

Did That Really Happen at Vatican II? Reflections on John O'Malley's Recent Book

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JOHN O'MALLEY has written an engaging account of Vatican II which culminates a series of articles penned over the previous forty years.¹ While the articles propound in greater detail the hermeneutical principles governing O'Malley's reading of the Council, the book presents a more unified view of the Council as a whole; articles and book complement each other without substantial variation in position. O'Malley's view agrees essentially with the "Bologna interpretation" championed by the late Giuseppe Alberigo and his collaborators.² This exegetical tradition has emphasized the novelty of Vatican II and its discontinuity with previous ecclesial and conciliar traditions. O'Malley's articles describe Vatican II as marking a "revolution" in the Church's self-understanding (*Traditions and Transitions*, 36, 48, 66, 73, 83, 108), a "notable departure from the fundamental paradigm of Church order that prevailed before the Council" (*Traditions and Transitions*, 107; also 120).

O'Malley was a young graduate student, just three years ordained, when the Council opened, and its impression upon him apparently never waned. The last pages of the book, however, express a regretful nostalgia

¹ John W. O'Malley, S.J., *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2008). The articles, published between 1971 and 1988, were collected in *Traditions and Transitions: Historical Perspectives on Vatican II* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1989). Page references to the former in our main text will be given in parentheses preceded by *What Happened*; page references to the latter will also be given in parentheses, but preceded by *Traditions and Transitions*.

² Giuseppe Alberigo, ed., *History of Vatican II*, 5 vols., English ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, trans. Matthew O'Connell (Leuven: Peters, 1996–2006).

for earlier days when it seemed that the Church's "periphery" would assert itself strongly against the "center" and introduce a more horizontal ecclesiology. Closely tied with the issue of collegiality are two other issues which O'Malley identifies as fundamental: radical *aggiornamento*, or how the Church deals with change, and the "style" of the Church's operations and communications. He would have the majority of the Council Fathers opting for a pastoral style instead of the previous legislative-judicial style. Likewise the Fathers allegedly preferred a worldview embracing adaptation to deep cultural changes instead of a view which ignores or downplays the reality and the need of historical and cultural changes. But O'Malley recognizes that wished-for changes have been frustrated. The institutional strength of "the center," the Roman Curia at whose gates the Council was held and in whose offices the conservative "minority" was entrenched, managed to hold firm and even to strengthen itself. "Collegiality, the linchpin in the center-periphery relationship promoted by the majority, ended up an abstract teaching without point of entry into the social reality of the church" (*What Happened*, 299–311). The crisis of the traditional teaching on birth control, which was touched upon at the Council and reiterated in *Humanae Vitae*, led to the reaffirmation of the center's authority and defined "the style of finding a solution to the problem." Hence O'Malley opines, "Even before the council ended in 1965, there was a discrepancy between what the bishops hoped they had accomplished and what had happened. The majority was consistently frustrated in its efforts to make its will felt through the establishment of real structural changes" (*What Happened*, 311–12).

Our disagreement with O'Malley's thesis will proceed in two steps: an examination of his method and a criticism of some major omissions and misreadings.

The Methodological Divorce

Continuity and Contingency

The nostalgia and regret are new to O'Malley because his earlier efforts at interpreting the Council propagated its new vision. For him it marked a novel openness to "history." Its leading progressive theologians possessed a historical consciousness which was lacking to previous centuries. They were aware of profound historical changes in Church history as expressions of a given culture and therefore "not necessarily irreversible." He repeatedly quotes J. C. Murray to the effect that "the issue underlying all issues" was "development of doctrine" (*Traditions and Transitions*, 14, 30, 61–62; *What Happened*, 9, 39–41, 196, 214–15). In fact the basic battle of

the Council is conceived in terms of the progressive majority with the conservative minority, who both hold radically opposed “styles of reading history.” The minority’s style, described as “classicism” and “substantialism,” sees basic continuity in history wherein certain developments were preordained by God and are now irreversible. Thus the Church would be “immune to process or to change in doctrine and discipline,” understanding herself primarily as a “doctrinal society,” that is, concerned primarily with protecting doctrine. This style of historical thinking O’Malley describes as “metaphysical, i.e., not historical at all.” In this view “true reform, therefore, consisted in removing threats to the sacred. Men were to be changed by religion not religion by men” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 34–35, 66–69, 107; *What Happened*, 37–38). The majority, by contrast, incorporates O’Malley’s preferred style. It emphasizes discontinuity; history is desacralized, a human phenomenon, the result of men’s free actions, decisions, and passions. Though all events are culturally and historically conditioned, they are unique, “radically contingent and particular.” “Every person, event, and document of the past is the product of very specific and unrepeatable contingencies” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 74–75). Hence they are relativized. Simultaneously the historian’s own understanding is relativized as culturally conditioned and contingent. He cannot hope to grasp past events as they actually happened. Indeed the “past” changes and becomes “new” with different interpretations of historians. As present historians’ interests and needs change, different questions are asked of the past. So Michel de Certeau is quoted with approval, “As we change we change the past.” Rather than despair at the impossibility of the modern historian’s task, O’Malley seems to rejoice in newly found freedom: “If the past imposes no pattern upon us, we are free to try to create the future. . . . [W]e are free to make our own decisions for the future. Indeed, we have no escape from such freedom, fraught as it is with dreadful burdens” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 35–37, 76–81, 67, 107–08; *What Happened*, 34). As a consequence Vatican II decided that “religion should be changed by men, in order to meet the needs of men.” This, O’Malley holds, is the basic meaning of *aggiornamento*, the Council’s pervasive theme and leitmotiv, adaptation to the needs of the time. The Council intended to “bring the Church up to date and make it effective in the contemporary world.” More than mere “adjustments,” this involves “a transformational or revolutionary reform.” “It implies experimentation, adaptation and a keen attentiveness to the lessons of experience as we daily receive them.” It involves “appropriating certain cultural assumptions and values” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 23, 30, 36, 47–48, 73, 111, 177–78; *What Happened*, 38, 80, 140, 215, 239, 298–302).

O'Malley also recognizes "a strong continuity" in history and identifies its three sources: the documentary evidence remains the same; "the basic operations of the human mind do not radically change from culture to culture"; and generations of historians are culturally linked to each other (*Traditions and Transitions*, 77–78). It is, however, debatable whether such sources provide adequate continuity for intelligibility. O'Malley's three sources are only relatively stable, even by his own standards. New documents are constantly being discovered, made available, or reinterpreted, and the authenticity or authorship of others can be easily put into question. The world of biblical scholarship witnesses to many radical changes of interpretation in the last two centuries even before finds at Qumran and Nag Hammadi. While man's basic intellectual operations may remain the same—this assertion recalls Lonergan's *Insight*—the interpretation of human understanding varies greatly from one philosopher to another. The conceptual formulations of understanding have changed over the ages, each novel interpretation claiming to improve, if not reject, its predecessor. Hence the intellectual operations to which Lonergan and O'Malley appeal need not provide unassailable continuity. Even Lonergan's analysis of human cognition underwent a major mutation from *Insight* to *Method in Theology*.³ Without doubt, in the realm of "scientific" American historiography, cultural continuity among historians has varied quite a bit in the last 175 years, from Bancroft's notion of Providence guiding the American republic in the spread of equality to the present pluralism of methodologies, and this has only reflected similar changes in European understandings of historiography.⁴

³ Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *Insight* (1958; repr. New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 271–78, 335–36; "Cognitional Structure," *Collection*, ed. F. E. Crowe (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 221–39. Yet the late Lonergan abandoned the early Lonergan's faculty psychology. Cf. John M. McDermott, S.J., "Tensions in Lonergan's Theory of Conversion," *Gregorianum* 74 (1993): 117–21. Furthermore we have maintained not only a different interpretation of Aquinas—cf. our "The Analogy of Human Knowing in the *Prima Pars*," *Gregorianum* (1996): 261–86, 501–25—but also a different metaphysics, which results in a different rational psychology: "Faith, Reason, and Freedom," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 67 (2002): 307–32, and "How Did Jesus Know He Was God? The Ontological Psychology of Mark 10:17–22," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 74 (2009): 272–97.

⁴ David D. Van Tassel, "Historiography, American," in *Dictionary of American History*, rev. ed., ed. Harold Chase et al. (New York: Scribner's, 1976), 3:280–83; Abraham S. Eisenstadt, "History and Historians," in *The Reader's Companion to American History*, ed. Eric Foner and Jahn A. Garraty (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), 499–504; James Hoopes, "The History of Ideas," in *Encyclopedia of American Cultural and Intellectual History*, ed. Mary Cayton and Peter Williams (New York: Scribner's, 2001), 3:643–50; Mary K. Cayton, "History and the Study of the Past,"

The tension between continuity and discontinuity is endemic to historiography. There has to be narrative consistency if the author wishes to make any sense out of the recorded past and communicate meaning. Yet the abstractions which he must employ in writing cannot grasp exhaustively the individual people and events whose tale he tells. His unavoidable omissions and oversights allow for interpretative revisions by later historians. In this dilemma historians share the common fate of all those seeking to comprehend reality intellectually. The problem recurs in many other disciplines because it is basic to thought. For example, modern physics postulates that space and time are both continuous and discontinuous, depending on the type of physics employed. For Heisenberg time is continuous and space discontinuous, while Einstein postulates discontinuous time—time is relative to the velocity of moving bodies in relation to the speed of light—while his universe closed upon itself presupposes continuous space; yet his space-time continuum, whereby space and time are relative to speed and each other, should introduce time's discontinuity into space. The Zenonian paradoxes reappear in modern form. Precisely because space and time exhibit such contrary characterizations, the ancients considered prime matter, the principle of individuality which makes something "here and now" as opposed to "there and then," to be unintelligible, non-being, and, insofar as it cannot be grasped by a finite mind, infinite.⁵

A similar paradox regards contingency. Unless there were necessity, contingency could not be affirmed; there would be no order in respect to which chance might be recognized. All thought presupposes something necessary or absolute and something contingent. In every true judgment about any reality, historical or otherwise, the judgment implies a certain necessity: this state of affairs is *de facto* true and cannot be otherwise. As Aristotle wrote, "What is (*to on*) must be when it is, and what is not (*to me on*) must not be when it is not" (*De Interpretatione* 9, 19a 25). Yet any finite reality so affirmed, insofar as it is not identical with infinite Being, is contingent, not possessing its necessity in itself. Present historiography seems intent on emphasizing contingency over necessity. On account of O'Malley's stress upon the uniqueness of every person, event, and document of the past, nominalism or radical existentialism threatens to slip into his philosophy of history. His statement about man being unable to escape from his freedom to create the future recalls Sartre's

in *ibid.*, 3:721–30; Georg Iggers, "Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995): 129–52.

⁵ John McDermott, S.J., "Why Matter Matters," *Proceedings of the Sixty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the Jesuit Philosophical Association* (2006): 19–47.

phrase about man as “condemned to be free.” Precisely because there is no determinism, each individual acts as moral legislator for himself, who has to create himself and his values; indeed, since man confers value by his choice, he is “unable ever to choose the worse.”⁶ Yet, despite his emphasis on human freedom, O’Malley also speaks of man’s freedom as culturally and historically conditioned; indeed he argues that Vatican II can only be understood in the wider cultural context of its times (*Traditions and Transitions*, 77, 81, 125; *What Happened*, 3–8), and, as we shall observe, he stresses the symbiotic relation between Vatican II and the world. He has to maintain that balance; otherwise historiography would be impossible: reality would be reduced to a Heraclitean or Humean flux from which no abstract universals can emerge. Then all human thought, which relies upon abstract concepts, would be disqualified a priori.

The Hermeneutical Option

While O’Malley perceptively notices that continuity and discontinuity are everywhere to be found in history, he surprisingly rejects the usual Catholic emphasis on continuity (*Traditions and Transitions*, 15–16, 34–36, 47–51, 57–59, 68–73, 79, 174; *What Happened*, 34). He prefers to stand with modern historians. “Historians have a bias toward emphasizing a discontinuity that is not always verified to the degree they imply to the unwary. . . . It is my persuasion, nonetheless, that Catholics have an inbred tendency to emphasize the continuities in their tradition . . . that blinds them to important discontinuities and thus beclouds their vision of both past and present” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 174). This choice will have consequences for his interpretation of historical entities, especially the Church, which stands in the middle of history:

An institution or an idea could have developed otherwise, for it is the product of human and contingent causes. To reply that providence ordained such a development simply removes the institution or idea from the area of human examination and hence silences both the historian and the theologian. If some given historical reality *could* have developed otherwise, and if we are still human agents operating in *human* history, we are free to change and even to reverse the direction of that reality if we so choose. What I am talking about, of course, is revolution, a term which historians use to describe certain phenomena which have occurred in the Church but which ecclesiastical documents never employ except in a pejorative sense. (*Traditions and Transitions*, 78–79)

⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Meuthen, 1948), 19–22, 25–27, 60.

