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Guarino, Thomas G.: *The Disputed Teachings of Vatican II.* Continuity and Reversal in Catholic Doctrine. – Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2018. (IX) 214 S., pb. \$ 28,00 ISBN: 978-0-8028-7438-2

Wicks, Jared: *Investigating Vatican II.* Its Theologians, Ecumenical Turn, and Biblical Commitment. – Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press 2018. (VII) 289 S., pb. \$ 29,95 ISBN: 978-0-8132-3047-4

In the English-speaking literature on Vatican II there has never been the publication of a systematic series of commentaries or theological dictionaries like in other countries in Europe and Latin America, but the debate on the meaning of the council has never really stopped. The two recent books reviewed here constitute a good example of the state of the debate in the USA in this particular juncture in the history of the reception of the council.

Thomas G. Guarino is Prof. of Systematic Theology at Seton Hall Univ. in New Jersey, leader in initiatives of ecumenical dialogue with Evangelicals, and already author, among other volumes, of a study on *Vincent of Lérins and Development of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids 2013). One of the leading figures of this book on the hermeneutical questions surrounding Vatican II is indeed Vincent of Lérins, Gallic monk of the first half of the fifth century, author of the *Commonitorium*, written after the council of Ephesus. Vincent was involved in the discussion about the role of the Creed of Nicaea in the post-Nicaean Christological and Trinitarian definitions: if it was possible to change that Creed and how. Vincent's approach is the key to interpreting Vatican II according to G. The author of this book intends to clarify in what sense one can affirm that Vatican II changed some teachings of the Catholic Church without talking about discontinuity, or, to use Vincent's language, how the teaching of Vatican II is *profectus* (legitimate change) and not *permutatio* (change leading to heresy). G. asks: "Can reversals be theologically assimilated without calling into question the continuity and perpetuity of divine revelation?" (3) G.'s book is a response to the accusations launched against Vatican II of breaking with the previous tradition – accusations coming not only from the circles of the Society of Saint Pius X, but also, in the last few years, from academic and ecclesiastical circles in communion with the bishop of Rome, especially in the United States.

In the first chap., G. addresses "the central problem of Vatican II," that is the fact that the council remains a contentious issue at more than fifty years from its conclusion: this has to do with the issue of "the material continuity of the faith through generations and cultures" (8). The author responds with Vincent of Lérins and John Henry Newman, but also with Henri BOUILLARD (*Conversion et grâce chez Thomas d'Aquin*, Paris 1944) and his distinction between doctrinal *affirmations* and conceptual *representations* in which they are expressed, thus reconciling the idea of immutable truth

of divine revelation and historical change. G.'s intent is to show that Vatican II was "a homogeneous *profectus* of the earlier tradition" (21). The second chap. outlines the main theological principles for understanding Vatican II: analogical thinking, content and context, the meaning of reversals of previous teachings, and the council's engaging with "masking" the reversals. The third chap. analyzes key words used to describe change at Vatican II: development, *ressourcement*, and *aggiornamento*. In chap.s four and five G. engages more directly with the issues raised by those who see in Vatican II a rupture with the tradition. G.'s response to the critics of Vatican II applies Pope Benedict XVI's speech of December 22, 2005 to key issues in which conciliar teaching developed: the priesthood, the "subsistit in," ecumenism, Judaism and non-Christian religions, religious liberty. More surprising, but not for those who know the theological debate on Vatican II in the USA, the necessity to mount a defense of the legitimacy and consistency with the tradition of other conciliar teachings, such as episcopal collegiality and Revelation. The thesis is that "these moments of discontinuity can be incorporated into a proper understanding of development. Thus, they do not jeopardize the material identity of divine revelation over time." (5) What is to be noted in this book is the effort to use pope Benedict XVI's speech of December 22, 2005 in order to make acceptable the doctrinal legitimacy of Vatican II to those who usually invoke an extremely simplified summation of that speech as "the hermeneutics of continuity versus discontinuity" as ground for a creeping rejection of Vatican II in toto.

The author dialogues with John O'MALLEY's *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge 2008), while other major sources for his interpretation are John Henry Newman and especially Gerard Philips, the chief drafter of *Lumen Gentium*. Less frequent is the recourse to Yves Congar and absent is the voice of other contemporary interpreters of Vatican II, especially from Europe or Latin America. G. engages critically with an ecclesial and theological landscape in the USA which since the early 2000s has turned towards neo-traditionalism: the official institutional and ecclesiastical interpretation of Vatican II in the USA has been more influenced by Benedict XVI than by any other pope, John Paul II included. This shows in the book, which adopts a safe hermeneutic of Vatican II in order to make space for the doctrinal existence of conciliar theology – but also for the idea of magisterial development in general – in American Catholicism today, where for some Catholics Vatican II is too modern to be Catholic, while for others, it's too Catholic to be modern. This generous and commendable effort by G. comes at a price sometimes, e. g. in his analysis of *Nostra Aetate*. On the one hand, the assertion that "the language of supersessionism is entirely avoided" (116) is not shared by many interpreters of the declaration. On the other hand, if it is true that *Nostra Aetate* "left intact the church's core theological belief about Jesus Christ" (117), it must also be said that the rejection of anti-Semitism by the conciliar declaration does not easily fit with the way the relationship between continuity and change is presented here. In other words, there seems to be an underestimation of the necessity of the discontinuities of Vatican II with the previous tradition in order to become faithful to the Gospel.

