

The Recent History of the Ecumenical Movement

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It Takes 100 Years

“It takes a hundred years to receive a council.” I have heard this adage in many places and at many times over the past fifty years. It is almost a commonplace observation these days about Vatican II, although I have not found any consistent testimony as to who said it first. Another post-Vatican II adage that we ecumenists hear often enough goes something like this, “Ecumenism is dead in the water.” To say “it takes a hundred years to receive a council” conveys impatience, frustration, and, in the last analysis, wisdom. Worry, dread, and resignation, benign, happy or sad, tinge any observation that a grand undertaking such as the ecumenical movement is dead in the water. A century to receive a council implies “We are nowhere near where we should be” fifty years after Vatican II, while declaring ecumenism without life or any future whatsoever implies “We aren’t going to make it.” To be an ecumenist is to be an optimist, and both attitudes, at first, seem adverse to that hopeful spirit.

John O’Malley reminds us in his recent book on the Council of Trent that Paolo Sarpi, a Venetian Servite Brother, had to publish his history of the Council of Trent pseudonymously and in London in 1619, fifty-six years after the close of that council, because he “interpreted Trent as a tragic story of the failure of a true reform to carry the day and the triumph of papal abuse of power.”¹ The book was immediately put on the Index of Prohibited Books. Forty years later and closer to the one hundred year mark after Trent, Jesuit Sforza Pallavicino published a two-

¹John W. O’Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 10.

volume rejoinder to Sarpi.² After Trent, Pius IV confirmed its decrees, established the Congregation of the Council, which remained in existence until 1966, and forbade the printing of commentaries and notes without the permission of the Holy See. His successor, Pius V, established a Congregation of the Index, with instructions for censorship and the banning of books far more restrictive than the Council of Trent had suggested.³ This was the Congregation that banned Sarpi's history of the council. The reform of the church called for by Trent was tightly controlled by Rome.

While O'Malley reports examples of a more sober and less ostentatious situation in Rome surrounding the papacy after Trent than before it, he also records continuing abuses and accumulation of wealth by bishops and clergy for decades afterwards. As late as 1652, at the 89 year mark, the bishop of Autun complained of widespread clerical concubinage, which, he feared, Catholics accepted as the norm. "The diocese of Autun was not unique," O'Malley writes.⁴ Yet, he concludes from the evidence of history that no matter the resistance to change of certain Renaissance systems, the climate in which they operated was gradually changing.

How much of the change in climate was directly due to the Council of Trent? A great deal, surely, but greater precision is hard to come by. During the council Catholic leaders of all stripes had their eyes fixed on it, and many were determined or under pressure to make its enactments operative. In the eyes of contemporaries the council stood at center stage.⁵

One measure of Trent's success was that it was not for another 300 years before a pope was up to calling a council and 400 years before a pope called a reform council. At the end of that council, Vatican II, Paul VI reformed the curia and left the interpretation and record of the council open, unlike his predecessors after Trent. Perhaps because the interpretation of the council was left

² For details on these two books see O'Malley, *Trent*, p. 291, n. 13.

³ O'Malley, *Trent*, pp. 266-68.

⁴ O'Malley, *Trent*, p. 272.

⁵ O'Malley, *Trent*, p. 273.

open for all of us that we expected the reforms of Vatican II to unfold more swiftly than those of Trent.⁶

Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue

On 25 January 1959, Pope John joyfully shared his intentions in private for a general council with those cardinals who had attended the closing of the Church Unity Octave with him at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls. *L'Osservatore Romano* published the announcement the next day, reporting a council “not only for the spiritual good and joy of the Christian people but also an invitation to the separated communities to seek again that unity for which so many souls are longing in these days throughout the world.”⁷

The furtherance of Christian unity was one of three main goals for the council that emerged from that initial public announcement to the opening on 11 October 1962. The other two were: the spiritual renewal of the church (its growth in faith and holiness) and *aggiornamento* (appropriate adaptation of church discipline to the needs and conditions of our times).⁸ Altogether, they spelled “reform.” It would be a reform that was expected to bring big change for the church. Even for a pope to acknowledge something beneficial from the ecumenical movement already decades in progress among Protestants was a big step, but Pope John did so in his first encyclical, *To the Throne of Peter*, in June 1959.⁹ As we read the early

⁶ I call attention to Alberto Melloni’s term, “the attempted ‘Sarpization’ of Alberigo,” that is, Giuseppe Alberigo, the chief editor of the indispensable five volume *History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995-2005).

⁷ *L'Osservatore Romano*, January 26/27, 1959. See also: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 51 (1959) 69; commented on by Stransky, “The Foundation of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity,” p. 62. Please note that it was unusual, if not historic, that a pope would personally close the church unity octave, as Pope John did in 1959; hence, not all the cardinals living in Rome chose to attend and did not hear the announcement Pope John made privately in the sacristy afterwards to those who attended that he intended to call a universal council of the church.

⁸ Joseph A. Komonchak, “Is Christ Divided? Dealing with Diversity and Disagreement,” 2003 Common Ground Initiative Lecture, published in *Origins, CNS Documentary Service*, 33, 9 (July 17, 2003)141.

⁹ *Ad Petri Cathedram* (29 June 1959) 64: “We have taken note that almost all those who are adorned with the name of Christian even though separated from Us and from one another have sought to forge bonds of unity by means of many congresses and by establishing councils. This is evidence that they are moved by an intense desire for unity of some kind.” http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_29061959_ad-petri_en.html. The Holy Office issued *Ecclesia cattolica* in 1950, which still warned bishops about involvement in

attempts by Giuseppe Roncalli to articulate an ecumenical mission for the church, we realize how very far we have come in 50 years. Pope John initially espoused a “theology of return,” which was not different from the message of the Catholic Church since the end of the Council of Trent 450 years ago. “Come, take, or resume, that place which is yours, which for many was your father’s place,” he urged in 1959.¹⁰

When Pope John tried these lines on Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher of Canterbury, during his secret visit in December 1960, the archbishop at once said, “Your Holiness, not return.” Puzzled, John asked, why not? Fisher replied, “None of us can go backwards. We are each now running on parallel courses; we are looking forward until, in God’s good time, our two courses approximate and meet. After a moment’s pause, John replied, “You are right.”¹¹

