

VATICAN II AFTER SIXTY YEARS

BREPOLS VATICAN II STUDIES

VOLUME 1

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Vatican II After Sixty Years

Developments and Expectations Prior to the Council

Edited by

MATHIJS LAMBERIGTS, ANTONIA PIZZEY, AND
KARIM SCHELKENS

BREPOLS

Cover illustration: Photo of John XXIII, taken on January 25, 1959, the day of the announcement of the Second Vatican Council (kind permission of FSCIRE, Bologna)

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D/2023/0095/254
ISBN 978-2-503-60772-6
eISBN 978-2-503-60773-3
DOI 10.1484/M.VATII-EB.5.135355

Printed in the EU on acid-free paper.



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In grateful memory of Joachim Schmiedl, ISch (1958-2021),
an outstanding and untiring Vatican II scholar and friend

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Introduction

Revisiting the Complexity of Pre-conciliar Catholicism

Current Pathways in Vatican II Research

In various ways, the present volume is a first. For a start, it marks the launch of a new book series, entitled *Brepols Vatican II Studies*. The series is dedicated to the study of what is inarguably the single largest and most impactful religious event of the twentieth century. Even after six decades, the Second Vatican Council remains a constant point of reference. While some study it as a past historical event, others regard it as an unfaltering source of inspiration, and still others find the council to be an ongoing stumbling block.

The very fact of such lingering and divergent approaches and readings makes it clear that the last word on this council has yet to be written. Research into Vatican II has never ceased, but as new contexts have arisen, scholarly insights into the meaning of this event have changed and continue to evolve. While the academic *communis opinio* still holds that Giuseppe Alberigo's *History of Vatican II* has offered an excellent framework regarding the council's history, it is also apparent that since the closure of the five-volume project a manifold of studies, inventories and diaries have been made public. Moreover, the increased accessibility of the Vatican II Papers preserved in the 'Archivio Apostolico Vaticano' has helped the scholarly community reshape its insights on many of the details regarding the council. All the while, research has focused more attention on the council's prehistory as well as its continuing influence and its locally diverse and often contested reception. The ongoing project 'Vatican II: Legacy and Mandate' is an important example of this kind of research. On an intercontinental scale, this project gathers academics in continental groups and aims at a renewed history and commentary of the conciliar documents and their global reception.

Against this horizon, Brepols's new series has a particular role to play, as it aims to establish an enduring interest in source-based research on Vatican II. It is all the more fitting, therefore, that this first volume presents the proceedings from the first of four conferences resulting from another international academic project on the council, a collaboration between the Australian Catholic University, the Catholic University of Leuven and Tilburg University: 'The Vision of Vatican II

Vatican II After Sixty Years, ed. by Mathijs Lamberigts, Antonia Pizzey, and Karim Schelkens, Brepols Vatican II Studies, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2023), pp. 15–20

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on Revelation, Church, Ecumenism, and Education: Furthering Research on the Drafting Histories, Intertextual Interpretation, and Global Reception of Eight Key Documents’.

Scrutinizing the Vision of Vatican II

As of 2021, four scholars – Professor Ormond Rush (ACU), Professors Mathijs Lamberigts and Peter De Mey (KU Leuven), and Professor Karim Schelkens from Tilburg University –, all connected to the aforementioned Legacy project, also serve as the chief investigators in the collaborative ‘Vision of Vatican II’ five-year research project.

As the title indicates, the project endeavors to revisit the council in view of investigating its overall vision. Doing so requires an integral approach, and the making of sound methodological and thematical choices, that fit well within the aforementioned evolution of scholarship. Methodologically, our program involves hermeneutically interrelating three aspects of the council as an event and its resulting documents. This implies including a focus on the pre-conciliar context, followed by attention to the history of the debates and drafting of the conciliar documents. The aim is to coherently reconnect what has been called the ‘spirit’ of the council with what has been called the ‘letter’ of the council. Integrating ‘the spirit and the letter’ enables a reconstruction of what one might call ‘the vision’ of the council.