Jared Wicks, SJ, was Dean of the Department of Fundamental Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian Univ. in Rome and now is scholar-in-residence at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus (Ohio, USA), and author, among other volumes, of *Doing Theology* (New York 2013). *Investigating Vatican II* collects ten very fine essays published originally between 2009 and 2015, in a period of time that coincides with the celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of Vatican II (in 2009 the fiftieth anniversary of the announcement and in 2015 the fiftieth anniversary of the conclusion).

The first part, “Major Figures and Aims of the Vatican II: Renewal and Reform” consists of five essays focusing on John XXIII, the role of theologians at the council, the behind-the-scenes of the constitution on Revelation *Dei Verbum*, Cardinal Augustin Bea of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, and Vatican II’s turn to ecumenism. The opening essay sets the tone for W.’s interpretation of Vatican II as a council that was called by John XXIII, historian of the council of Trent, having in mind not the continuation of Vatican I but a parallelism with the comprehensive work of ecclesiastical and theological reform initiated by Trent: “Angelo Roncalli saw Trent as a model for the Catholic church even in the mid-twentieth century.” (29) This is an important theological and historical insight which shows, though, its limits when the pastorality of Vatican II is narrowed down to John XXIII’s vision of Trent: in W.’s theological interpretation of Vatican II in this book, *Gaudium et Spes* has a secondary role, even though he acknowledges the importance of the debate on the pastoral constitution in the periodization of the council. The second chap., the longest in the book (31–79) on the role of the periti, is particularly important to understand the complexity of Vatican II as an ecclesiastical and spiritual event, but also as an event in the history of ideas. In the third chap. on *Dei Verbum*, W. explains his vision of a central role of the constitution on Revelation in the corpus of Vatican II, criticizing the choice made by some editions of the final documents to put *Lumen Gentium* at the beginning – a place that for W. *Dei Verbum* deserves. The short chap. dedicated to Cardinal Bea is very effective in demonstrating that the Secretariat for Christian Unity deserves a central role in any historically and theologically serious interpretation of Vatican II.

The second part, “The Council in Session (1962–1965): Outcomes and Global Traits,” has five essays: one for each of the four sessions and a final chap. on “Global Traits of Vatican II in Chapter VI of *Dei Verbum*.” In this section of the book, W. explains his periodization of Vatican II pivoting around “two dramas.” The first drama was the so-called “second preparation” that took place during the first intersession (January–September 1963, between the first and the second period) when a new agenda of the council was prepared after the rejection of almost all of the schemas of the preparation (1960–1962). The second drama took place in the third session, in 1964, around the debate on the future *Gaudium et Spes*, when it became clear that within the same conciliar majority there were rifts (especially between French and German council fathers and periti) about the theological direction taken by the pastoral constitution. The last chap., on the role of *Dei Verbum*, challenges “revisionist history” (237) of the constitution on Revelation that recently have tried to correct the negative views of the preparatory schema on “the sources of Revelation.” W. stands by the established interpretations of the schema *De fontibus* (for example, in the five-volume *History of Vatican II*, ed. by Giuseppe ALBERIGO and Joseph A. KOMONCHAK) but also re-examines the role of Pieter Smulders and Joseph Ratzinger, “neither of whom belonged to the theologically progressive lobby groups” (237).

W.’s take on Vatican II is historically very sound and clear. Theologically, his ranking of the final documents of the council follows a traditional criterion: the four constitutions first, then the nine decrees, and finally the three declarations. Within this criteriology, the author gives priority to *Dei Verbum*, which means it does not give priority to liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), ecclesiology (*Lumen Gentium*), or the relationship between the Church and the modern world (*Gaudium et Spes*). W. aligns here with other great interpreters of Vatican II in the effort to rebalance an interpretation of the council focused on ecclesiology (*Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, typical of the first post-conciliar period) with a more attentive analysis of the theology of Revelation (typical of the most recent period, also thanks to the emphasis of Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI on *Dei Verbum*). But in

W.'s book there is also a pastoral and ecclesial reason for this particular attention on *Dei Verbum*, as he writes in the introduction: "Sadly, many Catholics have not received and embraced Vatican II's attractive and rejuvenating vision of faith, worship, and life. A first reception of the council took place, but in many places this was done poorly." (3) In W.'s work there is a sense of urgency in rediscovering the history and theology of Vatican II in a way that opens a process of re-reception of Vatican II.

From these two books we see the larger issue of Vatican II in the Anglophone and North American context: an interrupted reception of the council which has created a polarized Catholicism both from the point of view of social-political worldviews and theological perspectives. In that context there are polarizing forces that pull in different directions: neo-traditionalist on one side and post-tradition or anti-tradition on the other side. All this is being reconsidered by theologians of the generation of G. and W., now that North American Catholicism begins to deal, more seriously than before, with secularization and the growth of religious disaffiliation and what that means for the reception of Vatican II. The problem is the indifference to Vatican II as a corpus and to the historical-theological debate on Vatican II in the younger generations of Catholic theologians in the USA.

The books by G. and W. are good representatives, in different ways, of a Catholic theological scholarship that tries to bridge that gap and ease the tension between neo-traditionalism and post-tradition Catholic theology. It's a hermeneutical perspective that tends to be more projected towards a reception of the texts of Vatican II that is safe from the accusations of discontinuity and rupture, rather than a reception that takes into account the possible, necessary changes both in Vatican II and in its interpretations in light of the need of global Catholicism today.

About the Author:

Massimo Faggioli, PhD, Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Villanova University, Philadelphia, USA (massimo.faggioli@villanova.edu)