Compare Pope John’s initial change in understanding of the ecumenical movement with the observation of Pope John Paul II thirty-five years later in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*:

It is not a matter of adding together all the riches scattered throughout the various Christian communities in order to arrive at a church which God has in mind for the future. . . . The elements of this already-given church exist, found in their fullness in the Catholic Church and, without this fullness, in the other communities (Decree on Ecumenism [*Unitatis redintegratio*] 4), where certain features of the Christian mystery have at times been more effectively emphasized. Ecumenism is directed precisely to making the partial communion existing between Christians grow toward full communion in truth and charity.¹²

ecumenical gatherings but recognized a worthy spiritual dimension in the yearning and prayers for unity. Therefore, bishops were told to consider trustworthy priests to observe these meetings. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 42 (1950) 143; English translation taken from *Instruction on the Ecumenical Movement*, Unity Studies 1, Commentary by Rev. William Conway (Garrison, NY: Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, 1954), p. 3.

¹⁰ This was in an address to Italian Catholic Action on 9 August 1959. *L'Osservatore Romano* (11 August 1959). Cited in Thomas F. Stransky, “The Vatican Council,” *Wiseman Review* (1962) 206.

¹¹ William Purcell covers these events in his biography of Archbishop Fisher, *Fisher of Lambeth: A Portrait From Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), pp. 268-287. Archbishop Fisher announced in advance his desire to visit Rome on his return from a visit to Jerusalem. Pope John approved it, but Cardinal Domenico Tardini, the Vatican Secretary of State, placed tight restrictions—no photos, no publicity, and no formal meeting with Cardinal Augustin Bea and the newly appointed Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. Though the Secretariat was formed to make the council truly “ecumenical” by contacting other churches, the wheels of change moved slowly for a protocol to be developed for the Secretariat to fulfill this function.

¹² *Ut Unum Sint* (hereafter referred to as UUS) 14,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-

In 1968 at age 22, I began graduate studies at Fordham University in New York. There were two Protestants, a Lutheran and a Presbyterian on that faculty, a development I happily took in stride as a conciliar implementation. I probably heard members of the graduate faculty of theology at Fordham mention the 100 year mark for receiving a council. One fellow doctoral student at Fordham was Jeffrey Gros, a Christian Brother, who would later serve as the first Catholic director of the Faith and Order Commission for the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA and then from 1991 until 2003 was an everyday colleague of mine at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. I remain in touch with Jeff even today four or five times a week. Jeff has catalogued, analyzed and published just about every ecumenical agreement on the national and international levels in the past 50 years. When I asked him who was responsible for the one hundred years to receive a council statement, he replied this way by email:

I remember hearing it as early as Robert McNally's Fordham class on Trent, but it may have been earlier - Bernard Cooke at Marquette, for example - but the original source? I don't have a clue.....Of course, 100 is too short a time, I would think. It was only the destabilization of 18th/19th century Europe that made Vatican I - as unfinished as it was - so influential so quickly, with the 1917 code doing much of the reception work.

As we look at the reception of Vatican II during the jubilee period, we realize that it was much more than the 16 documents that resulted from it. We know that the council took on a life of its own, generating unexpected developments. Trajectories originating from the council have continued as our work in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. I want to emphasize that Vatican II was the barest of beginnings for Catholics, especially for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. There is little to nail down here except the nature of the cautiously bold language and the irrevocable commitments to Christian unity through ecumenical dialogue,

[sint_en.html](#) (accessed 07/10/13); also published in *Origins, CNS Documentary Service*, vol. 24, no. 4 (June 8, 1995) 53.

relations with Jews never again based on the negative teachings of the past, and interreligious relations through dialogue and reconciliation, repeated by every pope since John XXIII.

The *Decree on Ecumenism (Redintegratio unitatis)* was promulgated on 21 November 1964, receiving 2137 votes and only 11 negative votes. Promulgated the same day as the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen gentium)*, the decree represents the ecumenical implementation of constitution on the church.¹³ After a brief introduction that identifies Christian unity as one of the principal concerns of the council and grounds Christian unity in three spheres, scripture, the desire of the universal church, and the ecumenical movement itself, three chapters follow. The first lays out Catholic principles of ecumenism, the second promotes the practice of ecumenism, and the third discusses specifically relations with the churches of the east and with the churches and ecclesial communities of the west. The *Decree* states all this before formal dialogues got fully underway leaving much to be filled out later, presumably after the conclusions of first, second and so on rounds of dialogue. Fr. John F. Hotchkin, who served as director of the U. S. bishops' Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for 30 years, said this about the *Decree*:

The text, so far reaching in its implications, would signal a sea change in the relations between the Roman Catholic Church and other Christians. One could only guess in advance at all its practical ramifications.¹⁴

The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity promised a directory for the implementation of the *Decree* from the floor of the council in the *relatio* of Archbishop Martin of Rouen on 5 October 1964, because one could only guess what the future held for the application of these principles.¹⁵

It came in two parts, in 1967 and 1970 with the approval of Pope Paul VI who confirmed its

¹³ Thomas F. Stransky, C.S.P., *The Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council* (Glen Rock, NJ: Paulist Press, 1965) 13.

¹⁴ John F. Hotchkin, "Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism," *Ecumenism*, no. 117 (March 1995) 4.

¹⁵ *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, III/3, 280-282.

teachings and ordered its publication. Over two decades later, the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* was revised, approved, confirmed and ordered to be published by John Paul II in 1993.¹⁶ Two years after that, in 1995, came *Ut Unum Sint*, the encyclical on ecumenism by John Paul II. Nothing stands higher in Catholic Church authority on ecumenism and the ecumenical movement than these three documents.

The *Decree* instructs that “Catholics must gladly acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments which derive from our common heritage and which are to be found among our separated brothers and sisters.” (4) Referring to the agreements of bilateral commissions for dialogue in the intervening three decades, John Paul II says in *Ut Unum Sint*:

These cannot remain the statements of bilateral commissions but must become a common heritage. For this to come about and for the bonds of communion to be thus strengthened, a serious examination needs to be made, which, by different ways and means and at various levels of responsibility, must involve the whole People of God. (80).

