also strictly speaking supernatural truths that enable us to cooperate with the supernatural grace that leads us to naturally unknowable and naturally unattainable supernatural end. Both the way God communicates in Christianity and Judaism and the content of what is communicated so remove them from the other religions that, although it be true that every man is ordered to Christ as to the true exemplar of his humanity and his divine friend, and is so ordered by whatever truth or goodness there is in his religion, this does not make his religion a participation in Christianity.

As to the modern world, then, Guarino casts the net of analogy one last time to express the Church's relation to whatever is good in Enlightenment modernity and liberalism with, it seems to me, as much or as little success as he has had with non-Christian religions.

Chapter 5 takes up those teachings of Vatican II that do not develop but reverse prior Catholic teaching. However, they reverse or substantially qualify teaching that while authoritative was not definitive: so the relation between pope and bishop in *Lumen Gentium*; religious freedom in *Dignitatis Humanae*; the issues referred to above in *Dei Verbum*.

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At the opening of the Council, John XXIII famously declared: "The *depositum fidei* or truths which are found in our venerable doctrine is one thing while the way [*modus*] in which these truths are expressed is another, always with the same meaning and the same judgment" (*Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, October 11, 1962).

Guarino takes John XXIII to be making a point similar to the position on doctrinal continuity laid out by Henri Bouillard in the closing pages of his *Conversion et grâce*,⁴ where Bouillard distinguishes between theological affirmations and the representations that compose the affirmations (19). The same affirmation can be made with quite different representations—quite different "theological vocabulary and concepts (representations)," as Guarino paraphrases. Again, we can have a "plurality of conceptual formulations" used to express the same affirmation, the same truth. And Guarino speaks in this way throughout the volume (19–20, 32–36, 39, 46, 68).⁵ Guarino thus lumps together vocabulary and concepts, words

⁴ Henri Bouillard, *Conversion et grâce chez s. Thomas d'Aquin. Étude historique* (Paris: Aubier, 1944), 219–24.

⁵ See also the discussion in Guarino's *Foundations of Systematic Theology* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 146–49, where he takes the distinction to be equivalent to that between content and context, or equivalently content and form,

and ideas, in the box of things subject to change. Conceptual “formulations” (19) and “conventions” (32) in which a doctrine is expressed can change, but the doctrine will remain the same, the same truth with the same meaning. Guarino knows of the theological reservations about this distinction between the content and form of a teaching expressed by the International Theological Commission and others,⁶ and shares them, but thinks some form of it is nonetheless indispensable for a Catholic theology that wants to maintain the universality and time-transcending truth of Catholic doctrine.⁷

Just as such, Bouillard’s proposal and Guarino’s appropriation of it is, I think, difficult to countenance. It seems to escape the doctrinal relativism Michel Labourdette and Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange imputed to it in the 1940s only by abstracting such a slimmed down affirmation from the many conceptually diverse formulations of it as cannot be distinguished from a kind of agnosticism. For instance, if we are not bound by the Council of Trent to confess that grace is the “formal cause” of justification, but are bound only to confess some interior change, or even merely that justification is a gift, then we lose the understanding of justification embedded in the idea of formal cause, where we understand not only *that* justification is a gift, but *how* it is a gift.⁸ And anyway, it seems difficult to escape the question of whether grace either is or is not the formal cause of justification.

To be sure, it depends on what we think a concept is. If it is a representation in the sense of the “ideas” of John Locke and other seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thinkers, then, granted that such representations express and can give us no insight into the object of their reference, granted that they are, in the end, a sort of nominal and nominalist definition of what they refer to, then we may very well change them every day to stay fresh and up to date, and make the same nominalist affirmations that, unfortunately, tell us nothing about the subject of the affirmations. We construct different realities from age to age. But no one who holds to Newman’s dogmatic principle wants that.

On the other hand, if a concept is the intelligibility of the thing it is the concept of, then concepts cannot be changed without changing the meaning of the serial affirmations in which one concept substitutes for another.

145, 149, 188–90.

⁶ Guarino, *Foundations*, 149–52.

⁷ Guarino, *Foundations*, 188–98. See also Guarino’s article, “Henri Bouillard and the Truth-Status of Dogmatic Statements,” *Science et Esprit* 39 (1987): 331–43.

⁸ Guarino is quite aware of this challenge; see “Henri Bouillard and the Truth-Status of Dogmatic Statements,” 341.

But a concept must be the intelligibility of the thing it is the concept of, or else the sort of (*commodious*) metaphysical realism Guarino plunks for in chapter 2 of his 2005 *Foundations of Systematic Theology* cannot be sustained.

Guarino thus aligns himself with that tradition in the twentieth-century Catholic understanding of trans-temporal doctrinal identity embraced by Bouillard, Jean LeBlond, and Karl Rahner, among others. For them, the key is the judgment and its tethering of thought to being by force of the copula. There is, however, another tradition that seems to ensure this same thing by appeal to the concept itself. This is the tradition of Ambroise Gardeil, Garrigou-Lagrange, and Congar. These theologians defended the time-transcending identity and universal accessibility of certain basic principles (identity, causality) and certain basic notions (person, nature, substance, property, life, for instance). It is this Dominican way rather than the Jesuit way, moreover, that has found expression in magisterial attempts to address this issue, notably in Pius XII's *Humani Generis* (§16), Paul VI's *Mysterium Fidei* (§24), and John Paul II's *Fides et Ratio* (§§ 4, 95–96). I think as well that, unless we think a concept is the intelligibility of the thing it is the concept of, then we find ourselves in striking philosophical—and so theological—discontinuity with Saint Thomas, Saint Bonaventure, Saint Augustine.