On Freedom and Necessity

The basis for O'Malley's option to depart from the usual Catholic interpretation seems to lie in the role assigned to human freedom with its inherent contingency. This is a philosophical preference, not otherwise grounded, which determines the trajectory of his subsequent hermeneutics. At this point, therefore, substantial questions may be raised. We already noted that necessity and contingency stand in a polar tension. One pole cannot be thought without the other. Furthermore we have elsewhere pointed out that this tension accords with many other tensions inherent in human thought which provide the epistemological and ontological presuppositions for human freedom. In order to make choices, human beings must be able to abstract themselves intellectually from the immediacy of experience and recognize various possibilities of action. Yet their intellectual abstractions and the necessary laws of thought do not exhaust reality; otherwise reality would be determined implacably by the laws of thought. In history many interpretations of human freedom have been proposed, for example, independence, doing what one feels like, following reason, indifference (mutual causality of intellect and will), and choosing the good. None has proven adequate by itself. Ultimately there can be no freedom without divine omnipotence as its condition of possibility. Only God can ground the absolute demand of love which overcomes the hesitation beyond which finite rational reasons for a possible choice cannot lead. For finite, that is, relative, reasons cannot ground an absolute commitment. Hence the moral necessity experienced in the demand for self-sacrificial love reveals God's presence in history. He alone can summon man to the apparent non-being of death; his appeal alone relativizes all the attractions of a finite universe; he alone is strong enough to conquer death by sharing his life of love. Indeed, insofar as there is no history without human free acts, there is no history without God's omnipotence, the necessary condition of human freedom. Consequently, while contingency and the necessity of thought can be played off against each other—neither pole can be reduced to the other—human freedom and the “necessity” of divine providence coincide in the mystery of love.⁷

Since God's presence constitutes history, there is no reason why he cannot intervene decisively and definitively in history. The Christian faith affirms that he did so in his Son's Incarnation. No divine revelation in history can surpass the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and Jesus entrusted himself to the Church, which he established. The gift of his Spirit

⁷ McDermott, “Faith, Reason, and Freedom,” esp. 327–31, and “The Mystery of Freedom,” *Lateranum* 74 (2008): 493–542.

ensures that Jesus' revelation will be preserved throughout history: "He will teach you all things and remind you of all that I said to you" (Jn 14:26). Were revelation's fullness not preserved, the Father's plan of salvation would be frustrated and the Church could not mediate Christ's absolute demand for faith and adherence. That would undercut the total dedication which love demands. But the Church has always maintained that Christ remains present in his ecclesial Body through Holy Scripture illumined by the Holy Spirit and in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Although the full revelation and communication of God's love occurred once and for all in the past, Christ remains constantly active and present in the Church. Hence restrictions which O'Malley imposes upon our knowledge of the past are not ultimate. "We realize that we shall never fully appropriate any past reality in its totality and on its own terms. No insight will perfectly exhaust the data's intelligibility, most especially if that 'data' is God's self-communication in revelation. Any authenticity is at least somewhat partial and incomplete" (*Traditions and Transitions*, 79). But God does not reveal himself by halves. His love is fully incarnate in Jesus. Certainly no human mind can exhaust the infinite mystery of God's being, which is Trinitarian love. Nonetheless his historical revelation must have an intelligible structure and content if it was and is addressed to human freedom. Otherwise St. Paul would never have prayed for the Ephesians that "Christ dwell through faith in your hearts, in order that, rooted and grounded in love, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breath and length and height and depth and to know Christ's love surpassing knowledge, in order that you might be filled unto all God's fullness" (Eph 3:17-19). Not everything in history, therefore, must be revisable. Consequently O'Malley's affirmation of the mutability of all historical institutions must be restricted. While some aspects of the Church's institution are subject to change, for example, the College of Cardinals and congregations of the Roman Curia, other aspects constitute the Church's essential structure and are immutable. The ecumenical councils Lateran IV (DS 811), Florence (DS 1307-8), Trent (DS 1767-70, 1772-74, 1776-78), and Vatican I (DS 3059-64) defined the Church's sacerdotal hierarchy as essential to her structure and governance. Moreover the Church has also defined and regulated her sacraments, which were instituted by Christ as means necessary for salvation, at Lateran IV (DS 802, 812), Constance (DS 1198-99), Florence (DS 1310-28), Trent (DS 1543-43, 1601-1816). In all of this she was only confirming her belief and practice from the time of the Apostles.⁸

⁸ In handling the problem of the historical development of ecclesial structures, Karl Rahner, S.J., "Über den Begriff des 'Jus Divinum' im katholischen Verständnis," *Schriften zur Theologie*, V (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1962), 249-77, and *Grundkurs des*

The Council's Hermeneutic: The Primacy of Style

O'Malley's preference for contingency and incompleteness gives him the hermeneutical key unlocking the meaning of Vatican II. As he admits, "The Council is not easy to interpret" (*Traditions and Transitions*, 182). He finds the Council's documents verbose, boring, vague, hard to interpret, indeterminate, unclear, open to diverse interpretations, "full of compromise and ambiguity" (*Traditions and Transitions*, 26, 28, 45, 112–14, 116–17, 176; *What Happened*, 309). They were seeking to reconcile opposing viewpoints; indeed opposed understandings of history—the historical and the unhistorical classicist—are both found in them (*Traditions and Transitions*, 26, 66, 116, 122–23). Lamentably Vatican II does not offer much help on how *aggiornamento* with its fundamental question of "the relationship of the past to the present" occurs (*Traditions and Transitions*, 62, 66). "The Council heads off in a new direction often without indication that an older direction has been abandoned, without much indication even of what that other direction was. In other words, explicit redefinition of what was good and bad . . . had to be done by 'experts' outside the Council" (*Traditions and Transitions*, 113, 178). "The unclari- ties, the hesitations, the qualifications, the ambivalences that mark the documents reflect the huge committee in which they were hammered out. They were the price paid to obtain consensus" (*Traditions and Transitions*, 116). Faced with such a multiplicity of opinions seeking to be acknowledged and the confusing compromises of the official texts, O'Malley seeks a tool to help make unitary sense of the Council. He finds it in the primacy of style.

"Style is the ultimate expression of hermeneutical meaning. It does not adorn meaning but is meaning. It is a hermeneutical key par excellence" (*What Happened*, 49, 306). This echoes Marshall McLuhan's catchword from the 1960s: the medium is the message.⁹ "One might hesitate to apply here the axiom that the medium was the message, but I must say that I continue to be surprised at how little study has been directed to the rhetoric of the Council. . . . If the style is the man, can we not assume,

Glaubens (Freiburg: Herder, 1976), 320–21, allows for a change of "forms" insofar as they all correspond to the Church's essential nature and for historical decisions by ecclesial authorities that become irreversible in the decision. While I am more inclined than Rahner to see the "decisions" as "recognitions" of the implications of the Church's basic sacramental structure (e.g., as the meaning of "sacrament" became clearer, its limitation to seven became obvious), even Rahner acknowledges that the Church as perpetuating "God's historically irreversible promise of Himself" given in Christ must have a historically irreversible structure.

⁹ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 2nd ed. (New York: North American, 1964), 23–25 and throughout.

at least for the sake of discussion, that to some extent the style is the Council—and then, by extension, that the style is the Church?” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 26). Later, in describing the Council’s new *formamentis*, he answers his previous question decisively: “‘The style is the man’—the style is the Council.” Hence “we can not rightly interpret what the Council was struggling to say to us unless we take into account the medium in which it conveyed its message.” In short, “a style choice is an identity choice, a personality choice, a choice in this instance about the kind of institution the council wanted the church to be” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 176–78; *What Happened*, 268, 305). Unlike Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus*, which mocked the equation of man with his clothes, O’Malley takes seriously the equation of style and meaning. The Council “teaches by means of its style” (*What Happened*, 49). Everything then depends upon his evaluation of the Council’s style.

Contrary to all previous ecumenical councils, which considered themselves juridical-legislative bodies, Vatican II issued no canons, no anathemas, and no definitions. Neither did it employ Scholastic dialectics with its abstract, impersonal, ahistorical terminology. Whereas “dialectics is the art of proving a point, of winning an argument, and of proving your opponent wrong,” the Council’s “soft rhetoric,” recalling the epideictic, or panegyric, style of the Church Fathers, seeks to persuade instead of coerce. “It teaches, but not so much by way of magisterial pronouncement as by suggestion, insinuation, and example.” The documents are “pastoral” in tone, upholding ideals. “‘Pastoral’ is itself a soft word, a euphemism that obscures the significant shift in values and in the styles of relationships that the documents promoted.” Their vocabulary favors words of reconciliation, cooperation, reciprocity, collegiality, humility, equality, service, development, interiority, and holiness. “Genre together with its appropriate vocabulary also imbues Vatican II with a coherence lacking in previous councils. The enactments of councils before Vatican II have been a collection of discrete units, a collection of enactments, which on the surface have little connection with one another.” Only through its style can one arrive at “the spirit” of the Council (*What Happened*, 43–52, 80, 306–8, 309–10; *Traditions and Transitions*, 23, 26–27, 177–80, 305–10).

By emphasizing style as the hermeneutic key, O’Malley fits the Council into the modern worldview of historicism. It is concerned primarily not with truth, but with persuasion in the midst of pluralism. So he considers *Gaudium et Spes* “the document most distinctive of the council and the one perhaps most revelatory of the council’s meaning.” For it opened the Church to dialogue with the modern world; “the church assumes a servant role vis-à-vis the world. The relationship is reciprocal:

the world helps the church in being true to itself—an unprecedented stance for an ecclesiastical document” (*What Happened*, 158, 233–34, 268).¹⁰ This completes the circularity of O’Malley’s argument. Because the Council’s style encourages openness to the world, the world’s historical consciousness becomes the principal hermeneutical key for interpreting the Council’s documents. The Council’s alleged aim of overcoming “cultural isolation” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 14–15, 25, 109) allows the world’s hermeneutical standards to interpret the Council. Historical consciousness was allegedly mediated to the bishops by the theologians present at the Council; thus the Council is said to have rested upon modern philosophies of history. Hence there emerges a “symbiotic relationship” between Church and world whereby cultural developments “have had more profound influences on the Church than most self-conscious decisions taken within the Church.” Thus the option to use historical consciousness is justified by the Council’s style. As a result the Council did not intend to say the last word but envisioned a Church “open to the future” with an “open-ended agenda.” The Church’s tradition is dynamic and is to be interpreted “creatively” in many traditions “always relative to the actual needs of those to whom it is addressed.” “By admitting the change-principle, the council implicitly admitted the open-ended character of its own pronouncements.” Its documents “were not an end point but a starting point.” Thus the Council’s “decisions take on a life of their own” insofar as they have to be “received” by the culture and in the process “undergo significant changes.” Change becomes “the precondition for the authenticity” of the Church’s identity (*Traditions and Transitions*, 28, 42–43, 80–81, 83, 123–24, 169, 185–86; *What Happened*, 50–51, 228). This allows the Council to be interpreted by its consequences. Despite the ambiguities and compromises in the documents, already in 1971 O’Malley wrote: “Today, some years after the close of the Council, a minimalist interpretation of Vatican II’s ‘accommodation to the times’ no longer seems possible, no matter what the intentions of the Council fathers were” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 47–48).

Unfortunately the notion of “style” can be as vague as that of “spirit,” as in “spirit of Vatican II.” O’Malley admits that “the protagonists [were] perhaps not always realizing the profound implications of what was at stake” in the battles over style and vocabulary (*What Happened*, 11–12). “Vatican II evidences a strong sense of continuity with the past and a desire to remain true to it.” The Council Fathers “consistently described *aggiornamento* in

¹⁰ Earlier O’Malley considered *Lumen Gentium* “the centerpiece of the Council . . . without doubt.” To it *Gaudium et Spes* adds “a long and extremely important codicil” (*Tradition and Transitions*, 24, 176).

terms of adjustment or accommodation,” and “at every critical juncture” the relationship of present to past “was alluded to, usually in the form of an assurance that no substantial change was being made in the patrimony of the past.” Leaders of the majority “argued that their positions were more conservative than those of the conservatives because they were retrievals of traditions fundamental and ancient.” Indeed, in the face of the mass media’s highlighting of innovation they “generally tried to minimize the novelty of some of their positions by insisting on their continuity with tradition” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 48, 60, 63, 66, 159; *What Happened*, 114, 196, 214, 292). Ultimately it is in the *ressourcement* movement calling for a return to biblical and patristic sources that O’Malley locates the basis for the Council’s most radical changes, more radical even than his interpretation of *aggiornamento* (*What Happened*, 300–5). Furthermore, at the Council consensus was sought for and achieved, as its documents garnered the approval of vast majorities. O’Malley admits that Paul VI, who was cautious by nature and considered it his role to protect orthodoxy, sought unanimity and intervened numerous times to win the support of the minority, usually with success; both he and John XXIII insisted that the Council should and did remain faithful to the traditional faith of the Church. Indeed while propounding his radical interpretation of *aggiornamento*, O’Malley confesses, “It can be questioned, in fact, just how clearly some of the fathers understood what they had wrought and now had to communicate to constituencies that understood less than they did” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 116; *What Happened*, 95, 107, 172–73, 242–45).