Furthermore, by 1995, thirty years later, John Paul II was ready to move beyond the language of the *Decree* itself:

Again, the very expression *separated brethren* tends to be replaced today by expressions which more readily evoke the deep communion — linked to the baptismal character — which the Spirit fosters in spite of historical and canonical divisions. Today we speak of "other Christians", "others who have received Baptism", and "Christians of other Communities". The *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* refers to the Communities to which these Christians belong as "Churches and Ecclesial Communities that are not in full communion with the Catholic Church". (*Directory* 5) This broadening of vocabulary is indicative of a significant change in attitudes. There is an increased awareness that we all belong to Christ. (UUS 42)

Nostra aetate, the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, illustrates more sharply how a general idea before the council became a final document with unexpected dimensions that could only provide the barest of beginnings. Out of nearly 3000 replies to a general questionnaire to bishops, religious superiors and pontifical faculties, only two

¹⁶ http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/general-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19930325_directory_en.html (accessed July 10, 2013).

of those faculties, the Biblical Faculty at the Gregorian in Rome and the Faculty of Theology at Fribourg, suggested that the church should address its relationship with the Jewish people. The topic was not on the council agenda until Pope John received another outsider, Jules Isaac, on 13 June 1960, just eight days after the pope had announced the preparatory commissions, including a Secretariat for Christian Unity.¹⁷ Several weeks later, in September 1960, Cardinal Augustine Bea, whom Pope John had appointed to head the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and to whom the pope had referred Isaac and his materials, suggested to Pope John that a religious statement on the Jews could be prepared. Pope John added it to the Secretariat's initial ecumenical mandate to assist other Christians to follow the work of the council. In time, Pope John authorized the Secretariat to serve as a permanent body of the council and also to prepare drafts to put before the council fathers.¹⁸

Diplomatic fears and the interference of Middle East politics removed a one-page initial draft on the Jews from the council agenda in June 1962, but John agreed again to Cardinal Bea's request in December 1962, after the bishops had gone home from the first session, to prepare a religious statement on the Jews. Pope John did not live to see the results. During the conclave that elected Paul VI, in June 1963, bishops from Asia and Africa chattered about the need for another secretariat, one responsible for relations with the peoples of Asia and Africa, with Muslims and all others who were religious but not in a Christian or Jewish way. Cardinal

¹⁷ Isaac's report about his audience with John XXIII appeared after his death in "La Réception de Jules Isaac par Jean XXIII, *La Documentation Catholique* 65/1528 (17 November 1968) 2015-6. He reported that Pope John told him that he thought of the idea as soon as Isaac entered the room but did not mention it until Isaac asked that the council do something for the Jews in the last ten minutes of a thirty minute audience. Archbishop Capovilla, secretary to Pope John, told Paulist Fr. Thomas Stransky, mentioned later in this paper, when he asked him about the visit of Jules Isaac, that the thought of a statement on the Jews had not occurred until they met and the pope never gave up on the idea afterwards.

¹⁸ Thomas F. Stransky, CSP, has traced the history of *Nostra aetate* in a number of places. See his two articles in *Nostra Aetate: Origins, Promulgation, Impact on Jewish-Catholic Relations*, edited by Neville Lamdan and Alberto Melloni (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007). Also see Stransky's article "The Genesis of *Nostra Aetate*," *America* (October 24, 2005). He also advised those writing the story through the five volume *History of Vatican II*, edited by Alberigo.

Thomas Tien of Taipei suggested in a letter in July to the newly elected pope that he establish a secretariat for non-Christians.¹⁹ Pope Paul agreed publicly in September to do so but waiting until the following Pentecost Sunday (17 May 1964).²⁰ Still, five months before that, on 6 January 1964, on the papal pilgrimage to the Holy Land, truly an event generated by Vatican II, when he and Greek Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras embraced on the Mount of Olives, Pope Paul also addressed all monotheists from Bethlehem:

We address this reverent greeting in particular to those who profess monotheism and with us direct their religious worship to the one true God, most high and living, the God of Abraham, the supreme God whom Melchizedek, a mysterious person about whose genealogy and end Scripture tells us nothing, and by whose regal priesthood Christ himself wishes to be characterized, one day, distinct in the past but recalled in the Bible and in the Missal, celebrated as “God Most High, maker of heaven and earth” (cf. Gn 14:19; Heb 7; Ps 76:3; 110:4).²¹

Giovanni Battista Montini, Paul VI, had been a friend of Louis Massignon, the great Catholic scholar of Islam of the early twentieth century. Massignon inspired a generation of priests, scholars, and others committed to improving relations with Muslims through sound scholarship on the faith of Muslims in the heritage of Abraham. His *badaliya* movement gathered Christians gathered especially on Fridays during noontime prayer to offer their prayers to God that would accompany or even “substitute” for the prayers of Muslims. The theology behind the idea of Catholic prayers assisting Muslim prayers to be pleasing to God was even more narrow than an ecumenical theology of return; yet, this small and, in that context, positive

¹⁹Ralph M. Wiltgen gives the details of these developments in *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: the Unknown Council* (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1967), pp. 73-78.

²⁰ The announcement came in an apostolic letter *Quod Apostolici* to Cardinal Eugene Tisserant (12 September 1963), dean of the college of cardinals, outlining the changes that Paul VI would make in the rules, structures, and procedures for the council.

²¹*Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church from the Second Vatican Council to John Paul II (1963-2005)*, edited by Francesco Gioia (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2005) [191] 159. The original address was given in French: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1964/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19640106_epiphanie_fr.html.

gesture of unity had wide appeal. Montini attended a *badaliya* group in Rome before becoming archbishop of Milan.²²

The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity could muster some expertise on Islam through its missionary contacts. Joseph Cuoq, a Missionary of Africa and expert on Islam, already had a desk at the Congregation for the Oriental Church since October 1961, which is a story in itself.²³ A first attempt to write a paragraph on relations with Muslims was taken out of the draft of *Nostra aetate* in April 1964, though several council fathers wanted one in response to the first presentation of the text on the floor of the council in November 1963.²⁴ Ten days later, another missionary, Fr. Georges Anawati, a Dominican, a scholar of Islam resident in Cairo, and a consultor to the Secretariat for Christian Unity, delivered a lecture at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas (Angelicum) entitled “L’Islam à l’heure du Concile: prolégomènes à un dialogue islamo-chrétien.”²⁵ The pieces were falling into place: a new secretariat for interreligious relations was established, expertise on Islam was now represented in Rome, and the bishops had seen a first draft of a statement on the Jews.

