

RECEIVING VATICAN II INTEREST GROUP

Topic:	Theological Fault-Lines at Vatican II
Co-Conveners:	James F. Keating, Providence College Christopher Ruddy, Catholic University of America
Moderator:	Robert P. Imbelli, Boston College
Presenter:	Jared Wicks, Pontifical College Josephinum
Respondent:	Bernard P. Prusak, Villanova University

The three-year interest group, “Receiving Vatican II,” devoted its inaugural session to Jared Wicks’s paper, “Theological Fault-Lines at Vatican II,” and Bernard Prusak’s response, “Remembering Vatican II, Attending to the Present, and Looking to the Future.”

Wicks’s paper comprised two parts. The first part looked at the *ressourcement* theology that emerged under Cardinal Augustin Bea’s leadership of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU). Drawing upon Mauro Velati’s recent 900-page edition of documents from the SPCU in Vatican II’s preparatory period (1960–62), Wicks sketched that Secretariat’s substantial contribution to the Council’s style and theological content. He first proposed that the SPCU’s preparatory drafts and revisions are early examples of what John O’Malley, S.J., has called Vatican II’s style: dialogical, expansive, inviting, and reconciling. Second, Wicks examined three pivotal theological contributions of the SPCU to the Council’s work: an elaboration of Ephesians and Colossians’ vision of the “exalted Christ” alive in his Church, which enabled the Council to articulate a more robustly Christological and pneumatological conception of hierarchy and ministry than was possible in the previously-dominant “Christ-as-Founder” view; a kind of “People of God” ecclesiology that, drawing deeply upon Scripture, wove together the ministerial priesthood with a recovery of the “royal priesthood” of all believers; and a presentation of a “pastorally comprehensive biblical movement” animating a more fruitful spirituality and pastoral care, which would influence *Dei verbum* (DV) (particularly its concluding chapter on Scripture in the life of the Church).

The second part of Wicks’s paper looked at three key dimensions of the Christology that emerged towards the end of the Council, particularly in DV and in *Gaudium et spes* (GS). First, Pope Paul VI’s address at the opening of Vatican II’s second session offered “a Christological starting-point and context” for the Council’s ecclesiological discourse. Second, DV’s “soteriological center” gave Vatican II’s teaching on divine revelation a depth and a breadth that was lacking in the “apologetically-framed fundamental theology between the two Vatican Councils;” Wicks proposed that DV be considered “logically and theologically” primary among the conciliar documents. Third, he highlighted the development of what Thomas Gertler has called the “Christological Credo” of GS 10: “[The Church] likewise believes that the key, the center, and the goal of all human history are found in its Lord and master.” This “Credo” emerged not from a clash within the conciliar “majority” between Thomists and neo-Augustinians, but from the desire of cardinals and other bishops from around the world for a more evangelical affirmation about the “singular role of Christ in human history.” The Council’s Christology, Wicks concluded, offers today to all generations “a personal anchor, an intellectual center, and powerful impetus for life and service in the variety of Christian callings.”

Bernard Prusak’s response likewise had two main parts corresponding to Wicks’s presentation. Prusak began by noting that the *ressourcement* theology highlighted in Wicks’s paper was sometimes received in preconconciliar magisterial circles with difficulty, rejection, and

even censure. He noted, too, several sharp contrasts, even reversals, between Pius XII's *Mediator Dei* and Vatican II's *Sacrosanctum concilium*. While broadly receiving the fruits of the *ressourcement* movement, Vatican II nonetheless inconsistently applied those fruits to its teaching on such matters as the Church's hierarchical structure, holy orders, and apostolic succession. "On some issues," he stated, "the tension between the data coming from scholarly investigation of the tradition and official pronouncements remains intact."

In the second part of his response, Prusak expanded Wicks's Christological focus, highlighting two other dimensions. First, he spoke of GS's affirmation of the legitimate autonomy of the created order and its corollary that contemporary men and women are increasingly aware of their capacity and responsibility for shaping their cultures. Second, he suggested that GS's Christological vision discloses Jesus as the fully human one who, in his encounter with death, shares the struggle of human freedom and reveals the ultimate triumph of self-giving love.

Prusak closed by asking whether, in light of GS's affirmation of human autonomy, "it is tenable to maintain that God made room for human creativity in the world but completely predetermined the shape of the Church for all time." Do such "new possibilities" exist in the Church today, he concluded, for women and ecumenical initiatives?

The ensuing discussion among the participants and the more than 80 attendees was wide-ranging and substantial, covering such issues as the status of the SPCU vis-à-vis other curial bodies, the relationship of liturgy and soteriology, the Council's possible Eurocentricity, and the Council's reception among younger generations.

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