If a revolution in the Church’s self-understanding emerged at the Council, it is hard to explain how it occurred. Why did the vast majority of aged bishops who as young men “had been indoctrinated by the [manualist] textbooks” (*What Happened*, 290), some of whom had suffered persecution or material deprivation for the sake of the traditional faith, suddenly adhere to a revolutionary program? It seems unlikely that the conciliar Fathers were stupid, ignorant of what they were doing, or hypocritically misled by their leaders or theological *periti*. How, in short, does O’Malley then justify his discovery of “a new ecclesiological paradigm” in Vatican II, even though “the Council never unambiguously articulated that paradigm”? (*Traditions and Transitions*, 107) He does not appeal much to the content of specific documents, for he admits that the conciliar texts can be interpreted to undergird almost any theological position. He explicitly excludes a “proof-texting” approach to the Council. Instead he appeals to the Council’s style and “*sensus plenior*—a ‘fuller meaning’—that transcends original intent” as well as “the sum of the Council’s documents” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 32, 186; *What Happened*, 12). Repeatedly

his exegesis employs the words “implicit,” “implication,” and “implies” when he cannot find exact statements to bolster his interpretation (e.g., *Traditions and Transitions*, 26, 27, 65, 107, 110, 113; *What Happened*, 39, 44, 46, 50, 144, 245, 269, 307, 310). He even relies upon the argument from silence: for example, “Although in the documents of Vatican II the hierarchical character of the church is repeatedly stressed and the prerogatives of the pope reiterated almost obsessively, the church is never described as a monarchy or the members of the church as subjects—a significant departure from previous practice” (*What Happened*, 48–49; cf. also 145–46, 245–46, 252–53).¹¹ Since from silence nothing follows and “implications” can be very vague, this method obviously evokes creative reading. Thereby O’Malley causes the suspicion to arise that he sits outside the Council as one of the “experts” telling its participants what they actually meant. Moreover his appeal to this *sensus plenior* is bewildering. The term is primarily applied to inspired biblical writings to indicate that God can introduce into the text a meaning not explicitly intended by the human author.¹² But the appeal contradicts O’Malley’s professed historical method, which “desacralizes” and “deprovidentializes” history, considering it a human phenomenon whose contingent choices are entirely reversible (*Traditions and Transitions*, 74–79). Is *sensus plenior* a *deus ex machina* devised to save O’Malley’s method from itself or does it reflect his Christian awareness that there is a divine governance of the Church, an overriding sense of history, and a God who alone knows, judges, and guides the intentions and acts of men? “The king’s heart is a steam of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He will” (Prov 21:1).

Epistemological relativism quickly undermines itself. If a text allows many meanings, if its meanings are open-ended, and if present interpretations change the past, by what standards can O’Malley chastise Church leaders who allegedly “short-circuit the dialogic style that seems an important part of the message of the Council” and introduce “a level of dysfunction in the institution destined to beget even further dysfunction” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 184)? The future to which O’Malley’s interpretation is open has not yet arrived. How can he vindicate his interpretation as

¹¹ Actually O’Malley does not adduce any evidence of the use of “monarchy” in magisterial documents; I do not know of any, and the word is not listed in the index to Denzinger-Schönmetzer. While the word is found in ecclesiological manuals, to equate the manuals with the Magisterium is excessive.

¹² Wilfred Harrington, O.P., “Senses of Scripture,” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph Komonchak et al. (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1987), 945–47. Harrington claims already in 1987 that “the fuller sense theory had a close connection with a neo-scholastic theory of scriptural inspiration which is now abandoned.”

superior to that of Giovanni Montini, Karol Wojtyła, and Joseph Ratzinger, who were actively engaged in the Council as pope, archbishop, and peritus, and claimed to implement its decrees and intentions? Much as O'Malley dislikes the role played by Paul VI in the Council (*What Happened*, 107–8, 181–85, 201, 224–26, 238, 240–46, 252–53, 280, 284–85, 287, 293–94), there is no doubt that as bishop of Rome he exercised the principal authority in the Council; without his approval the Council's decrees would be null. If Paul VI's interpretation of the documents he signed is not accurate, whose interpretation outranks his? Did the post-conciliar development of episcopal collegiality frustrate the bishops' wishes or O'Malley's desires? Finally, O'Malley's method must admit that his interpretation is always subject to revision. Indeed Joseph Ratzinger ten years after Vatican II offered an almost diametrically opposed interpretation:

An interpretation of the Council that understands its dogmatic texts as mere preludes to a still unattained conciliar spirit, that regards the whole as just a preparation for *Gaudium et Spes*, and that looks upon the latter text as just the beginning of an unswerving course toward an ever greater union with what is called progress—such an interpretation is not only contrary to what the Council Fathers intended and meant, it has been reduced *ad absurdum* by the course of events. Where the spirit of the Council is turned against the word of the Council and is vaguely regarded as a distillation from the development that evolved from the 'Pastoral Constitution,' this spirit becomes a specter and leads to meaninglessness. The upheavals caused by such a concept are so obvious that their existence cannot be seriously disputed. . . . [T]he progress of the Church cannot consist in a belated embrace of the modern world—the theology of Latin America has made that all too clear to us and has demonstrated thereby the rightness of its cry for liberation. . . . [W]e must interpret Vatican Council II as a whole and. . . our interpretation must be oriented toward its central theological texts. . . . [O]nly the whole in its proper orientation is truly the spirit of the Council.¹³

Which interpretation is to be preferred? Let us see whither O'Malley's method leads.

¹³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, trans. M. McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 390. Cf. also Avery Dulles, S.J., "Nature, Mission, and Structure of the Church," in *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*, ed. Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (New York: Oxford, 2008), 25–26, who also rejects the thesis propounded by O'Malley, G. Baum, R. McBrien, and the Lutheran G. Lindbeck that Vatican II introduced a revolution into the Church's self-understanding.

Omissions, Oversights, and Errors

On Content, Style, and Ecclesiology

Although for O'Malley the basic change initiated by Vatican II rested upon its implicit adoption of modern philosophies of history stressing discontinuities resultant from human freedom, he leaves rather vague how this influence entered the Council; he seems largely to attribute it to *periti* open to historical consciousness (*Traditions and Transitions*, 159). Allegedly the Council's intellectual debate pitted those open to a modern approach to historical reality against those holding a "classical" mentality opposed to modernity and generally seeking to retain the power and authority of "the center." Unfortunately he never spells out the philosophies of history or examines their ultimate metaphysical foundation. His characterization of the debates hardly does justice to the underlying theological and philosophical issues. While sensitive to the changing needs of the Church and world, leading theologians generally try to think the faith systematically, that is, to make a presentation of the Church's faith in divine revelation coherent with certain initial principles rationally explicated. Within a system they have reasons for the positions which they adopt. At Vatican II almost all the *periti* were trained in Thomism. It provided a common structure and language. It also allowed the implications of theological positions to be understood quickly. But not all Thomists were of one mind. Tensions exist in the Angelic Doctor's thought because he sought to produce a synthesis, a unity in diversity, not only of faith and reason but also of Aristotle and the neo-Platonic tradition coming through Augustine and Dionysius. These tensions allow Thomas's thought to be interpreted in diverse ways. Both sides in the conciliar debates took their positions and fought their battles based on theological and philosophical presuppositions. Ultimately truth and fidelity to Christ's revelation were at stake.

Elsewhere we have sought to delineate at length two broad interpretations of Thomism, which in our opinion helped define the theological issues addressed at Vatican II. The more Aristotelian approach stresses the validity of the fundamental concept of being, which allows all realities to be conceptualized in universals and clearly distinguished from each other. Consequently revelation is understood by this conceptualist Thomism primarily in terms of divinely revealed propositions to be believed on the authority of Christ and his Church. Since revealed propositions are supernatural, surpassing the human mind's capacity to ascertain directly their truth, they can only be accepted from God and are not subject to human revision. This approach obviously insists upon continuity with

tradition. The more neo-Platonic approach insists that truth is attained primarily in judgment, of which the concept is only a part. Judgment involves a dynamic existential synthesis whose movement assumes the concept while surpassing it. Its ultimate term is nothing finite, but the infinite God, who supplies the final attraction for every spiritual act. Since the immediate vision of God is understood by Thomists to be supernatural, there is implicit in every spiritual act of human nature a desire for a supernatural object. Faith consequently involves a "personal" relation with God, mediated historically by Christ and the Church, but it is no longer tied primarily to propositional formulations. Indeed, based on one's experience of God, which can never be fully conceptualized, it is possible to reformulate the basic truths of faith. Clearly this view, generally designated "transcendental Thomism," allows more readily for discontinuity in tradition and dogmatic development, while its concern for adaptation seeks to make the truth of faith more accessible to people living in the modern world. The theological consequences of that perspectival shift from conceptualist Thomism to transcendental Thomism can be immense, as subsequent history proved.

The most intelligent proponents of each systematic interpretation at and previous to Vatican II were aware of the need for balance.¹⁴ There is no

¹⁴ John McDermott, S.J., "Faith and Critical Reason in Theology," in *Excellence in Seminary Education*, ed. Stephen Minkiel et al. (Erie, PA: Gannon University, 1988), 68–93; "The Methodological Shift in Twentieth Century Thomism," *Seminarium* 31 (1991): 245–66; "The Context of *Veritatis Splendor*," in *Prophecy and Diplomacy*, ed. John Conley and Joseph Koterski (New York: Fordham, 1999), 115–72; "Spiritual Theology and Religious Life Before and After Vatican II," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 8:2 (2001): 51–75; "The Path and Progress of Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 13 (2006): 11–42; "Vatican II and the Theologians on the Church as Sacrament," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 71 (2006): 143–78; "*Lumen Gentium*: The Once and Future Constitution," in *After Forty Years: Vatican Council II's Diverse Legacy*, ed. Kenneth Whitehead (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's, 2007), 134–64. On various leading theologians: McDermott, *Love and Understanding* (Rome: Gregorian, 1983), 143–66; "De Lubac and Rousselot," *Gregorianum* 78 (1997): 741–58; "Rousselot et Maréchal," in *Au Point de Départ*, ed. P. Gilbert (Bruxelles: Lessius, 2000), 194–217; "Moral Systems: Maritain and Schüller Compared," *Divus Thomas* 46 (1985): 3–23; "Maritain on Two Infinities: God and Matter," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 28 (1988): 257–69; "Karl Rahner in Tradition: The One and the Many," *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* 3/2 (2007): 1–60; "Bernard Lonergan," in *Storia della Teologia: III Da Vitus Pichler a Henri de Lubac*, ed. R. Fisichella (Roma: Dehoniane, 1996), 751–64; "Tensions," 101–40. Cf. also Alberto Cozzi, *La Centralità di Cristo nella Teologia di L. Billot* (Milano: Glossa, 1999); Daniele Moretto, *Il Dinamismo intellettuale davanti al Mistero: La Questione del soprannaturale nel Percorso speculativo di J. Maréchal* (Milano: Glossa, 2001); Benedikt Ritzler, *Freiheit in der Umarmung des ewig Liebenden* (Bern: Lang, 2000); Raymond

thought without valid concepts, yet thought also requires judgments; essential and existential orders complement each other. Indeed, the fundamental sacramental structure of Christian revelation demands the presence of the infinite God revealing himself in and through finite intelligible structures. Thus the Church must maintain continuity in faith, which comes from without, that is, from preaching (Rom 10:14–17), while propagating the faith in a language intelligible to the world's current mentality.