A new draft of *Nostra aetate*, presented in September 1964, had a brief reference to Muslims, but the council fathers wanted more, not just on Muslims but on the religions of Africa and Asia. A team of four specialists on Islam and a team of others, including those with expertise on Hinduism and Buddhism who accompanied the bishops of India and Japan to the council,

²² John Borelli, “Vatican II: Preparing the Catholic Church for Dialogue,” *Origins*, vol. 42, no. 11 (August 2, 2012) 162-174. One should not underestimate the role of Cardinal Tisserant, a man who had focused on the Middle East for decades and had supported various Catholic institutions in that region of the world as Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Church.

²³ John Borelli, “The Origins and Early Development of Interreligious Relations during the Century of the Church (1910-2010),” *U. S. Catholic Historian* 28, 2 (Spring 2010) 93-94.

²⁴ Minutes of the Secretariat meetings during Spring 1964 reveal a paragraph on Islam in one draft and then a line through it marked as a deletion. Copies are in the archives of John F. Long, S.J., a staff member of the Secretariat, Woodstock Library, Georgetown University.

²⁵ Anawati’s paper appeared in *Angelicum* 41 (1964): 145-68. See also, Dominique Avon, *Le Frères prêcheurs en Orient, Les dominicains du Caire (années 1910 – années 1960)* (Paris : Les Éditions du Cerf, 2005) 785-786. Cardinal Tisserant presided at Fr. Anawati’s presentation in November 1964.

added the additional paragraphs to the draft presented in November 1964 and approved.²⁶ In the following month, Pope Paul visited India and offered a prayer drawing the words from a Hindu Upanishad: “From the unreal lead me to the real; from darkness lead me to light; from death lead me to immortality” (*Br. Up.* I, 3, 28).²⁷

Briefest of all 16 conciliar documents, *Nostra Aetate*, the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, was something that only the deliberations and energy of Vatican II could have produced. And, despite how it was expanded beyond relations with Jews to interreligious relations with Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and many others, we should never forget its core text, paragraph 4, how it originated, and how it reversed centuries of anti-Jewish presentation of Christian doctrine. It did this by reminding Christians that Jesus was a Jew and must be understood within his Jewish context, that his mother, the apostles, and the apostolic church were Jewish, and that Jews then or today do not bear the guilt for the death of Jesus. In a few words, the text also stated respect for various aspects of other religions and encouraged dialogue and cooperation to investigate and preserve what is true and good in them, which often reflects of ray of that truth that enlightens all. *Nostra aetate* was promulgated on 28 October 1965 with 2221 approving votes and only 88 negative votes.

Like the other documents of the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, identified by some as the most successful of the conciliar commissions, the *Decree on Ecumenism*, the *Declaration on Religious Liberty*, and portions of the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, *Nostra aetate* or the *Declaration of the Relation of the Church to Non-*

²⁶ Both the journals of Yves Congar and Joseph Neuner confirm these details: Yves Congar, OP, *My Journal of the Council*, translated by Mary John Ronayne, OP and Mary Cecily Boudling, OP (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012) 633-34, and Joseph Neuner, *Memories of my Life* (Pune, India: Pune Jesuit Society, 2003) 34-36.

²⁷ *Interreligious Dialogue*, [199] 165; http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1964/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19641203_other-religions_en.html.

Christian Religions was only a beginning.²⁸ Whatever we Catholics have been doing today in ecumenical and interreligious relations along these trajectories over the last many years constitute a significant portion of the reception of Vatican II.

What We Have Accomplished in Fifty Years

I would agree with Newman's indication in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* that councils require time for the sorting out of doctrine.²⁹ Though I have not found him to say that it takes 100 years to receive a council, he gives good evidence in that direction. Fr. Thomas Stransky, a Paulist Father and later this year turns 83 years of age is convinced that he heard John Tracey Ellis paraphrase John Henry Newman about 100 years to receive a council when he studied theology at Catholic University in the 1950s. In 1960, Stransky, then 30, became one of the original four of the Secretariat for Christian Unity. He served full-time through the council and beyond until 1970, and has been a consultant to the secretariat most of the past 43 years. He followed these Secretariat texts through their developments from their point of origin and has been in countless dialogues in the 50 years since. I first met Tom Stransky in 1981 at a ten-day workshop bringing Catholics engaged in ecumenical work on the diocesan level up to date. That was a year before the Faith and Order document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, which we studied in its final draft form, and the year of the *Final Report* of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC).³⁰

²⁸ Mauro Velati, "Completing the Conciliar Agenda," *History of Vatican II*, vol. 5 (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006), p. 231. The observation by Velati on the Secretariat is important for understanding change within the council itself: "This body had come into existence as a simple bureau supplying on-Catholics with information about the Council, but by putting on the agenda subjects most central to the *aggiornamento* desired by John XXIII, it had acquired a decisive influence on the Council's work." See also Giuseppe Alberigo, "Transition to a New Age," *History of Vatican II*, vol. 5, p. 588.

²⁹ John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1960) 298-308; 346-347.

³⁰ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* was Faith and Order Paper No. 111 and published by the World Council of Churches. It is available on the internet and in so many places. The availability of *The Final Report*, the collection of

For nearly all those years since 1981, I have heard the adage that ecumenism is dead in the water. We naively expected that with so much good will at the time of the close of the council, the churches would be “united but not absorbed” in just a few years.³¹ Certain developments did come quickly—reconciliation of the Christological controversies of the fifth century between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Oriental Churches. Even *The Final Report ARCIC* in 1981 and the World Council Faith and Order convergence text, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, of 1982 came relatively early with enormous effect on the churches in the ecumenical movement.