At this juncture, and as will be explained further on, our project investigates the council’s preparatory phase, focusing on the events, debates and currents preceding the council. In subsequent steps, the project will seek to bring the aforementioned levels of enquiry into hermeneutical conversation with how the conciliar event, its texts and its vision have evolved, and how all this has been received in diverse contexts in the global church. As such, the aim is to re-insert the council between past and future.

Returning to the project’s title, it should be made clear that this project unfolds itself not just along the methodological angle of inserting the council in between past and future, but also along a thematic approach. Each of our four expert symposia and the proceedings following them will run along a similar thread in the conciliar vision, weaving together four strands of Vatican II’s agenda: revelation, church, ecumenism, and education. Together, these themes constitute a major axis of the council’s relevance. Taking them as coherent will enable us to reach a deeper interpretation, not only of each of the individual themes, but also of the whole conciliar vision.

Contents of the Present Volume

As said, this collection of studies is in many respects a ‘first’. Indeed, the present volume reflects the outcome of our project’s inaugural expert seminar, held in March 2022. Despite the drastic measures required to cope with the pandemic at that instance, a group of international scholars gathered in a hybrid format, based in Leuven, to scrutinise the developments and expectations on doctrine, theology and church life in the decades leading up to Vatican II.

It ought not to come as a surprise to the reader, therefore, that this volume opens with an introductory reflection on precisely this topic, by Michael Quisinsky. He argues that historiography and theology cannot be separated, and that, in fact, understanding Christianity implies understanding that the gospel has become an integral part of history. That said, the author connects the project’s overall aim of exploring the vision of Vatican II, ultimately to better address questions around the extent to which the conciliar vision may still assist in providing answers to contemporary questions, and therefore guide church life into the future, with the requirement to develop an incarnational model, able to reconnect with the *memoria passionis et resurrectionis*.

After Quisinsky’s opening words to this volume, the theme of ‘revelation’ is examined by three authors, each investigating the relationship between revelation and tradition in the era before the council. Ormond Rush offers an in-depth study of neo-scholastic manuals, analysing their style, their attempts at comprehensiveness regarding the teachings of the Catholic Church, and the conceptual discourse they perused. His contribution explains the theological methodologies that shaped a uniform global Catholicism, by highlighting theological models of revelation, authority, and modes of conveying doctrinal truth in the manualist tradition, which kept revelation theology at bay from lived experience and historical contingency. Next, Karim Schelkens picks up on this theme, from the angle of church history, highlighting the extent to which an instructional view of revealed truth led to tensed positions in the pre-conciliar Catholic world. One key example of a scholar seeking to deal with these very tensions, and developing both a theological and historically motivated answer was Yves Congar. His work *Tradition et traditions* is studied at length by Andrew Meszaros in his contribution.

Then follows the theme of ‘church’, with broad attention to ecclesiological developments, also including the role of the laity, in the pre-conciliar context. The contribution of Sandra Arenas acts to correct the often all too monolithic view of Latin American Catholicism. Her study of the contextual diversity stemming from the *vota* of the Southern Cone of the continent – comprising Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and the Guianas Islands that border Brazil to the south – gives rise to a broader reflection on the existing view, and clarifies that the Synthetic Report from the ante-preparatory commission failed to do justice to the complexity of the *vota*. This contribution is complemented by the study of Rolando Iberico Ruiz, who demonstrates a similar circumstance for the Andean region. Here too, the common classification of the Andean episcopate