Although such a schema contrasting these diverse interpretations of St. Thomas cannot do full justice to the complexity of the issues and personalities at Vatican II—many theologians had different nuances in their interpretation of Thomas and the Catholic faith—it at least provides an intellectual framework for a theological understanding of the Council. The Council's documents need not be interpreted as a confusing hodgepodge of compromises but as a serious intent to be faithful to Christ's revelation in the Catholic tradition, utilizing especially the thought of the Angelic Doctor. In any case the schema allows the student of the Council to identify the intellectual content of the documents which were hammered out after much debate and with great concern for precision in order that support from the greatest possible number of conciliar Fathers might be attained. Because O'Malley does not concern himself in detail with the Council's underlying theological visions, his chosen perspective apparently leads to overlooking or erroneously interpreting certain documents and events. Admittedly every historian must select details which he considers relevant to his interpretation, but there always hovers the risk that his philosophical stance narrows the perception of the details.¹⁵ That unfortunately seems to have happened in O'Malley's interpretation.

Apparently because he fails to identify basic theological visions at play in the Council, O'Malley has recourse to style as his hermeneutical key.

Dennehy, "Maritain's Theory of Subsistence," *The Thomist* 39 (1975): 543–73; Giovanni Rota, "Persona" e "Natura" nell'*Itinerario Speculativo di Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J. (1904–1984)* (Milan: Glossa, 1998); Patrick Burke, *Reinterpreting Rahner* (New York: Fordham, 2002).

¹⁵ In *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1993) O'Malley likewise tends to read the modern opposition between "spirit" and institution into St. Ignatius's day. He tends to bypass Jesuits' vowed obedience to the pope, otherwise strongly accentuated in other histories of St. Ignatius and the Society of Jesus, in favor of general service for the good of souls. Yet Yves Congar, O.P., *L'Église* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), 369–70, points out, "Ignatius seems to have created this expression 'hierarchical Church'. . . . There is an identity between what God demands and service in this Church, between discernment of spirits and the hierarchical Church's judgment." *The Spiritual Exercises* refer to "our mother, the hierarchical Church" (nn. 170, 352).

Then it is all the more surprising that he ignores some of the most obvious stylistic choices of the Council Fathers. Though the Council distinguished among dogmatic constitutions, pastoral constitutions, decrees, and declarations, O'Malley opines, "the distinction between decrees and declarations, no matter what it originally meant, has become meaningless" (*What Happened*, 3). That allows him to set aside the decrees *On the Mass* and *On the Catholic Eastern Churches* while accentuating the declarations *On Religious Liberty* and *On Non-Christian Religions*. But are not the dogmatic constitutions *On Divine Revelation* (*Dei Verbum*) and *On the Church* (*Lumen Gentium*) the central statements, indeed the documents which aroused the most heated debates and set the tone for the other documents? If, then, *Lumen Gentium's* chapter 3 on the hierarchy was the most closely scrutinized part of the text (*What Happened*, 208), would not the chapter's clear acceptance of Vatican I's definitions have provided a clue for the Council's intentions? This chapter is especially decisive in view of Paul VI's insertion of the *Nota Explicativa Previa*. As the previous quotation of Joseph Ratzinger indicates, the center of the Council is found in the dogmatic constitutions *Dei Verbum* and *Lumen Gentium*.

O'Malley's concentration on style instead of content might also lead to a major oversight even while interpreting *Lumen Gentium*. He understands the Council's ecclesiology in terms of "people of God," a model implying the primacy of horizontal relationships, and designates it *Lumen Gentium's* "favorite and characteristic description of the Church" (*Traditions and Transitions*, 65, 114, 117; *What Happened*, 11, 52, 78, 141, 174, 177–78, 253; cf. also 306–7). Actually, when questioned on this point, the Theological Committee, responsible for composing the final text of *Lumen Gentium*, explained that because it agreed with many Fathers that the Mystical Body "is more than an image and leads more deeply into the mystery of the Church," the paragraph on the Body of Christ was placed after the consideration of other Scriptural images. Among others, Karol Wojtyła, speaking for the Polish episcopate, maintained in the aula that "the mystical Body of Christ . . . is more than an image; for it determines the very nature of the Church under a Christological aspect and simultaneously under the aspect of the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Redemption."¹⁶ O'Malley's lack of attention to the Body of Christ prob-

¹⁶ Theological Committee's *Relatio*, in *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II* (Vatican: Vaticana, 1970–1978), III/1, 173; Karol Wojtyła in *Acta*, II/3, 857. On the importance of the Body of Christ ecclesiology, to which "People of God" came as a complement, cf. Yves Congar, O.P., "D'une 'ecclesiologie en gestation' à *Lumen Gentium* chap. I et II," in *Le Concile de Vatican II* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), 129–34; "*Lumen Gentium* no. 7, 'L'Église, Corps mystique du Christ'," vu au

ably let him interpret the original relation of the Apostles among themselves as based primarily on “direct personal fellowship. A certain egalitarianism was implied because of the implied recognition of the validity of a variety of charisms in a setting where charism was the foundational value” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 141). Did not Jesus choose the Twelve and grant Peter a preeminent role among them? Did not Paul insist on a hierarchical ordering in the Body of Christ to the charismatic but disjointed Corinthian church? (1 Cor 12:27–30; cf. also Eph 4:11–12). If all value depended upon charismatic gifts, why did Paul, who was filled with the Spirit, so often defend his authoritative apostolic calling? When O’Malley laments the Council’s failure to provide a clear reconciliation of the hierarchical Church of *Lumen Gentium*, §3 with the “people-of-God Church” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 114), he overlooks the role which the constitution assigns to the Body of Christ, an image which he later acknowledges to be used to express “one of the leitmotifs of the council, reconciliation between the vertical and horizontal dimensions in the church” (*What Happened*, 186).¹⁷ Moreover, in the New Testament “Body of Christ” is found much more often than “people of God” to describe the Church, doubtless because it highlights the definitive salvific novelty which Christ introduced beyond the Old Testament. The *peritus* A. Grillmeier, who helped compose the initial chapters of *Lumen Gentium*, notes that “people of God” denotes “not the crowd (*Schar*) of believers in opposition to the hierarchy, but the Church in her entirety.” The image was chosen to emphasize God’s election, continuity with the Old Testament, and the aspect of *communio* as well as to go beyond the juridical viewpoint in showing the development of God’s plan in history. But it is

terme de huit siècles d’histoire de la théologie du Corps mystique,” in *Le Concile de Vatican II*, 159–61. The Bologna-school anticipated O’Malley’s position with a bit more nuance: Alberto Melloni, “The Beginning of the Second Period: The Great Debate on the Church,” in *History of Vatican II*, 3:50, claims that the Council abandoned “the dominance of the image of the mystical body.” While the first schema, which presented the Church primarily as the Body of Christ, was balanced by other images, the Body of Christ remained central in later revisions. Even a quick look at the *Index Verborum cum Documentis Concilii Vaticani Secundi*, ed. Xavier Ochoa (Rome: Commentarium pro Religiosis, 1967), indicates the equal frequency of “Body of Christ” and “People of God,” with a slight advantage to the former.

¹⁷ Cf. Alois Grillmeier, S.J., “Dogmatische Konstitution über die Kirche: Kommentar zum I. Kapitel,” in *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler et al. (Freiburg: Herder, 1967–1968), 1:166–70, who also sees “Body of Christ” as reconciling both dimensions. Once in passing O’Malley recognized that both “Body of Christ” and “People of God” had replaced the image of the Lord’s field often employed by earlier councils (*Traditions and Transitions*, 62). But he failed to employ “Body of Christ” to shed light on the Council’s ecclesiology.

“insufficient of itself alone to comprehend the Church’s entire reality”; rather, quoting Y. Congar, Grillmeier holds that “the basic law of the Church can only be manifested in the terminology and theology of the ‘Body of Christ.’” Because “people of God” is subordinate to “Body of Christ,” the Church cannot be reduced to the Old Testament notion of the people of God.¹⁸

Also questionable is O’Malley’s contrast of the panegyric, persuasive style of the Fathers with scholastic juridical-legislative terminology to justify Vatican II’s “pastoral” approach. Did not the Fathers produce *Adversus Haereses*, *Contra Noetum*, *Contra Celsum*, *Adversus Praxeam*, *Adversus Arianos*, to name only a few of their polemical works against heretics and pagans? Did the Fathers not produce an immense polemical literature during the Gnostic, Arian, Pelagian, Nestorian, Monophysite, and Monotheletic controversies? Did they not compose the anathemas of the first eight ecumenical councils—not to mention countless provincial councils and synods—which O’Malley now finds so repugnant to Vatican II’s “pastoral” vision?

Furthermore, it boggles the mind that O’Malley should attribute to Vatican II’s documents “a coherence lacking in previous councils. The enactments of councils before Vatican II have been a collection of discrete units, a collection of enactments, which on the surface have little connection with one another” (*What Happened*, 51, 309–10). The Church Fathers knew their opponents well, and anyone acquainted with the controversies of the time must acknowledge that the creeds, definitions, and anathemas of Nicea, Constantinople I, Ephesus, Chalcedon, Constantinople II and III, and Nicea II hit the nails squarely on the head. Their proclamations were much more precise than Vatican II’s. “Coherence” must then refer only to “stylistic” coherence, which O’Malley prefers to conceptual coherence since he affirms Vatican II’s coherence “despite the compromises, ambiguities, misleading euphemisms, stylistic infelicities, and the hundreds of specific issues that abound in them and sometimes look like clutter” (*What Happened*, 309). Though content and style should cohere like form and matter—O’Malley protests against “the illegitimacy of separating style from content” (*What Happened*, 49)—Vatican II is apparently an exception. Then again, “style” is so vague that it can clothe an infinite variety of assertions. It can be “the ultimate expres-

¹⁸ Grillmeier, “Dogmatische Konstitution,” 1:176–78. Cf. also Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, trans. Henry Traub, Gerard Thormann, and Werner Barzel (New York: Paulist, 1966), 45–46; Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*,” in *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, ed. Stephan Horn and Vinzenz Pfinür, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 126–29.

sion of meaning” (*What Happened*, 49, 306) only after there has been a failure in understanding content.

Though the Council is said to have “sedulously avoided definition” (*Traditions and Transitions*, 179), not only did it often cite the definitions of previous councils as binding statements of faith but also, in the opinion of Yves Congar, the declaration of *Lumen Gentium*, §21 on the sacramentality of the episcopate “expresses, by a unanimous act of the extraordinary magisterium, the common doctrine of the ordinary and universal magisterium.” It resolved a long debated question. More importantly, despite the lack of “those declaratory formulas, repeated and solemn, that normally introduce a definition,” “the matter is of such great importance, and its part in the doctrine of the episcopate is so decisive that it proves difficult to admit that the council did not pronounce here a definitive judgment.” Though not strictly a “definition,” it is “sufficient because the proposed doctrine *imposes itself* as one on which the Catholic magisterium universally agrees.” Umberto Betti, another Council *peritus*, judges that the declarations of *Lumen Gentium*, §§14, 20, 21, which begin “the Holy Council teaches,” are “irrevocable” and of “eternal validity.”¹⁹ Though O’Malley admits that he simplifies issues to fit his limited narrative (*What Happened*, 312), a more careful recognition of the Council’s stylistic nuances might change some of his conclusions.

On Context and Sympathy

Despite O’Malley’s call to read documents in context (*What Happened*, 3, 12), his reading of neo-scholasticism lacks awareness of its historical context. He judges that its manuals “stood apart in almost determined isolation not only from other forms of contemporary scholarship but to a large extent even from Neo-Scholasticism itself.” Though *Aeterni Patris* called for a revival of Thomism in 1879, “it was not until after Vatican II that it had any real impact on the theological textbooks used in seminaries.” Younger theologians in Europe, he holds, rejected this “spiritually arid and overly intellectualized theology officially promoted by the church” (*What Happened*, 62–63, 76). Do theology professors intend to bore audiences and desiccate spirituality? Medieval and Baroque theologians composed long and complicated treatises with intricate, hair-sharp distinctions precisely because such theological points mattered a great deal to them, and they were supported by a vibrant spirituality that constructed magnificent cathedrals, produced prodigies of missionary

¹⁹ Yves Congar, O.P., “In luogo di conclusione,” in *La Chiesa del Vaticano II*, ed. Guilhaume Baraúna (Florence: Vallecchi, 1965), 1262–63; Umberto Betti, O.F.M., “Qualificazione teologica della Costituzione,” in *La Chiesa del Vaticano II*, 269–72.

endeavor, and nourished martyrs. To us effete postmoderns their texts appear cluttered with distinctions too intricate for consideration because we share neither their trust in intellect nor their vibrant spirituality. We demand “relevance” to stimulate or titillate us, but when relevance is preferred to truth, relevance soon becomes irrelevant. Nothing is more irrelevant than yesterday’s relevance. Reacting against the vague meanderings of idealistic theology or the banalities of rationalist theology, the youth of the latter nineteenth century were attracted to the precision and clarity of the scholastic revival.²⁰ Is it coincidence that today so many younger Catholics, disappointed by decades of faulty catechesis, are turning to Gilson and Maritain, Ott, Garrigou-Lagrange, and Pohle-Preuss? After transcendental theologians, epigones of Rousselot, Rahner, and Lonergan, produced reams of nebulous speculation about relying on personal experience to reformulate dogma and come to moral decisions, even if they are at variance with the Magisterium’s teaching, young believers are seeking clarity about the content of faith, reasons for belief, and moral codes in the face of an increasingly hostile secular world. One has to appreciate the cultural climate in which theologies are generated.

