

“Colberg masterfully deconstructs the widely held assumption that the Second Vatican Council turned its back on the First Vatican Council. By asking ‘what,’ ‘how,’ and ‘why’ they taught about issues of authority, infallibility, and collegiality, she reveals the common concerns and shared commitments of these two very different ecclesial events. The result is a compelling chapter in the story of a living tradition—a century-long struggle to discover what it means to be church in the modern world. This is an invaluable contribution to the ongoing reception of both Vatican councils.”

— Edward P. Hahnenberg, PhD, author of *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*

VATICAN I AND VATICAN II

Councils in the Living Tradition

Kristin M. Colberg



A Michael Glazier Book

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Preface

Why Examine The Relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II?

For many Catholics as well as for non-Catholics, the relationship between the First Vatican Council (1869–1870) and the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) is marked either by ambiguity or, worse, by opposition. For many, the name Vatican I immediately prompts the words “papal infallibility,” “centralized authority,” and “clerical leadership,” while the name Vatican II sets off the words “college of bishops,” “local church,” and “lay leadership.” These spontaneous associations of words usually imply either that these two assemblies are disconnected from each other or that they oppose each other in their ecclesiological visions. When taking the latter perspective, Catholics often feel pressed to identify themselves as proponents either of Vatican I or of Vatican II—but not of both. Can such a view be correct?

This was my question when as a graduate student I selected Vatican I as the subject of a major research paper. At the time, my knowledge of the council was exhausted by two basic pieces of information: (1) it defined papal infallibility and (2) many people had a negative view of its decrees. Even with minimal knowledge of Vatican I, I already possessed a nascent impression that the council was misguided, outdated, and relatively unimportant. My professor was at a loss as to why, given the vast possibilities in the field of ecclesiology, I would devote significant time to what he assumed would be another dry paper on papal infallibility. My motivation was not, however, a desire to investigate the finer points of the pope’s power; rather I wanted to know “*what was Vatican I trying to do?*” Presuming that Vatican I presented an inappropriate notion of authority and an inadequate view of freedom,

I wanted to appreciate the council's intent in the hope of understanding its teachings in new ways. Knowing that Vatican I and its presentation of authority presents a major stumbling block for many contemporary men and women, it seemed essential to offer some account of papal infallibility that was not entirely incompatible with modern notions of freedom. My investigation initially arose from questions about the church's ability to speak meaningfully in the modern context and a sense that, while perhaps flawed, its teachings on authority need not be seen as opposed to modern men's and women's sense of themselves and experience of the world.

Over time, this project became a study not just about Vatican I but also about Vatican II and the relationship between them. This expanded focus was organic. In examining what Vatican I was trying to achieve, it became clear that *Vatican I shared many of the same concerns and intentions as Vatican II*. This insight stands at the heart of this study. Recognizing critical aspects of continuity between these councils provides both immediate and proximate benefits. In an immediate sense it contributes to a more adequate reading of each council while offering a perspective for interpreting their relationship. The relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II remains largely unexplored as a resource for Catholic theology. This lacuna is particularly notable when one considers that current debates over Vatican II's interpretation center on the nature of its relation to tradition—specifically the question of the extent to which it reflects continuity and/or rupture with its conciliar predecessors. The void in theological reflection on the relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II can be attributed, to a large extent, to the fact that the teachings of these two councils and, significantly, their intentions, are widely presupposed to be incompatible. This perception is fueled, largely, by inadequate interpretations of Vatican I. This book seeks to provide a properly contextualized reading of Vatican I's presentation of papal authority in order to better understand its teachings and bring its voice into the conversation about Vatican II's interpretation. Rehabilitating Vatican I exerts something of a domino effect. Appreciating the meaning of Vatican I's definition of papal infallibility in its appropriate setting illumines the importance of the questions it

raised and the consequence of the incomplete answers it produced. This enhanced reading of Vatican I offers deeper appreciation of Vatican II questions which, in turn, facilitates a greater awareness of the significance and character of the conversations that have followed it.

In a broader sense, studying the relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II provides insight into overarching theological concerns, including the hermeneutics of conciliar interpretation, the nature of the church's tradition, the character of the church-world relationship, and the effective proclamation of the Gospel. This book, therefore, examines the relationship of Vatican I and Vatican II as an important theological locus in its own right and as a window into fundamental theological concerns. A key principle of dogmatic hermeneutics is that conciliar teachings must be read in light of the entire tradition and from the perspective of the way in which such discrete teachings can be integrated within that whole. Evidence of the importance and prominence of this principle can be found throughout the conciliar tradition, including within the documents of Vatican I, which take pains to show their positions as rooted in and building on the work of the council's predecessors. Seeing councils within this larger framework reflects a principle at the heart of the Christian tradition, namely, that conciliar teachings exist as part of a living tradition. They do not intend to be the only word on a particular topic; rather, they define a valid presentation of an issue that can and must be held in tension with other valid presentations. Isolating or polarizing particular councils contradicts this hermeneutical principle and raises serious theological problems.