as intransigent or unclassifiable, appears to be historically unwarranted, as it reduces the complexity of the ecclesial situation on the eve of the council and neglects the genuine attempts at ecclesial *aggiornamento* made there. In the same thematic cluster, Antonia Pizzey examines the variety of ecclesial images and metaphors present among Australian Catholics. While her contribution stands to illustrate the dominant description of the church in terms of visible society and body of Christ, a nuanced analysis of the presence of such imagery also indicates that on an inchoate level, such images – and in particular the biblical *Corpus Christi* image – contained within themselves possibilities for widening the common understanding of the church, and did not necessarily stand in the way of ecclesial renewal. The reluctant space created for a role of the laity is addressed by Catherine Masson in the last chapter on the church, devoted to the figure of Cardinal Achille Liénart. This study bridges the gap between the pre-conciliar and the conciliar phase, focusing on the ‘pragmatic’ contribution of the Lillois prelate in the new field of the Lay Apostolate.

Closely related to the ecclesiological theme is that of the Latin Church’s relatedness to both the Eastern Catholic Churches and to the non-Roman Catholic world. As regards the Eastern Catholic world, the highly documented contribution offered by co-authors Jose Maripurath Devassy, Astrid Kaptijn, and Peter De Mey stands to affirm the difficult position of these churches in the pre-conciliar Catholic world, mirroring the difficulties of the Latin Church in relation to ecclesial diversity. The combined interest of these contributors attends to the precarious legislative position of the Eastern Catholic Churches on the eve of the council, as well as to a full description of the rich diversity of the *vota* introduced by these churches and a tendency within the pre-conciliar Oriental Commission to strive toward uniformism. The latter point, the enduring tension between unity and diversity, also shaped the early attempts at an ecumenical agenda in the years preceding the council. The theme connects well with Simon Beentjes’s study on the expansion of the ecclesiological in terms of universality, as this appeared in the context of the Ecumenical Study Days of Chevetogne. Strikingly, the author’s reflections on the internal width of the notion of the church as mystical body also gave opportunities for ecumenical *ressourcement* from the side of Catholics. Saretta Marotta offers a final article touching upon the emerging dialogue agenda. Her study of the Catholic Conference on Ecumenical Questions investigates the endeavor of Catholic ecumenists to reconcile differences in sensitivities and working methods, often related to the varying degrees in maturity of ecumenical awareness in European countries before Vatican II. This was evident in the difficulty of presenting a Catholic response to the issues discussed by the World Council of Churches, yet it did lead to the drafting of a noteworthy *Memorandum for the Council*, in which the ideas of key figures like Christophe Dumont, Yves Congar, John Willebrands and Charles Boyer resonated.

Last but not least, this volume offers three contributions on the, all too often neglected, conciliar theme of ‘education’. This section is structured chronologically, starting with a critical state of affairs in matters of religious education and

the re-Christianization of Western Europe. Stephen Parker sketches a landscape marked by the waning of Christianity's cultural hegemony and the upcoming secularisation that set in long before the council. This contribution, highlighting a growing horizon of pluralism, indicates that the Catholic Church had for too long neglected possibilities for nurturing young people's religious upbringing in well-considered programs of education. Building upon this, Isaak Deman presents a study of the pre-conciliar *vota* on education. His work fills a gap in the scholarly field, as pre-conciliar expectations regarding catechesis, seminary formation and Catholic schools based on the *vota* have largely been neglected, even if in the corpus of *vota* these appear to have been recurrent topics. His survey unveils the difficulties raised by the fact that the educational field strongly differed per region or country. The struggle to find consensus on this topic would linger, as Mathijs Lamberigts' closing article to these proceedings indicates, until the council period itself. In his study, Lamberigts examines the composition of the preparatory commission and the early drafting stages of the Decree on Catholic Education until its final discussion in the Central Preparatory Commission in March 1962. In his conclusions, the author repeats what in the end may be seen as a striking characteristic for those revisiting the pre-Vatican II era: the Roman Catholic world was, contrary to what has often been assumed in studies on pre-conciliar Catholicism, marked by a vast internal complexity and diversity. Needless to say, this complexity and diversity would impact on the conciliar debates and the drafting of the documents. That story will be the subject of the next volume of proceedings.