O’Malley’s judgment about the effect of *Aeterni Patris* must be limited to the thesis style of the manuals. For anyone who studies and compares the Suarezian and eclectic manuals common before *Aeterni Patris* with the Thomistic manuals after the encyclical must recognize the difference in content. The great theologian Louis Billot was forced by Leo XIII upon the Gregorian University and his brilliant Thomist manuals, though retaining some Suarezian positions of the Society of Jesus, soon influenced the entire Catholic theological world.²¹ Manuals provide an extremely efficient pedagogical tool to offer students the entire teaching of the Church on particular topics as proven from Scripture, tradition, and the Magisterium before they enter into speculative justifications of the thesis under consideration and resolve difficulties. Moreover, the manuals offer a schema whose controverted issues or deeper points a good teacher might develop in lectures. Even the great transcendental thinkers, Rousselot, Maréchal, Rahner, and Lonergan, composed their own manuals. Moreover, the conceptualist theology was very integrated into its culture, perhaps excessively so. O’Malley overlooks the article of J. Wicks on manualistic theol-

²⁰ Cf. Gerald McCool, S.J., *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Seabury, 1977), esp. 135–44.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 236–40, and my own reading. When I was teaching at the Gregorian, one of the older professors told me that former students of Billot informed him that Billot’s lectures often moved them to prayer. For the brilliance of Billot’s theology cf. Cozzi, *La Centralità di Cristo* (supra n. 14).

ogy, referred to in his footnotes. Wicks observes that the manuals “were children of their own time, the age of positivism.” As such they “showed an exemplary concern for relating revelation to history and faith to human rationality.” They also, he holds, kept theology in touch with the faith of the day and preserved the transcendence of supernatural revelation.²² In the latter half of the nineteenth century Newtonian physics and Kantian philosophy were enjoying their heyday. Both insisted on the universality of conceptually formulated laws and the primacy of facts. Yet Neo-Scholasticism, while accepting the validity of universal concepts, resisted the rationalist current of the day because it knew an infinite God and, especially for Thomists, a contingent existential order. Admittedly, as any intellectual system is developed, its weaknesses become ever more apparent and it requires multiple hair-splitting distinctions to shore itself up. Even before Fr. O’Malley’s day internal tensions were manifest in neo-scholasticism and it seemed out of touch with the relativism of modern physics and the philosophies of dynamism, evolution, and existentialism. But until Vatican II the system retained many defenders who saw that if the value of concepts was denied or relativized, thinking would be undercut and the Church’s dogmas reduced to transitory articulations of subjective experience. R. G. Collingwood, whom O’Malley cites (*Traditions and Transitions*, 67–69; *What Happened*, 37), wrote that a good historian must enter sympathetically into the worlds of values of those undergoing change and that such a task is very difficult, if not impossible.²³ In O’Malley’s case a failure to appreciate the values of the conceptualist theology has adversely affected his retelling of Vatican II’s story.

Lack of sympathy for conceptualist theologians may have led O’Malley into exaggeration. For example, he writes, “The fundamental error for which most of the Modernists were punished was their historical approach” (*What Happened*, 261). Actually the condemnations in *Lamentabili* and *Pascendi* (1907) did not attack historical research, but the philosophical and theological presuppositions employed by the Modernists. These errors included agnosticism, immanentism, and reliance on religious feeling as the norm of belief. By excluding God from historical interventions, the presuppositions lead to the separation of faith from history and, concretely, the distinctions of the Christ of history from the Christ of faith, the Church of history from the Church of faith, etc. (DS 3401–66,

²² Jared Wicks, S.J., “Theologies: Manualistic Tradition,” in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, ed. René Latourelle and Rino Fisichella (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 1102–5.

²³ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (1946; repr. New York: Oxford University, 1956), 213–31, 240–48, 302–8, 326–34.

3475–3500). Pius X was actually defending historical research as a means of attaining truth. If historical research was condemned, how did *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* and the Bollandists continued to publish excellent historical studies uninterrupted? Catholic historical research and writing, already strong before Modernism's condemnation, burgeoned after the alleged condemnation. Actually conceptualist theology relied on historical research to guarantee the veracity of Christ's message, its sole manner of ascertaining supernatural truths. But unlike "the modern philosophy of history," which excludes God from history and whose stress on discontinuity and contingency motivates O'Malley's call for "ecclesial transformation" (*Traditions and Transitions*, 73–81), Pius X, doubtless relying on his faith in the Incarnation, insisted that God can never be excluded from history, but can be known in and through it, and that historical truth is not a chimera but is really possible.

A similar lack of sympathy with the Holy Office results in a false interpretation of its difficulties with Teilhard de Chardin. It attributed to Teilhard grave philosophic and theological errors, opines O'Malley, "presumably related in one way or another to his theories about evolution and the expanding universe" (*What Happened*, 88). Actually the warning explicitly says, "Putting aside a judgment about matters pertaining to the positive sciences, in philosophical and theological material it is sufficiently clear that the previously mentioned works abound with such ambiguities, also even serious errors, that they offend Catholic doctrine."²⁴ His scientific theories are explicitly excluded. Any theologian reading Teilhard's works must recognize the obscurity or confusion about his understanding of the relations between nature and grace, matter and consciousness, freedom and necessity, the historical and the cosmic Christs. Even Teilhard's friend Henri de Lubac, who corrected many errors in *The Phenomenon of Man* and was commissioned by Jesuit superiors to write in Teilhard's defense, admitted that his writings contained many imprecisions and ambiguities. He was "not a theologian nor a philosopher, strictly speaking, but a mystic."²⁵

In a similarly critical vein O'Malley finds "ironic" that Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* led him "into a church that on the

²⁴ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 54 (1962), 526 (issued June 30, 1962).

²⁵ Henri de Lubac, S.J., *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, trans. René Hague (New York: Desclee, 1967), 84–91, 125, 183–84, 186–88, 192–93, 202–4, 214–15. It should also be remembered that Teilhard's difficulties were primarily with the Society of Jesus, whose censors long prohibited publication of his philosophical-theological writings. Only after his death were they published by lay friends. Cf. Mary and Ellen Lukas, *Teilhard: A Biography* (London: Collins, 1977), 52–57, 222, 226–27, 243–44, 251–59, 277.

official and unofficial level was denying that such evolution occurred" (*What Happened*, 77). In leaving friends, position, and his spiritual mother, was Newman so stupid or benighted as not to know the Church he was entering?²⁶ As proof O'Malley refers to Billot's publication in 1904 of *On the Immutability of Tradition against the Modern Heresy of Evolutionism*. Actually Billot's volume, published sixty years after Newman's conversion and twenty-five years after Newman's elevation to the cardinalate purple, serves more to refute O'Malley than to support him; it deserves some discussion. Billot recognized a "certain evolution" in the Church's belief as she went "in the process of time" from simple faith to clearer, more precise understanding. To refute heresy the Fathers developed a more exact, technical terminology. Anticipating Pope John's words at the opening of Vatican II, Billot saw the need of "distinguishing the ways of understanding and signifying from the realities understood and signified." He not only admitted that the Holy Spirit's charism was granted to the Church because "the full presentation of the complete teaching immediately from the beginning would scarcely have been connaturally possible" but he also recognized that heretics usually introduced their novelties cloaked in traditional language without preserving the reality intended by simple faith. On the occasion of heretical distortions, the Fathers arrived at a deeper "intimate penetration of the revealed truth." He even notes that some Fathers erred in their expressions as they sought to advance from the "state of simple faith" to correct "theological speculation." He quotes J. B. Franzelin, the nineteenth century's foremost Roman manualist, Aquinas, and Augustine, as authorities recognizing the same type of dogmatic progress.²⁷ This may not be O'Malley's understanding of dogmatic development, but, despite its flaws, it accords easily with Newman's views. If O'Malley had studied the great conceptualist theologians more sympathetically, he might have acquired greater insight

²⁶ In his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1878; repr. Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), 33, 36, but originally composed in 1845, Newman presupposes that Christian revelation consists of "a definite teaching from above" which in history manifests "real continuity of doctrine." Indeed, in his enumeration of the seven notes that distinguish genuine developments from corruptions, he mentions first "preservation of type," second "continuity of principles," and sixth "conservative action upon its past" while insisting on "power of assimilation," "anticipation of the future," and "chronic vigor" (*ibid.*, 177–207). Vatican I agrees with him in acknowledging "growth and vehement progress" in "understanding, knowledge, and wisdom" regarding the deposit of faith, while simultaneously insisting that the deposit be faithfully preserved *in suo dumtaxat genere, in eodem scilicet dogmate, eodem sensu eademque sententia* (DS 3020).

²⁷ Louis Billot, S.J., *De Immutabilitate Traditionis*, 4th ed. (Rome: Gregoriana, 1929), 34–78, esp. 34–39, 48–52, 62–65, 75.

into their project. Certainly Newman, Franzelin, and Billot manifested a more flexible notion of doctrinal development than O'Malley, who simply states, "Some doctrines taught by the church in the twentieth century, such as the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, were unknown as such in the church of the apostolic or patristic periods" (*What Happened*, 37).²⁸

Misreading Sources

Though on many points different theological interpretations can be defended, on the relation of Scripture and Tradition more than a difference of interpretation is involved. O'Malley misunderstands his sources. He asserts that H. Jedin's history of Trent "made clear that subsequent Catholic interpretation of Trent's few words on the subject, used in polemic against Protestants, had gone far beyond what Trent intended to say." Then he continues:

Other historical studies had noted that before the sixteenth century, "Scripture alone" was in some form, not quite Luther's, the traditional opinion, held even by Thomas Aquinas. A further problem with the [preliminary] schema [*De Fontibus Revelationis*] was its designation of Scripture and Tradition as *sources* of Revelation, whereas even Trent had made clear that the preaching of Christ and the Apostles was the source, transmitted in two ways—"in written books and in unwritten traditions." (*What Happened*, 146–47)

As proof of his position O'Malley cites Jedin, the Tridentine decree, and *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, especially a. 8, ad 2. These texts do not support him. The *Summa* text does not use the expression "Scripture alone." Rather, in discussing the use of authority in *sacra doctrina*, Thomas holds it necessary to "obey the authority of those to whom revelation occurred." Thus sacred doctrine "arguing from necessity, properly employs the authorities of the canonical Scripture; it employs the authorities of other teachers (*doctores*), as if arguing from proper [principles], but in a probable

²⁸ Cf. Xavier Le Bachelet, "Immaculée Conception," in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, ed. A. Vacant and E. Mangenot et al. (Paris: Letouzey, 1902–50), 7/1:871–1115 for a complete consideration of all the texts in favor of the doctrine; he even considers the doctrine implicitly revealed in Genesis 3:15 and Luke 1:28. The doctrine was very explicitly proposed in East and West by the Middle Ages, even if some, Aquinas among them, questioned it. Who can forget Hopkins's praise of Duns Scotus "who fired France for Mary without spot"? O'Malley might quibble in favor of his statement's correctness with his modifying "as such"; surely the doctrine was not believed with the precision later attained, but why does he deny continuity in faith, even if implicit? Bachelet makes clear, however, that by the Middle Ages the doctrine was explicit.

way (*probabiliter*). For our faith relies on the revelation made to the Apostles and Prophets, who wrote the canonical books, not on any possible revelation made to other teachers.” “Authorities” here refers primarily to people of authority, not to books, and does not limit their received revelation to canonical Scripture. In the article’s corpus Thomas maintains that sacred doctrine does not have to prove its first principles, “the articles of faith.”²⁹ Later texts make clear that the articles of faith are given in creeds and other conciliar pronouncements binding for faith. He not only cites conciliar statements as authoritative in his explanations (e.g., *ST* I, q. 29, a. 3; q. 30, a. 1; q. 31, a. 1; III, q. 2, a. 1 and ad 1; q. 2, a. 3, q. 2, a. 6; q. 4, a. 3) but also he explicitly demands that faith affirm the articles of faith proposed by the Church (*ST* II–II, q. 5, a. 3). Since heresy corrupts the faith, the pope, alone or in an ecumenical council, can authoritatively determine what belongs to the faith (*ST* I, q. 32, a. 4; q. 36, a. 2, ad 2; II–II, q. 1, a. 10; q. 11, aa. 1–4).³⁰ As Y. Congar wrote, “No Catholic can uphold a principle of *Scriptura sola*. The facts, moreover, do not allow it.” At Trent, Jedin noted, “[T]he Lutheran principle of ‘the Bible alone’ eliminated [Tradition] as a source of revelation” and was decisively rejected by the Council Fathers. After the appearance of Jedin’s volume, J. Geiselmann ignited a debate, arguing that the substitution of “in written books and unwritten traditions” for a previous “partially (*partim*) in written books and partially (*partim*) in unwritten traditions” indicated that Trent meant to recognize a single source of gospel truth transmitted in two manners. H. Lennerz rebutted his contention, showing that the majority of the Fathers at Trent considered Tradition a source alongside Scripture and intended that in their teaching. Other commentators came to a middle position, agreeing with Lennerz’s historical proof but recognizing that Geiselmann’s conclusion was legitimate since the change, made for an unknown reason, did not oblige the Church to acknowledge two separate sources of revelation. Actually, before Lennerz, Jedin had written, “There can be no doubt that though the majority of the theologians of Trent may

²⁹ In the first *quaestio* Thomas uses *sacra doctrina* in a double sense: doctrine taught and the act of teaching. Thus sacred doctrine relies on human authorities who received revelation to transmit it and on “articles of faith.” Cf. Gerald Van Ackern, S.J., *Sacra Doctrina* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1952), 78–117, esp. 107–17.