The 1985 Synod of Bishops emphatically endorsed the trajectories of Vatican II. Clearly the assembled bishops from all the continents agreed that Vatican II was good for the church but the church had a long way to go to live up to Vatican II. Fr. Stransky wrote at the time:

The endorsement was inevitable. Even juridically, the council stands above and judges any postconciliar consultative synod, not vice versa. And no synod could stuff the stubborn genie back into a preconciliar bottle. But, the admission that, in the life of the church, Vatican II is still an infant, or perhaps an awkward adolescent, is welcome realism, and a relief.³²

Already at this Synod of Bishops, there were signs of attempts to control the unfolding and narrative of Vatican II. For example, the attempt to re-organize the 16 documents of the council by nomenclature giving priority to the four constitutions was, I think, a mistake because the least in categorization—the declarations, especially *Nostra aetate* and religious liberty, offered the newest teachings and most radical departures from the preconciliar church. It even

a series of seven agreed statements on Eucharist, Ministry and Ordination, and Authority in the Church, was published in several places and is available on the internet.

³¹ This was the formula used in the “Malines Conversations” (1921-1925), the first formal dialogues between Catholics and representatives of the churches and ecclesial communities of the west, in this case Anglicans. See, *Un Pionnier Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873-1960)*, vol. 1 (Louvain-La-Neuve: Éditions de Chevetogne, 2001) 449-530.

³² Thomas F. Stransky, “Surprises and Fears of Ecumenism: Twenty Years After Vatican II, *America* (January 25, 1986) 44.

violated the comment of Paul VI at the conclusion of the council to take the documents as a whole.³³

Some at the 1985 synod called for a catechism. After all, Trent had a catechism, and, obviously, whoever writes the catechism might control the narrative if one is willing to concede that the texts were the essential feature of Vatican II. Recall that after Trent, Pius IV established Congregation of the Council, which remained in existence until 1966, and tightly controlled the interpretation of the council.³⁴ Fr. Stransky was right. By 1985 it was too late to put the genie of Vatican II back in the bottle. To clamor even at this point fifty years later for a once and for all “authentic interpretation of Vatican II” is a red herring. The interpretation has been given to us as we follow the trajectories of the council.

John O’Malley, whose work on Vatican II and on Trent is the most helpful, prefers the word “trajectory” over reception. I refer to his two books, *What Happened at Vatican II* and *Trent: What Happened at the Council*.³⁵ The interpretation of the council, especially in the fields that we have chosen, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, is in the doing and living of these relationships. It is not ecumenism that is dead in the water; rather, our naïve understandings of the workings of the Holy Spirit through the ecumenical movement may no longer have life.

We are in a transition now too, if you have not noticed it. You would have had to been dead in the water since before February 11 not to notice it. Aside from Bergoglio resembling Roncalli more than any of his predecessors, he represents a new moment at the 50 year mark.

Paul VI guided the council to a conclusion. John Paul I and John Paul II had been bishops at the

³³ Paul VI’s address to the council at its final public session on 7 December 1965 as well as his address to the Roman Curia two weeks after the close of the council on 23 December 1965 are the best sources for his assessment.

³⁴ O’Malley, *Trent*, pp. 266-68.

³⁵ John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008). His preference of trajectory over reception is more recently found in “Introduction: Trajectories and Hermeneutics,” in *After Vatican II: Trajectories and Hermeneutics*, edited by John L. Heft with John O’Malley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012) xii.

council. Benedict XVI had served as a peritus. Jorge Mario Bergoglio was nowhere near Rome when Vatican II met; yet, at first look, he truly has possession of its trajectories. You can find written evidence in the one book we had available to us at that time of his election, *Sobre el Cielo y la Tierra*, hastily translated into English in a month's time and published as *On Heaven and Earth*.³⁶ Here is just one example:

The dialogue between culture and religion is essential, as it was proposed by Vatican II. From the beginning, the Church has asked for a continuous conversion—*Ecclesia semper reformanda*—and that transformation takes on diverse shapes throughout time, without altering dogma.³⁷

Meeting June 13 with members of the ordinary council of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis said there needs to be greater reflection on “the church, the mother church, with all its nuances, including that of synodality.” Pope Francis said each of the eight cardinals he named in April to advise him on the reform of the Roman Curia mentioned the need to “find a path for coordination between synodality and the bishop of Rome.” Already his advisory board of eight cardinals who will guide him in reforming the curia will also be linked in some way to the synod of bishops and real collegiality will be pursued. Any bishop who has attended one of the synods of bishops since 1985 will tell you about its disappointing features. In the text prepared for the June 13 meeting -- a text the pope said would be handed to the council members -- Pope Francis had described the synods as “one of the fruits of the Second Vatican Council” and a structure “at the service of the mission and communion of the church, as an expression of collegiality.” “Open to the grace of the Holy Spirit, the soul of the church, we trust that the Synod of Bishops will undergo further developments to further promote dialogue and collaboration among the bishops

³⁶ *Sobre el Cielo y la Tierra* (Editorial Sudamericana, 2010), *On Heaven and Earth* (Image, 2013).

³⁷ *On Heaven and Earth*, p. 226.

and between the bishops and the bishop of Rome,” he had written. This could have a huge impact on ecumenical relations.³⁸

Lessons Learned

The first major realization, within just two decades of the council, was the expansiveness of ecumenical dialogue. The *Decree on Ecumenism* divided ecumenical dialogue between restoring unity between the church east and west and healing the classical divides resulting from the Reformation. Yet, as churches have moved into relationships of communion, dialogue has not let up but has increased. We have such libraries, volumes and electronic records upon records containing agreed statements, supporting papers, academic studies with solid ecumenical dimensions, theological treatises building on these for the future, summaries of developments, and published covenants and concords of communion testifying to how much bilateral and multilateral ecumenical dialogues have accomplished in the last five decades. Now fifty years after the council the arena is more global than ever. Younger Christians today are accustomed to religious pluralism, which they do not view as a challenge but as a rich cultural backdrop. Ecumenism of the South is now represented in the person of the Bishop of Rome. Furthermore, nowadays there is a more inclusive tent in Catholic ecumenical outreach including Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and smaller groups such as Mennonites.