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The Second Vatican Council was a theological event for all three of the authors reviewed here. Since the reception of the Council is by no means accomplished, one supposes Wicks would also readily assent to the Council as an “ongoing” theological event. This is more evidently true for Guarino, of course, since he is in the thick of arguments for and against the continuity of conciliar teaching with prior ecclesial teaching. But it is most evident for Levering, and his last chapter makes this especially clear.

In his introduction to *An Introduction to Vatican II*, Levering, like Wicks, calls for a more perfect reception of the Council, “a new *ressourcement*” leading to ecclesial reform and renewal. He frames this wanted renewal between two excesses to be avoided: an “ahistorical extrinsicism” according to which an unchanging formulation of revelation can be fittingly layered over every age of the Church's life, indifferent to what must be merely accidental cultural and historical changes, and an “atheological historicism,” where the Church rearranges her structures and story according to shifting constellations of power (19). These are the very poles by which Maurice Blondel framed the task facing theology in thinking

about tradition and the continuity of an abiding dogmatic identity in the midst of the modernist crisis at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Blondel reappears in Levering's last chapter (192, 196). Here, Levering opposes two interpretations of the Council's achievement, two ways to read the documents and receive the event. First, there is Robert Imbelli's reading, according to which the reception of the Council is the reception of *Dei Verbum* (177–78, 181–82) and the reception of *Dei Verbum* is the reception of Christ, the culmination of revelation, the linchpin and turning point of the history of the people of God, to see whom is to see the Father, and who accomplishes his work especially by his Cross and resurrection (*Dei Verbum* §4). Is Imbelli's reading, and *Dei Verbum's* teaching, an instance of a-historical extrinsicism? Manifestly it is not according to Levering. Rather, by making timely the patristic understanding of Christ the revealer, and the role of Scripture and Tradition in making him and his truth present, the Council does truly enact John XXIII's hope that "the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be more effectively defended and presented" (*Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, Oct. 11, 1962).

This Christological understanding of the Council and its adequate reception Levering contrasts to that of Massimo Faggioli, a noted apologist for the *History of Vatican II* edited by Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak (English version). Faggioli dismisses a concern for the continuity of Christian doctrine and Catholic ethos as relevant to understanding the Council and, in fact, does not think such continuity is to be discerned there (187–88). Guarino, it would seem, has labored under a great delusion. Absent a concern for doctrinal continuity within a changing form and presentation of the same truths, the Council turns out to have been really only about re-arranging the power structure of the Church. Faggioli gives us, in other words, an atheological, historicist reading of the Council. I would spell out the line of thought that impels thinkers like Faggioli to this position as follows—a line of thought Blondel first explicated in 1904 with *History and Dogma*. History may be done in two ways: apart from faith and theology, or within faith and taking account of what by faith we know as certainly true because it is revealed doctrinal truth. Even more and apart from faith, moreover, history is incapable of discerning the unity of doctrine itself and the unity of the Catholic ethos that lives by it. Did Cardinal Newman not think the unity and continuity of these things in the Church are *themselves* objects of faith? The continuity of these things is in principle subject to being impugned by reason in its historical form ("critical history"). But they are not themselves objects of purely historical knowledge. History must be able to be read concordantly with them. Still, at the end of the day, they are fulfillments of the promise

of the Lord to remain with us until the closing of the age, and to send forth into the Church the Spirit of truth. Thus, the continuities in question are grasped by faith, or not at all. Absent faith, absent the guardrails of doctrine, the *history* of doctrine and the Catholic thing disintegrates into separate and sometimes incoherent sub-narratives whose principle of unity is not the Holy Spirit and the Tradition of the Church (as Blondel and Congar conceived it), but power and the will to power. Truth with a capital *T* is the very first thing, after all, that Nietzsche sends packing in his hermeneutics of the history of good and evil.

Thus our present misery, with Faggioli as a prominent exponent of doctrinal relativism.

There are many other interpreters of the Council in addition to Imbelli and Faggioli whom Levering treats with his usual thoroughness and comprehensive scope in his last chapter. He ends, suitably, with homage to Joseph Ratzinger, defending his reading of *Gaudium et Spes* from those who see in him “only” an Augustine *redivivus* (if only it were so). Levering sees with Ratzinger that the reception of the Council leaves us with the choice between a self-constituting Church (203), the Church of Faggioli and others, and a Church that has the audacity to think she has heard a revelation and that it is her duty merely to guard it. *Custodi depositum*.

The context of the reception the Second Vatican Council now in the first part of the twenty-first century therefore remains exactly the same in its essentials as the context of the dispute over the nature of dogma at the beginning of the twentieth century. We may well thank all three of these authors reviewed here for helping us to negotiate this reception historically and theologically.