³⁰ Thomas’s appeal to ecclesial authorities for the content of faith is not new. It is obvious in the *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, cc. 24–25. For a good example of how dogma serves as the norm for Scripture’s interpretation, even against the apparent literal sense, cf. *ST* I, q. 31, aa. 2 and 4. Cf. also Thomas Prügl, “Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture,” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2005), 405–6, for Thomas’s exegesis of Scripture within the norm of tradition.

not have approved the formula *partim-partim*, they approved the thing itself, that is, the statement that dogmatic tradition was a channel of revelation which supplemented the Scriptures.”³¹ Here O’Malley is caught on the horns of a dilemma: if he wishes to interpret Trent as holding for a single source of revelation, he has to “proof-text,” upholding a minimalist interpretation which depends upon a lacuna, that is, the removal of a phrase which actually reflected the intention of the Council Fathers; if, to the contrary, he wishes to interpret the “spirit” of Trent and the intention of the Fathers, he has to affirm two sources of revelation and contradict his method for interpreting Vatican II.

Regressive Interpretations

Given O’Malley’s hermeneutic exalting the “spirit of Vatican II,” the reader must be wary lest post-conciliar issues distort the interpretations of conciliar texts. For example, the three ecclesiological schemata culminating in *Lumen Gentium* are said to “indicate in different ways that even the non-baptized who sincerely follow their consciences are somehow joined to the church and saved” (*What Happened*, 175). That position not only contradicts previous statements of Scripture and the Church on the necessity of faith and baptism for salvation (e.g., Jn 3:5; Mk 16:16; Heb 11:6; Rom 10:9–17), indeed on the necessity of entering the Church for salvation (e.g., DS 802; *Lumen Gentium*, §14) but also is not found in *Lumen Gentium* or any other document. Though O’Malley makes reference to *Lumen Gentium*, §8, which affirms that “many elements of sanctification and truth are found outside [the Church’s] visible bounds,” he allows that the statement “can be interpreted as substantially the same teaching as in the Feeney case.” What then can be the foundation for O’Malley’s assurance on the salvation of the non-baptized? His phrasing recalls *Lumen Gentium*, §16, a text often cited by K. Rahner to prove his

³¹ Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent: vol. 2*, trans. Ernest Graf (London: Nelson, 1961; German original 1957), 58–62, 73–75; Josef Geiselmann, *The Meaning of Tradition*, trans. W. O’Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966); Heinrich Lennerz, S.J., “Scriptura Sola,” *Gregorianum* 40 (1959): 39–53; Lennerz, “Sine Scripta Traditione,” *Gregorianum* 40: 624–35; Lennerz, “Scriptura et Traditio,” *Gregorianum* 42 (1961): 517–22. For the mediating position cf. Johannes Beumer, S.J., “Das katholische Traditionsprinzip in seiner heute neu erkannten Problematik,” *Scholastik* 36 (1961): 217–40; Beumer, *Die mündliche Überlieferung als Glaubensquelle* (Freiburg: Herder, 1962), 81–84; Yves Congar, O.P., *La Tradition et les traditions* (Paris: Fayard, 1960), 214–18; Gabriel Moran, F.C.S., *Scripture and Tradition* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963); Joseph Ratzinger (with Karl Rahner), *Revelation and Tradition*, trans. W. O’Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 32–37, 50–66.

contention that the Council affirmed salvation outside the Church. O'Malley might have been misled by a widespread acceptance of that position, but a careful examination of the text refutes Rahner's interpretation.³² Let us follow its development.

Lumen Gentium, §13 ends with the statement: "Therefore all men are called to this catholic unity of the People of God, which prefigures and promotes universal peace, and in various ways they belong to it or are ordained to it, as Catholic faithful or other believers in Christ or finally all men everywhere who are called to salvation by God's grace." The text concerns the orientation of various groups to the Church; it does not treat the question of the salvation of those outside the visible Church. *Lumen Gentium*, §14 starts with a statement of principle: "The Church is necessary for salvation," as are faith and baptism. "Hence those men could not be saved who, though knowing that the Church was founded as necessary by God through Jesus Christ, nonetheless would not want to enter it or persevere in it." Thereafter it considers explicit members and catechumens; the latter are joined to her by an explicit desire. *Lumen Gentium*, §15 treats the cases of various Christians who "are joined in some real way to us" by the "gifts, graces, and sanctifying power" of the Holy Spirit who moves them to Catholic unity. *Lumen Gentium*, §16 begins, "Finally those who have not yet accepted the Gospel are ordered to the People of God by various considerations (*rationibus*). After mentioning Jews and Moslems, the chapter turns to those "who seek the unknown God in shadows and images." God is not far from them since "He gives to all life, inspiration, and all things (cf. Acts 17:25–28) and the Savior wants all men to be saved (cf. 1 Tim 2:4)." Then come the crucial sentences:

For those can attain eternal salvation who are without fault ignorant of Christ's Gospel and Church, but seek God with a sincere heart and, under grace's influence, try by works to fulfill His will made known through the demand of conscience. Nor does divine Providence deny helps necessary for salvation to those who without fault have not yet arrived at explicit knowledge of God and strive with divine grace to lead a good life. For whatever goodness or truth is found among them the Church considers as a preparation for the Gospel and a gift from Him who illuminates every man in order that they might at last (*tandem*) have light.

³² Karl Rahner, S.J., "Die anonymen Christen," in *Schriften zur Theologie* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1959–84), 6:553–54; Rahner, "Atheismus und implizites Christentum," in *Schriften zur Theologie*, 8:189–93; Rahner, "Kirche, Kirchen, und Religionen," in *Schriften zur Theologie*, 8:356–57; Rahner, "Das neue Bild der Kirche," in *Schriften zur Theologie*, 8:338–45; Rahner, *Grundkurs*, 156.

In Rahner's theology all grace is understood from uncreated grace, God's presence in the soul, which produces sanctifying grace and works itself out as actual graces in individual acts.³³ According to his theory the text affirms that grace, uncreated grace with its immediate consequence of sanctifying grace, is given to all men of good will. But it is questionable whether the Council Fathers accepted his theology and affirmed all its implications. In the conceptualist theology, in which they had been "indoctrinated" (*What Happened*, 290), graces are bestowed in reverse order: actual graces arouse the desire for baptism, which brings sanctifying grace, which, rendering the soul holy, prepares it for the divine indwelling. The mere mention of grace does not imply sanctifying grace; indeed, unlike *Lumen Gentium*, §15, which explicitly mentions the Spirit's "sanctifying power" active in the lives of Christians, whose baptisms were always acknowledged as valid, *Lumen Gentium*, §16 makes no mention of sanctifying grace. The good works accomplished under grace are only the preparation for the gospel, and their goodness is given for a purpose: "that they might *at last* have life." In quoting Acts 17, *Lumen Gentium*, §16 depicts with St. Paul the state of men to whom the Gospel had not come, while I Timothy 2 provides the reason for Paul's mission of preaching to the Gentiles. The statement that people with a sincere heart inculpably ignorant of the Gospel might "attain eternal salvation" says nothing more than what Pius IX declared more than a hundred years previously: "Those who labor under invincible ignorance concerning our sacred religion and who lead an honest and good life, diligently observing the natural law and its commandments engraved by God in all hearts and prepared to obey Him, can, by the effective power (*operante virtute*) of divine light and grace, attain eternal life" (DS 2866). Pius IX prudently left that manner of attainment in God's merciful and just hands. If no one can be sure of his own salvation (1 Cor 4:3–5; DS 1540–41, 1566, 1572–73), pontificating about the salvation of others beyond Scripture and Church tradition risks becoming a presumptuous adventure.³⁴

Alois Grillmeier, one of the *periti* responsible for the composition of *Lumen Gentium*, §16, notes that *Lumen Gentium*, §16 is concerned with the orientation of various non-Christian groups to the Church, not with the question whether anyone can be saved outside the Church. Regarding the salvation of the sincere God-seeker "the constitution says nothing about

³³ McDermott, "Karl Rahner in Tradition," 27–29.

³⁴ On this question cf. our "Storia universale e storia della salvezza," in *Dizionario di teologia fondamentale*, ed. R. Latourelle and R. Fisichella (Assisi: Cittadella, 1990), 1193–1206. (Unfortunately the English edition changed our original text for "inclusivism" and introduced various imprecisions.)

how finally the actual justification (in faith and love) occurs. It is only concerned to show that every connection with God is already aimed at the acceptance of the saving God and thereby also is oriented to the people of God." Whether sincere God-seekers receive the offered sanctifying grace "within this guiltless theoretical atheism (perhaps through a theism in the non-reflective moral actualization of their concrete existence under grace, which implies revelation and faith) or only through a grace that leads them out of this atheism (when?), about that the text is silent."³⁵ In a private conversation Grillmeier told me that when he submitted his commissioned commentary on *Lumen Gentium* I–II to the Herder commentary on Vatican II, Rahner, one of its editors, had the submission returned repeatedly to him, requesting the inclusion of a statement about the possibility of salvation outside the Church. But Grillmeier resisted the pressure since, he said, such had not been the intent of the Council. O'Malley, on the contrary, perhaps taken up into the general theological mood dominant after the Council, does not question the compatibility of his interpretation of *Lumen Gentium* with previous ecclesial tradition.

On another point O'Malley is similarly moved by the post-Vatican II mood. He considers the question of artificial birth control one of the most important basic issues of the Council, even though it was never debated at length on the Council floor. He attributes to Maximos IV Saigh, the Melkite patriarch of Antioch, the view "For the faithful it is a sad and agonizing issue, for there is a cleavage between the official teaching of the church and the contrary practice in most families" (*What Happened*, 5–6, 82–83, 236–38, 265–66, 284–85, 311–12). While Maximos's opinion is correctly cited, its truth is never questioned. Actually in the United States sociological surveys before Vatican II show that the great majority of American Catholics agreed with the prohibition of artificial birth control and were following Church teaching.³⁶ From conversations during my own studies in Rome, 1973–76, I learned from third world priests that the majority of Catholics in their countries were also

³⁵ Grillmeier, "Dogmatische Konstitution," 205–7; for *Ad Gentes*, §7 cf. Suso Brechter, O.S.B., "Dekret über die Missionstätigkeit der Kirche: Einleitung und Kommentar," in *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, 3:141–42.