One of the signs of the times is the passing of councils of churches. It endured for over 100 years in the United States. Institutions do not have the financial backing they once did. episcopal conferences and councils of churches are generally stressed financially, which was not the case 50 years ago. New formats for dialogue need to be developed for church officials to remain in contact, and different institutions, for us Catholics, universities, religious orders,

³⁸ Pope Francis’ reflections on synodality and collegiality were given during a meeting of the Council for the Synod of Bishops on 13 June 2013. “Pope says structures for collaboration, collegiality need strengthening,” Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service, June 13, 2013.

centers for social justice, need to think of ways not only to bring people together ecumenically and interreligiously but also to address current issues in ecumenical and interreligious relations.

A second lesson we have learned in the past five decades is that the severances among Christians during the Reformation were more than 500 ago and are not easily remedied in 50 years of dialogue. It was far easier for communities of Christians to split apart than it has been for them to come back together. New severances today add further to the need for a creative reconsideration of the ecumenical problem. Serious mutual reflection on the meaning of communion and fellowship need to take place. Such was the case when Bishop Donald Bolen staffed Anglican-Catholic relations for the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, today's incarnation of the earlier Secretariat. First, by agreement of Anglican and Catholic officials a new commission came into existence, not to replace ARCIC, the commission for dialogue that had developed soon after Vatican II, but to address specific issues of moving the relationship forward and through new obstacles. The new commission is the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (IARCCUM). Causes of disunity within the Anglican Communion combined with common agreements on the meaning and value of communion ecclesiology forced responses to hard questions affecting the churches and the ecumenical future. A sub-commission of IARCCUM produced "Ecclesiological Reflections on the Current Situation in the Anglican Communion in the Light of ARCIC."³⁹ Then IARCCUM issued "Growing Together in Unity and Mission," a document that summarizes the achievements of 40 years of dialogue. Both the document and the model need to be studied.⁴⁰

³⁹ http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20040608_iarccum-ecclesiology_en.html (accessed 07/11/13).

⁴⁰ *Growing Together in Unity and Mission* was published by the Anglican Consultative Council and the Pontifical Council through the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2007. It is also on the website of the Pontifical Council: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20070914_growing-together_en.html (accessed 07/11/13).

The next and third lesson follows on this: freer identities need to develop based on ecumenical achievements. We are no longer what we are because we are not the others. Remove disagreement on a pillar of disagreement in the Reformation, for example, the doctrine of justification by faith, and how will we define ourselves distinctively as Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans, and Methodists? The ecumenical movement, which developed to remove issues, also raises new ones. With agreements on full communion between various churches, pulpit sharing on a regular basis, and Eucharistic sharing agreements among various churches denomination identity requires new understandings.

A fourth lesson, though, is that few churches in the ecumenical movement have stood still. They have made decisions that have slowed the progress towards unity. The larger task ahead at times seems even further out than it did back then in the mid-1960s when we had little experience of the dynamics of dialogue and in the 1980s when we were coming to understand how dialogue at best led to slow but determined progress. Yet, think back to the first half of the twentieth century and how impossible the achievement of the ecumenical movement must have seemed. If you look back at the initial agreements that led to the major ongoing dialogues between Catholics and Anglicans, Catholics and Lutherans, Catholics and Christians of Reformed churches, you will note how they all began with a strong request for the members of their churches to live the Christian life together more visibly than they had before. That is no less true today than then. One wonders if current tensions in relationships would exist today or have the power that they do had we implemented those pleas to live the Christian life together more visibly.

Cardinal Walter Kasper published *Harvesting the Fruits*, in which he assesses the fruits of the dialogues with the Lutherans, Christians of the Reformed tradition, Anglicans, and

Methodists, to keep alive the memory of the achievements of dialogue and to initiate processes of reception of these agreements. He commented that the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between Catholics and Lutherans took considerable energy. We do not have the time, staffing, and energy to do the same with every agreement.⁴¹ At the same time, his project to harvest the fruits from these four dialogues reveals considerable agreement on our common faith, on salvation and justification, on the church itself, and on the sacraments of baptism and eucharist. Much remains for the dialogues to resolve, the ecumenism has certainly not been dead in the water. In fact, after so much dialogue, a new responsibility among the churches engaged in the ecumenical movement towards one another has emerged. We might say that we have a mutual accountability because of our decades of ecumenical interaction.⁴²

A fifth lesson, now turning to Jewish relations, is how fragile progress can be. A whole range of issues from international politics, to social challenges, to religious matters impact Jewish relations. The special feature of these relations for Christians is that they are unavoidable if we are to understand ourselves correctly. Therefore, if we change the wording of our liturgy, Jews pay attention. If we form stronger ecumenical bonds so that the world may believe, Jews pay attention and wonder about missionary efforts directed at them. We are also condemned to live the consequences of our collective history in which Jews have been a minority since the first decades of the apostolic church. Therefore, the archives of Pius XII matter a great deal.

A sixth lesson is how much the texture of the theological dialogue has changed with the inclusion of a growing number of Jewish scholars of the New Testament and Patristics period.

⁴¹ Cardinal Walter Kasper, *harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (New York: Continuum, 2009).

⁴² John A. Radano, "Mutual Accountability: Building Together on the Achievements of the Ecumenical Movement," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 47, 3 (Summer 2012) 333-354.

The *Jewish Study Bible* and the *Jewish Annotated New Testament* belong among the resources of every Christian seriously involved in pastoral work and in Christian-Jewish relations.

A seventh lesson, staying with Jewish relations, is that the serious divides among Jews remain. There is no single body representing all Jews worldwide or nationally. Orthodox Jews prefer to remain on the theological sidelines following the cautions voiced 50 years ago during the preparatory period of Vatican II. Others are ready to engage in interreligious dialogue. But, no single dialogue incorporates all Jewish concerns and all Jewish learning. That means that we need to adjust our own understandings and methods in Catholic-Jewish relations.

An eighth lesson, now moving to relations with Muslims, is how very important this dialogue is to world peace and to our own honesty on both sides. Christians and Muslims are people of social justice—it is the aspect of the New Testament that Muslims understand and even celebrate. If we Christians take the time to hear what the Qur'an says and to study how the measure of justice has been applied when Muslims write their own history just as we have done writing our history, we can make great success in ending mutual suspicion and in working together in positive ways. As someone who has spent a considerable amount of my time in church work attending to Christian-Muslim relations, I can attest to the joy of the small gains achieved by so many local and regional dialogues, some with laudable longevity, and also the sadness and frustration when a single news story causes greater harm and suspicion than any thousand points of light. We are working in a deep hole, disadvantaged by how our history has been read. Probably the most difficult problem to overcome is the understanding of Christian-Muslim relations as a grand bilateral relationship when in fact history, if allowed to break out of the stereotypes imposed on it, would speak of multilateral relationships.

A Common Word between Us and You, issued in 2007 by a special effort chaired by the Kingdom of Jordan, represents the most significant, broadly representative Muslim response to *Nostra aetate*.⁴³ Asking Christians to join in dialogue with Muslims based on the principles of love of God and love of neighbor, the statement became a point of contact in a series of conferences. The statement and subsequent conferences demonstrate that Muslims and Christians can participate as partners in a range of dialogues looking at social, political, and even theological questions together.

In relations with Buddhists, Hindus and others, we need to explore the achievements on a regional basis. Hindus and Buddhists belong to extremely diverse traditions, which are presented more uniformly than they are in reality through general interpretations of scholars. On this score, the efforts of Catholic monastics, encouraged by Cardinal Pignedoli, who headed that other secretariat, the Secretariat for Non-Christians in the 1970s, to develop relations with their counterparts among Hindus, Buddhists, even Sufis and others, needed to be raised up as a success story.⁴⁴ Dialogue Inter-Monastique/Monastic Interreligious Dialogue has been going for decades. Success in Europe and in North America led to the famed “Gethsemani Encounters,” which produced a number of volumes. DIM/MID maintains a website and a journal, *Dilatato Corde*. Spinning off of the encounters, Nuns of the West and Monks of the West meet with some regularity. Numerous lessons have been learned through these efforts.⁴⁵

The Vatican opened up a dialogue with Buddhists and ran for several meetings in the mid-1990s. One simple lesson is that everyone enjoys the benefits of a formal dialogue with the Vatican. It is the center stage. Unfortunately, in the arena of interreligious relations and to some

⁴³ <http://www.acommonword.com/> (accessed 07/11/13).

⁴⁴ Pascaline Coff, O.S.B., gave an account of this developments in “How We Reached This Point: Communication Becoming Communion,” *The Gethsemani Ecnounter*, edited by Donald W. Mitchell and James Wiseman, O.S.B. (New York: Continuum, 1997) 4-17.

⁴⁵ <http://www.dimmid.org/> (accessed 07/11/13).

extent in Jewish relations, a dialogue involving the Vatican on an international scale is so visible that it can accomplish little in substance. Critics can easily shout “compromise” whenever doctrine is taken up as though there could be some negotiation in doctrine in interreligious relations. This is where the proximity of ecumenical dialogue, which involves efforts to find language to overcome differences keeping Christians apart, to interreligious dialogue can confuse those engaged in interreligious dialogue. Mutual understanding and spiritual companionship, the more profound goals of interreligious dialogue, need not involve compromise and negotiation.

Where large communities of Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and others live side by side Christians, particular questions and topics specific to the relationships can be addressed in ongoing dialogue for mutual understanding. The mutual reading of texts is one way these dialogues have been successful. Texts are selected dependent on the relationship. Also, meditation is more and more a part of peoples’ lives.

I should say something about dialogue with representatives of indigenous traditions. The bishops of Africa clamored the loudest at Vatican II to include these. More recently, when the Superior General of the Jesuits decided to replace having a single representative on his Jesuit curia promoting ecumenical and interreligious dialogue with a board of advisors worldwide, he was advised not to forget to include specialists on indigenous traditions. The lessons are numerous first of all because many Christians inhabit both realms, those of Christian faith and of indigenous practice. Questions of inculturation overlap interreligious dialogue since many live the dialogue in their minds and hearts. We are aware too of the need for reconciliation and the addressing of past harms. We also know that questions of neglect and lack of justice rest at the core of these dialogues.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Without Vatican II, I wonder how well the Catholic Church would have survived what the future held for it:

There is a growing number of people in every country who are conscious of being the architects and authors of the culture of their own community. Throughout the world there is a continual increase in the awareness of autonomy as well as responsibility, which is of the greatest significance for the spiritual and moral maturity of humankind. This is the more evidence if we consider the unification of the world and the task laid on us of building a better world in terms of truth and justice. Thus we are witnesses that a new humanism is being born in which the human is defined above all in terms of responsibility to our sisters and brothers and to history. (*Gaudium et Spes*, 55)

This little nugget, a fresh way to expression Pope John's spirit of *aggiornamento* for the council in its final text, might be the key to the questions we ask today. The documents of Vatican II reflect self-awareness on the part of Catholics of the church as it organizes itself internally and reaches out externally. With this insight, Catholics moved into the post-conciliar world.⁴⁶

For our conference at Georgetown University on 11-12 October, 2012, recalling the opening of Vatican II fifty years earlier, we celebrated a liturgy after the keynote address on our theme "Dialogue and Catholic Identity" by Jesuit Father John O'Malley in the afternoon and the testimony of Paulist Fr. Thomas Stransky, who was there 50 years ago. At the liturgy, we had asked Archbishop Michael L. Fitzgerald, M.Afr., to preach. He was at the opening of the council as a young priest and in 1987, just after the first World Day of Prayer in Assisi in October 1986, began serving as secretary for the Secretariat for Non-Christians. Now 75 and newly retired from the Papal Diplomatic Corps, he turned to Pope John's example and his opening address to the council, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*:

The task before the Church is an arduous one, no easier today than it was fifty years ago. Yet it was one which John XXIII faced with equanimity. He wished to distance himself from "the prophets of doom", discerning the work of Divine Providence