³⁶ Andrew Greely, "Family Planning among American Catholics," *Chicago Studies* 2 (1963): 47–58; Allan Carlson, "The Future of Marriage and the Family in the United States," in *The Church, Marriage and the Family*, ed. Kenneth Whitehead (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's, 2007), 310–12; cf. also Ambrogio Valsecchi, *Controversy: The Birth Control Debate 1958–1968*, trans. Dorothy White (Washington, DC: Corpus 1968), 37–118, who shows that the question of the "pill" was first raised at the very end of 1963, and only in 1965 did the debate really heat up among moralists.

obedient to Church doctrine. *Humanae Vitae* occasioned a tornado of dissent in the first world because Church teaching was publicly challenged by theologians like Charles Curran, who used the confusion after the Council to promote the idea of a “sinful Church,” a pilgrim people of God searching for truth along with others.³⁷ On this issue O’Malley is apparently following his hermeneutical principal whereby subsequent needs determine the interpretation of previous historical events and change their meaning. But one must be careful to ascertain facts before drawing conclusions.

According to O’Malley’s Vatican II, “the church needs and learns from the world” and “the world helps the church in being true to herself—an unprecedented stance for an ecclesiastical document” (*What Happened*, 234, 268). Given the watchful presence of the minority at the Council and the concern of the majority to remain faithful to tradition, O’Malley’s interpretation has to be greatly nuanced. For his opinion he refers in general to *Gaudium et Spes*. The Latin words for “learn,” *discere* and *ediscere*, occur only three time in that pastoral constitution and only once is the Church its subject:

[The Church] learned from the beginning of her history to express Christ’s message with the help of concepts and languages of different peoples and, in addition, tried to explain it with the wisdom of philosophers: her purpose was to adapt the Gospel to the comprehension of all men and the requirements of the wise, insofar as it is appropriate. Indeed, this adapted preaching of the revealed Word should remain the law of all evangelization. (*Gaudium et spes* §44)

This text should not be exaggerated, as the conciliar context makes clear. Since Christ, the fullness of revelation in whom and for whom all things have been created, is present in his Body, the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, §§7, 45; *Dei Verbum*, §2; *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §§6–7), there is nothing essential which the Church has to learn from outside herself. Although, *Gaudium et spes* §44 continues, the Church should call upon the help of people living in the world, experts in its organization and training, and knowing its mentality, she discerns from her own fullness. “With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the whole people of God, particularly of her pastors and theologians, to listen to and distinguish the many voices of our times and to interpret them in the light of the divine Word, in order that the revealed truth may be more deeply penetrated, better understood, and more suitably presented.” As a historical social reality

³⁷ For an evaluation of Curran’s position cf. John McDermott, S.J., “Charles Curran’s Moral Theory: Foundational Sexual Ethics,” *Anthropotes* 23 (2007): 167–226.

with a visible structure the Church “can be and is enriched by the evolution of social life, not as if anything would be lacking in the constitution given her by Christ, but in order to know more profoundly, to express better, and to accommodate [her constitution] more fruitfully to our times.” The Church admits that from those who promote human community “she receives not a little help, insofar as [the ecclesial community] depends upon external things. Indeed from the opposition of those who resist and persecute her she confesses that she has greatly profited and can profit.” Grace requires nature as a foundation, but grace depends upon God alone. Similarly the Church exists in the world, but her fidelity to Christ and her own essence depends upon the divine gift, Jesus Christ, the fullness of reality. The world may stimulate the Church’s reflection upon her own mystery, but the world cannot tell her who she is or what the meaning of life is. While the world learns in order to come to knowledge of the mystery that man is, going from lack to fullness, the Church lives from fullness unto ever greater fullness. She lives the mystery of the kingdom that is present and still to come, the “already” that is “not yet.” The Church “is [Christ’s] Body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph 1:23). From fullness she grows into superabundance (cf. Lk 6:38; 1 Thess 3:12; 2 Cor 4:15; Eph 1:7–10).

At the basis of O’Malley’s relativizing interpretation of the Church may be the one-sided theology widely propagated after the Council which reduced Rahner’s theology to a vague Plotinian schema whereby everything emanates from and is attracted back to an infinite, ineffable mystery. Although Rahner insisted on the absolute necessity of Christ, the sole mediator of salvation, his system has difficulty grounding that necessity. If sanctifying grace is a participation in God’s life and God is immediately present to the soul as uncreated grace-revelation, it is hard to justify the need for a further absolute in history where all signs are finite and therefore relative. Moreover Rahner had difficulty defining the notion of person, changing his six definitions according to need and making the beatific vision, usually regarded as the fulfillment of nature, a constitutive moment of the hypostatic union. Indeed in every human nature was implanted a desire for the hypostatic union as well as a desire for the beatific vision, and the two desires were never distinguished.³⁸ Insofar as Rahner recognized that the modern notion of “person” refers to a self-conscious, free center of activity, which classical philosophy applied to a human nature, and Jesus was said to have a human self-conscious, free center of activity vis-à-vis a divine self-conscious, free

³⁸ McDermott, “Karl Rahner,” 36–45, 58–59, n. 112.

center of activity, it is hardly surprising that theologians following his thought's trajectory would declare Jesus a "human person."³⁹ Although O'Malley never explicitly adopts that position, his distinction of "the person of God" from the "person of Jesus" allows ambiguity: the Council "affirmed what had been revealed to the human race from above was not doctrines as such but the very person of God, especially as the divinity was manifested in the person of Christ. Without explicitly affiliating itself with any specific school of Christology, the council consistently presented Christ as servant and liberator" (*What Happened*, 295). One perceives the difficulties. God is tripersonal, not a "person," and it would be much more exact to affirm that while the divinity might be manifested in Christ's humanity, Christ's person is divine. This insufficient understanding of person in Christology may also explain the earlier cited position affirming that since it is impossible to exhaust the intelligibility of God's self-revelation, our authenticity is always "at least somewhat partial and incomplete" (*Traditions and Transitions*, 79).

There are other points on which O'Malley's interpretation can be questioned. He tends to overstate contrasts as between the Augustinian and Thomistic evaluations of sexuality, the cultic and the social activist priest, conscience and obedience to Church laws, authority and service, etc. Indeed in Vatican II's change of literary styles from previous councils he perceives the opposition of "almost two different visions of Catholicism: from commands to invitations, from laws to ideals, from definition to mystery, from threats to persuasion, from coercion to conscience, from monologue to dialogue, from ruling to serving, from withdrawn to integrated, from vertical to horizontal, from exclusion to inclusion, from hostility to friendship, from rivalry to partnership, from suspicion to trust, from static to ongoing, from passive acceptance to active engagement, from fault-finding to appreciation, from prescriptive to principled, from behavior modification to inner appropriation" (*What Happened*, 307). If style is a matter of identity (*What Happened*, 305), the Catholic Church must have suffered a traumatic identity crisis at Vatican II and emerged a

³⁹ Karl Rahner, S.J., and Herbert Vorgrimler, "Person," in *Kleines theologisches Wörterbuch* (Freiburg: Herder, 1961), 283; Piet Schoonenberg, S.J., *The Christ*, trans. Della Couling (New York: Seabury, 1971), 71–91; Schoonenberg, "Spirit Christology and Logos Christology," *Bijdragen* 38 (1977): 368; Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, trans. Hubert Hoskins (New York: Seabury, 1979), 601–4, 655–56; Jon Sobrino, S.J., *Jesus the Liberator*, trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 158–59, cf. also 147–50; Roger Haight, S.J., *Jesus Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 391, 441–43, 461–62; William Dych, S.J., *Thy Kingdom Come* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1999), 54–55.

totally changed entity! Such exaggerated contrasts seemingly stem from O'Malley's desire to support his theory of Vatican II's ecclesial revolution. Desire does control perception. Before concluding, however, our critique should examine O'Malley's main thesis, the alleged Roman frustration of the bishops' hopes for a more collegial Church.

Collegiality

O'Malley sees the Council as an attempt of the bishops, the periphery, to assert themselves over against the center, the pope and the Roman Curia. "Collegiality" is the watchword for this issue, the word "most bitterly contested" during the Council. It is considered, along with clerical celibacy and birth control, to be "so sensitive or potentially explosive that Pope Paul withheld them from the council's agenda" (*What Happened*, 6, 49, 163, 302). The preliminary voting (Oct. 30, 1963) on *De Ecclesia*'s second chapter dealing with the hierarchy was strongly in favor of collegiality; it was "another turning point in the council" when, "despite differences in emphasis and outlook, there was agreement in principle on some critical and controversial issues." There and then "in principle, collegiality had achieved a secure and central status as a way the church operates—or is supposed to operate" (*What Happened*, 184).⁴⁰ This turn marked an adaptation to the democratic temper of the times and was "symptomatic of a more general trend to promote collegial relationships throughout the church" in terms of collaboration with priests and laity (*What Happened*, 302–5). Maximos IV Saigh emerged as collegiality's chief advocate since from the Council's beginning he promoted the authority of patriarchs and bishops against the concentration of all authority in the pope with his Curia. He proposed that a small group of bishops with rotating membership in perpetual session remain in Rome to assist the pope collegially as the supreme body of the Church (*What*

⁴⁰ O'Malley actually exaggerates the opposition: 16 percent of the bishops, not "almost 20 percent," opposed the proposal on the relation of council and pope; 19 percent, not "almost 25 percent," opposed consideration of the reinstatement of the diaconate, a proposal which O'Malley interprets to have "sidestepped the celibacy issue" (*What Happened*, 185). (Later, *What Happened*, 209, notes that the proposal to ordain as deacons young men not bound to celibacy was rejected by the majority. How much support would have been found for any reduction of priestly celibacy? One suspects again O'Malley's eisegesis in making clerical celibacy a basic issue [*What Happened*, 6]; even he admits that Paul VI's decision to exclude the topic from the council "met with applause" from the Fathers when some Brazilian bishops sought to introduce the issue just before the council's end [*What Happened*, 271]—in *Acta Synodalia* IV/1, 41, Cardinal Tisserant's letter speaks of "repeated applause.")

Happened, 125–26, 191). In its first revision, the decree on the episcopal office, *Christus Dominus*, §5, proposed “in very general terms” an episcopal body in order “to make collegiality a functioning reality, along the lines proposed by Maximos and others a year earlier.” While its basic orientation was approved, the high number of qualified votes sent the decree back to committee (*What Happened*, 210–11). Before the committee produced a rewritten document, Paul VI intervened with his *motu proprio*, *Apostolica Sollicitudo*, establishing a consultative synod of bishops from the entire world. Although initial reaction was favorable to this institutional expression of collegiality, O’Malley opines that the Fathers desiring collegiality should have had “serious misgivings” at this “preemptive strike by the center.” For the Synod was only consultative and “subject ‘immediately and directly to the power’ of the pope.” “The body described in *Apostolica Sollicitudo* could hardly have been further from what Maximos had proposed the previous year. With one stroke the text cut collegiality off from grounding in the institutional reality of the church” (*What Happened*, 252–53). Hence “collegiality, the linchpin in the center-periphery relationship promoted by the majority, ended up an abstract teaching without point of entry into the social reality of the church. It ended up an ideal, no match for the deeply entrenched system.” As a result “the majority was consistently frustrated” (*What Happened*, 311–12).

However widespread was the support for collegiality, O’Malley overlooks the vastly differing understandings of it which were expressed by the Council Fathers. There was no definition, much less a clearly articulated institutional vision, of collegiality which was commonly accepted by the Council.⁴¹ That is doubtless why the proposal of a collegiate body in the revised *Christus Dominus*, §5 was left very vague. It is misleading to take Maximos’s vision of an episcopal assembly or council as normative for all the bishops. Doubtless, because their views on collegiality varied so widely, the bishops gladly accepted the pope’s initiative in *Apostolica Sollicitudo*. Even the Bologna school admits, “In general the fathers were very receptive of the announcement [of *Apostolica Sollicitudo*], even though they were not in a position to assess the development of the new institution.” For “the pope’s decision dispensed the Council from a difficult discussion that was far from desired by all. By giving the impression that he had come down in favor of what the fathers wanted, Paul VI gave the majority the feeling that it had won its case; such, at least, was the impression at the

⁴¹ Hermann-Josef Sieben, S.J., *Katholische Konzilsdebatte im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1993), 316–30. On the development of the ecclesiological schema, cf. our “*Lumen Gentium*: The Once and Future Constitution,” 138–46.

time.”⁴² In fact the bishops approved *Christus Dominus*, §5 by an overwhelming majority, 2,171 in favor, only 8 opposed, the most positive vote for any paragraph in the first chapter of *Christus Dominus*. The pope’s specification of the synod accorded perfectly with the bishops’ previously expressed views. A preliminary draft of *Christus Dominus*, §5, which was composed to replace the first document on bishops proposed to the Fathers, expressed the *hope* that to lighten his work the pope would call some bishops from the whole world to help him “in ways and for reasons to be suitably decided, even, if it should please the same Supreme Pontiff, summoning them for a meeting (*Coetus*) or deliberative body of sorts [*Consilium quoddam*—not *Concilium*].”⁴³ A revised version added the words “by him,” that is, the pope, after “decided,” in accord with the wish of many Fathers, the Theological Committee’s *Relatio* reported, “in order that it should appear more clearly that it pertains exclusively to him alone to determine beforehand the previously stated prescriptions.” Thereby the opinion of “one or other Father” that the members be elected by bishops’ conferences was put aside. In the revised version the phrase “if it should please the same Supreme Pontiff” was dropped, probably because it seemed redundant after the previous emphasis on the pope’s free initiative in summoning the bishops. But the next revision restored the phrase in a slightly altered form, “if it should please him (*Eidem*),” before “even summoning. . . .” The Fathers were clearly leaving the role of the episcopal advisory council up to the pope. The *Relatio* made very clear that “many Fathers” insisted that the suggested “Central *Consilium* be the sign of the episcopal college’s participation in the care for the universal Church, but not in the sense, as some desired, that the *Consilium* be an

⁴² Gilles Routhier, “Finishing the Work Begun: The Trying Experience of the Fourth Period,” in *History of Vatican II*, 5:57–60. The next sentence attempts to undermine the unanimity: “Others, however, had the impression that the Pope had snatched from the majority an even more resounding victory.” The only proof of this is the quoted remark of an otherwise anonymous monsignor of San Carlo, a seminary in Rome. For the ideologically perceptive, one swallow makes a spring, one drop amounts to a deluge.

⁴³ In the terminology of Vatican II, *consilium* is usually employed to describe God’s redemptive plan, or counsel, or an evangelical counsel or proffered counsel. In the limited number of times when it is applied to a gathering of bishops, priests, or laity it is usually clear that the intended gathering offers counsel and does not legislate: *Christus Dominus*, §§27, 38; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §26. *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, §23 assigns a normative role to the patriarchs who determine liturgical, linguistic norms with a synod or a “*concilium* of prelates.” Only in *Perfectae Caritatis*, §34, where *consilia* are listed alongside *capitula* for religious orders and congregations, might more than a deliberative role be assigned to them, depending on the congregations’ constitutions.

exercise of the task of the episcopal college.”⁴⁴ The final, solemnly approved paragraph specifically responded to that wish. It reads:

Let bishops, chosen from different parts of the globe, in ways and for reasons determined or to be determined by the Roman Pontiff, provide to the church's Supreme Pastor a stronger effective assistance in a deliberative body [*Consilium*], which is properly named *synod of bishops*. Acting on behalf of the whole Catholic episcopate, it certainly gives at the same time a sign that all the bishops in hierarchical communion share the care for the universal Church.

This text was substituted for the previous text simply because Paul VI's *motu proprio Apostolica Sollicitudo* (Sept. 15, 1965) had resolved the question of the type of the deliberative body, for which the Council's secretary general lauded the Pope: “Again and again we give thanks to the Church's Supreme Pastor and most beloved Father and we rejoice greatly because in a question of such great moment there is clearly manifested the perfect union of souls between the members of the episcopal College and its Head.”⁴⁵ It

⁴⁴ *Acta Synodalia* III/6, 122–23, 131; IV/2, 513; for the vote cf. Xavier Rynne, *The Fourth Session* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), 129.

⁴⁵ *Acta Synodalia* IV/2, 618–19; that the term “synod” does not equate it to “council” is clear because it is chosen by Paul VI, who specified its nature in *Apostolica Sollicitudo*: “The task (*munus*) of teaching and giving counsel belongs to the Synod of Bishops by its very nature. It will be able also to enjoy a deliberative power, where this is granted to it by the Roman Pontiff, in whose power it will be in this case to make valid the Synod's decisions.” The pope decides when the synod is to be called, the matter to be considered, and the order of its agenda; he can also add members to the synod beyond those attending by office or elected by episcopal conferences (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 57 [1965], 776–77, 779). The secretary general's remarks also make it clear that he understood “synod” as a “deliberative body” (*Consilium seu Synodum Episcoporum: Acta Synodalia* IV/2, 620). Sieben, *Katholische Konzilsidee*, 326–30, interprets the request of September 18, 1964 for a *consilium* already in terms of an episcopal synod. In view of the *Relatio* hardly any other conclusion seems possible. Given that in previous discussions about the pope's role with regard to the acts of the whole episcopal college it was already agreed that “the actual exercise of the power of the corpus of the bishops will be determined by the rules approved by the pope” and that no collegial act would be valid without the pope's approval (cf. Gérard Philips, “Die Geschichte der dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche ‘Lumen Gentium,’” *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, 1:144–45), it could hardly be expected that more authority be given to a partial representation of the whole college. *Apostolica Sollicitudo* was responding perfectly to the bishops' desires. The world's leading expert on ecclesial councils with a shelf of published volumes, Sieben (*Katholische Konzilsidee*, 330), says of Vatican II: “The council's statements about the ecumenical council only confirm traditional views.” This is far from a revolution in the Church's self-understanding. The real novelties are the consultative bishops' synod and the recognition of the bishops' conferences.

requires great creative imagination to discover in the Pope's decision a "preemptive strike by the center" frustrating the bishops' wishes. O'Malley seems to have identified a post-Vatican II liberal rallying cry for democracy in Patriarch Maximos's conciliar speech and extended it by regressive eisegesis to the whole college of bishops. A small minority's view of collegiality is erroneously projected onto the majority of bishops.

By defining clearly neither the bishops' nor his own understanding of collegiality O'Malley leaves great leeway for the expression of discontent. He never touches the underlying theological difficulty of balancing the papal authority recognized by Vatican I and II with the authority of bishops. Even today theologians debate who is the subject of supreme authority in the Church: pope, council, or pope and council as two inadequately distinguished subjects.⁴⁶ How then were the bishops expected to determine precisely the juridical relation of a novel episcopal institution to the pope's office? (Power of decision requires jurisdiction.) Discussions might have been extended endlessly without resolution. The Pope's intervention is easily construed as a great assistance to the Council on this issue. It resolved an impossibly contentious issue without committing the Council to any theory, leaving open the possibility of future resolution with maturity of reflection.

Perhaps no clear juridical resolution can be found. Much as the Church needs a juridical structure, she is more than an institution. The Body of Christ is a communion of love in which authority is bestowed for service. While a juridical structure requires a single source of authority, the structure does not define the Church's ultimate reality. Essential as Peter is to the Church, he never is apart from the Church's apostolic faith and the successors of the Apostles. He is bound to both. In an extreme case a heretical pope ceases to be pope.⁴⁷ No pope substitutes for Christ, the

⁴⁶ Cf. Sieben, *Katholische Konzilsidee*, 330–37, 346–50; and the debate goes on.

⁴⁷ To the axiom "the first see is judged by no one" was usually joined the proviso "unless he deviate from the faith." Simony was considered a heresy and justified removing the pope, as in the case of John XII; it was the reason for Gregory VI's abdication. Pope Marcellinus was long considered (falsely) to have been deposed for apostasy. Cf. Salvatore Vacca, O.F.M. Cap., *Prima Sedes a Nemine Iudicatur* (Rome: Gregorian, 1993), 61–63, 80, 134, 149–50, 154, 157, 161, 176, 178–80, 187–88, 193, 201, 208, 230–31, 242, 246, 254, 257, 262, 264. Pope Honorius, though dead, was condemned as a heretic (wrongly) by Constantinople III (DS 552). That decision was accepted by his successor Leo II, who excused it as due to negligence in following the lead of the Patriarch Sergius (Mansi 11:733, 1052). John XXII, accused of heresy by the king of France, submitted his view on the particular judgment to an ecclesial committee and publicly retracted his errors, deferring "to the decision of the Church and our successors" (DS 990–91).

one Absolute in time, who remains Eucharistically present in his Church. How the Church arrives at a papal impeachment cannot be juridically fixed because such legislation, touching the Church's structure *juris divini*, would impossibly establish a juridical instance over the pope, who holds supreme jurisdiction (DS 3060, 3063–64). Nonetheless the bishops enjoy their own proper authority by episcopal consecration (*Lumen Gentium*, §21) and united “together with their head, the Supreme Pontiff, and never apart from him, they have supreme and full authority over the universal Church” (*Lumen Gentium*, §22).

In times of crisis and confusion, as at Constance, an ecumenical council can choose or determine the identity of the pope and resolve a schism. Yet the very success of Constance went to excess in subsequent decades. Because the Council prescribed the regular convocation of ecumenical councils every five years, Martin V called a council to convene in Pavia in 1423. Since the bishops were too concerned with matters of their own dioceses, few heeded the call and after eleven months of irresolute inactivity the Council dissolved itself. The next summoning resulted in the Council of Basel, which, driven principally by theologians and canonists, sought to place itself over the pope and rule the Church. But it soon disqualified itself by its internal divisions and attempts to curry favor with secular princes. Clearly the ordinary subject of supreme jurisdiction is the pope. It depends on his charity, his responsibility to the Lord Jesus for the well-being of the Church, to heed and serve his fellow bishops. That was always acknowledged in the interrupted Vatican I, which defined papal infallibility and jurisdictional primacy (DS 3061–62, cf. 3113–16). Vatican II emphasized that the bishops as a college “exercise their own proper authority” and possess “supreme power over the whole Church,” not as delegated by the pope but in their own right, though never without the pope (*Lumen Gentium*, §§19–23). The pope should heed the bishops, and the Synod of Bishops became a new means, alongside the episcopal visits *ad limina*, of assisting the pope in his universal care for the Church. The Church lives the mystery of Christ's love, which demands the greatest unity even as it preserves the greatest distinctions. The mystery of unity and plurality, the one and the many, is reflected in the Church because she reflects the mystery of Trinitarian love. The polarities of pope and bishops, of bishops and priests, and of clergy and laity must be maintained in balanced tension and strengthened in mutual service. There is no preordained solution to all possible differences on meeting the demands of charity, but all Christians, pope, bishops, priests, and laity, are called to bear each other's burdens in different ways; in that their sanctification consists.

Conclusion

Father O'Malley has written with an engaging style a stimulating account of Vatican II from a "progressive" viewpoint. A child of the enthusiastic Sixties, he expected great changes to follow in the wake of Vatican II. His hopes have been disappointed because the center has held despite the centrifugal forces unleashed in the Council's aftermath. Despite the pressures for adaptation to the world, Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI have striven to maintain continuity with the wider tradition of Christ's Church, confident that the full reality of Jesus Christ, God incarnate, has never been lacking to his Bride and Body. In this, it seems, they remained faithful to the wishes of the Council Fathers and the wider Catholic sacramental vision. Expectations of a new humanity voiced by many progressives were to be frustrated not only because those expectations, living from an uncharted future, tended to be vague and amorphous, but also because the underlying theological system propelling the progressive hopes, transcendental Thomism, is replete with internal tensions. When controlled by leading theologians, these tensions preserve an openness to God's freedom without completely relativizing finite, intelligible structures. Unfortunately many of their self-proclaimed disciples, overlooking the need to balance vital tensions, rush to extremes. But the Council itself aimed at a compromise among the various theological visions in play in the aula and conference rooms. The minority and Paul VI contributed mightily to Vatican II, preserving finite intelligibility and continuity with recent Tradition, even as the majority accomplished an adaptation to the modern world with a more personalist, existential, and pastoral language by revivifying older elements of Tradition. They supplemented the limitations of the conceptualist theology. They never intended a revolution. Unfortunately O'Malley's penchant to emphasize revolutionary novelty hinders his perception of the Council's sane, sacramental, and Catholic vision. He borrows from secular historians hermeneutical principles which not only relativize themselves but also skew his interpretation of the Council. Because he adopts the relativistic apriori of much modern historiography, he has prioritized style over substance in his retelling of Vatican II.

Certainly his own volume reads well, a tribute to his literary style. But it cannot satisfy those who prefer truth to rhetoric, Plato and Aristotle to Isocrates, content to appearance. When our culture again returns to the quest for truth, O'Malley's book will be set aside. It can hardly expect a better fate since he acknowledges that the future changes the past. But insofar as decisions about life in the Church depend upon interpretations

of her tradition, readers of O'Malley's book should be aware that they are not necessarily obtaining the full truth. His regressive eisegesis reads later issues back into the Council, missing thereby the Council's intent. In fact, given O'Malley's philosophy of history, he cannot inform anyone about *What **Really** Happened at Vatican II*. Insofar as reality changes with the future, yet the future never arrives short of Judgment Day, O'Malley cuts himself and his readers off from truth. In the meantime Joseph Ratzinger's realistic philosophy, orthodox theology, and knowledgeable judgments about Vatican II are to be preferred. N V