⁴⁶ Komonchak

in the events of the time. He proposed that the Spouse of Christ, the Church, should have recourse to the “medicine of mercy” rather than “the weapon of severity”. He had a childlike trust in God, a trust that had allowed him to announce the Council with the assurance that the Holy Spirit would guide it to results beneficial for the whole Church.⁴⁷

Pope John put it this way fifty years ago:

But for this teaching [the deposit of the faith] to reach the many fields of human activity which affect individuals, families, and social life, it is first of all necessary that the Church never turn her eyes from the sacred heritage of truth which she has received from those who went before; and at the same time she must also look at the present times which have introduced new conditions and new forms of life, and have opened new avenues for the Catholic apostolate.⁴⁸

At this jubilee time of Vatican II, it might be good to re-teach the achievements of the council and the reasons why the language in the seed texts for dialogue is what it is. I find a lack of understanding widespread on ecumenical relations, on Jewish relations, and the rest from the principles stated at the council to present achievements. Few clergy are aware of the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*. Actually, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity issued another helpful text, *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Those Engaged in Pastoral Work*, in 1995, which needs to be implemented.⁴⁹ I fear too that we risk becoming again a “church of no.” In particular, the policy developed by the Pontifical Council for the Catholic Church with regard to sacramental sharing and later incorporated into canon law, needs to be studied and implemented, especially in the light the

⁴⁷ Archbishop Fitzgerald’s homily and the presentations at the October 2012 Georgetown University conference on Vatican II can be found at <http://www.georgetown.edu/vatican-II-dialogue.html>.

⁴⁸ Archbishop Fitzgerald gave his own translation of the pope’s opening exhortation, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, which can be found in its Latin form here: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_spe_19621011_opening-council_lt.html. Archbishop Fitzgerald’s homily was published as “Dialogue for Life,” *The Tablet* (8 December 2012) 13-15. Another English version of this passage can be found in Xavier Rynne, *Letters from Vatican City* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Co., 1963) 267.

⁴⁹ Both the directory and the formation text are on the website of the Pontifical Council: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/sub-index/index_general-docs.htm (accessed 07/12/13).

many agreements between Catholics and other Christians on the eucharist.⁵⁰ On our lived level of ecumenical life, more and more families have members belonging to other churches. We should remember the considerable impatience when ordinary lives of falling in love, having children and raising a family, developing careers and meeting life's challenges are on a different clock than the glacial time of church relations.

The generation of pioneers is mostly gone and the generation whom they instructed is nearing retirement. The "new generation," to which the Cardinal Kasper refers in *Harvesting the Fruits*, has indeed had a different set of ecumenical experiences. We are learning new lessons here too, namely how significant a generation change can be for the churches. Allegiance to a particular church, therefore, may become a casualty of the success of the ecumenical movement. Many younger Christians, raised in one of those churches now enjoying long-term relationships of pulpit sharing or of full common, more easily change churches or perhaps even are reluctant to identify with a single church. They feel comfortable in more than one church. Relationships, especially marriage, worship experiences, and social engagement in the mission of the church, become important factors for church affiliation than doctrine. If trends are true that the current rising generation of young adults seems less committed to institutions and affiliations but is still interested in finding worshipping communities, then church institutions beyond the congregational level may be hard pressed to find the financial and personnel support necessary to function as before. A recent statistic is that 30% of adults 30 and under are unaffiliated.

We need to find ways to engage parishes more in ecumenical and interreligious work, and in helping them individually address the particular ecumenical and interfaith questions of

⁵⁰ See Thomas P. Rausch, S.J., "Occasional Eucharistic Hospitality: Revisiting the Question," *Theological Studies*, vol. 74, no. 3 (June 2013)399-419.

their neighborhood, that is, with the religious communities of their towns and cities. This requires very creative staffing and the utilization of funds.

Keep in mind too that our local relations, not just on a diocesan level, but in our towns and neighborhood, more and more have a global dimension. These are the times in which we live. Young Christians are more pluralistic, more comfortable with the benefits of a secular society, and are more global than ever before.

Shelves of ecumenical agreements remain on the shelf until they are taken down and made the subject of study. The convergence text, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, is an example of how a text became the source for ecumenical education and further agreements in the reception process. Now a similar convergence text exists, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*.⁵¹ Do we have the energy and resources to mount as wide-spread of a response as was accomplished with *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*? In 2010 also, the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation sketched out a vision for the future, “Steps Toward a Reunited Church: An Orthodox-Catholic Vision of the Future.”⁵² Such blueprints may be the occasion for moving ahead. We should also note new and independent movements, like “Receptive Ecumenism,” developed at Durham University in the United Kingdom and gaining international interest.⁵³ Just this year, Bishop Donald Bolen and others have revived the model of the Malines Conversations, a small, somewhat independent effort between Anglicans and Catholics in the 1920s to initiate ecumenical discussions. In the twentieth century, the Malines Conversations were a singular effort when nothing else provided hope for unity between

⁵¹ <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision> (accessed 07/11/13).

⁵² The text was published in *Origins* vol. 40, no. 23 (November 11, 2010). It can also be found on websites, for example, for the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/orthodox/steps-towards-reunited-church.cfm> (accessed 07/11/13).

⁵³ <http://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/projects/receptiveecumenism/> (accessed 07/11/13).

Catholics and Anglicans. Perhaps in the twenty-first century, these new conversations, or others like them, will provide new hope for progress in restoring church unity.

One of the great minds of Vatican II was the Dominican theologian, Fr. Yves Congar. Almost immediately after the close of the Vatican II, he reflected on the major consequence of missing the point of Vatican II and looking at the word, the texts, of the council and losing sight of its trajectories. This is how he put it on 13 December 1965:

The danger is that one will not *seek* any more, but will simply exploit the inexhaustible warehouse of Vatican II. Then a post-Vatican era would open up in the way a post-Tridentine era existed. It would be a betrayal of the *aggiornamento* if we thought it could be fixed once for all in the texts of Vatican II.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Jean-Pierre Jossua, O.P., *Yves Congar : Theology in the Service of God's People* (Chicago: The Priory Press, 1968) 182.