That conciliar decrees must be seen against the expansive backdrop of the Christian faith understood holistically means that the church must engage in continual re-readings and re-receptions of them. The church must move beyond the sense that the acts of re-reading and contextualizing call into question the legitimacy of the church's tradition or its ability to adequately interpret its own positions. Efforts at re-reading need not suggest a failure of original readings and receptions. On the contrary, it is a sign of ecclesial vitality and a community that witnesses to a living tradition. An active and ongoing reception of doctrine resists stacking

Christian teachings one on top of the other as if they were inanimate; it rather integrates the content of sacred tradition into the life of the faithful through the spirit of Christ who makes all things new. The need for continual re-readings and re-receptions suggests that conciliar texts are never finished. Their teachings can always be better understood by refracting their meaning through the lens of other legitimate expressions of the faith.

This book provides a coherent account of the relationship between the First Vatican Council and the Second Vatican Council. It argues that Vatican I and Vatican II do not stand in opposition to one another but enjoy a relationship of complementarity. In other words, their relationship is not one of *either/or* but one of *both/and*. Drawing on the church's own tradition as well as the best of historical and theological scholarship concerning Vatican I and Vatican II, the chapters that follow demonstrate that properly contextualizing these councils illumines fundamental agreement between them; an agreement that is sufficiently strong to allow their difference to be seen as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. In order to express the full catholicity of the Catholic faith and present it effectively in the modern context, the church must develop lenses for interpreting its tradition that can fruitfully integrate all legitimate aspects of it.

The book's account of the both/and relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II unfolds in eight chapters. The first chapter considers the nature of the church's conciliar tradition and the problems that arise from attempts to polarize particular councils and, in particular, the two most recent councils. It argues that efforts to set Vatican I and Vatican II in a competitive relationship, usually as a means of achieving clarity, frustrate the church's ability to present a coherent message and speak meaningfully today. Chapter 2 establishes the context in which Vatican I's decrees can be read appropriately; specifically, it looks at historical and theological factors which influenced *why* Vatican I taught what it taught. Chapter 3 engages in a close reading of Vatican I's definition of papal infallibility by attending to the way that the council's context influenced both the form and the content of this teaching. It demonstrates that (1) *what* the council taught is considerably more limited than is generally perceived and (2) *how* the

council taught is considerably less rigid. Chapter 4 examines the immediate reception of Vatican I's teaching on papal infallibility following the council's suspension. In particular, it considers how the council's inability to complete the more comprehensive document on the church it had intended impacted the way that some bishops interpreted the meaning of its texts.

Attention shifts in chapter 5 to the historical and theological context of Vatican II. It demonstrates that the teachings and silences of Vatican I serve as a critical context for the drama and decisions that unfolded at Vatican II. In other words, a significant element of *why* Vatican II taught what it taught was the need to balance and complete Vatican I's texts. The sixth chapter examines *what* and *how* Vatican II taught regarding the authority of the bishops in *Lumen Gentium* 18–23. This examination highlights how the content and style of Vatican II's presentation of episcopal authority draws from Vatican I's presentation of papal authority in key ways. The final chapter explores the *both/and* character of the relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II. The chapter illustrates that proper contextualization of both councils illumines fundamental continuity between their presentations of the church. It sketches some of the vast implications of this relationship for the church's engagement with a wide range of contemporary issues and its efforts to advance critical dialogues.

This book is about the relationship between Vatican I and II and what this relationship reveals regarding the nature of the church. It retrieves Vatican I from the margins of Catholic discourse and, in doing so, initiates a chain reaction, the end result of which is a greater ecclesial self-understanding and more coherent Christian discourse. The contextualization achieved by directing questions of *why*, *how*, and *what* at each council demonstrates that Vatican I and Vatican II are fundamentally harmonious, offering a coherent presentation of many issues on which the church is often charged with incoherence. Providing a more accurate view of this relationship succeeds in the original aim of asserting the church's ability to speak meaningfully in the modern context and to provide satisfying answers to the questions posed by modern men and women. It facilitates the church's efforts to speak meaningfully by affirming the coherence of the church's presentation of topics

such as authority and freedom and by clarifying the character of the church's living tradition.

Before proceeding, I would like to acknowledge many of the people who have assisted in bringing this book to publication. My greatest debt is owed to Robert Krieg of the University of Notre Dame and to Shawn Colberg of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University. Bob has been a constant source of support, ideas, editorial assistance, and friendship. He has spent countless hours discussing this manuscript with me and has read drafts of it at every stage. No one could ask for a better or more dedicated mentor. His generosity of time with his students and colleagues, skill in teaching, outstanding scholarship, clarity in writing, and sense of humor are things that I hope to emulate in my own career. Shawn has been a partner in this project, and without him it would not exist. Everything that I have written is better for having discussed it with him, from having learned from him, and from his superb editing of my work. He also acted selflessly to create the time and space needed for research and writing. I could never express the full extent of my gratitude for all Shawn did so that my goals could be realized.

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I would also like to thank the Department of Theology at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University and the School of Theology at Saint John's University for the support they provided during the writing of this manuscript. Thanks also go to my colleagues on the Reformed-Catholic dialogue who helped me to think about the ecumenical implications of this study. Additionally, I am grateful to Liturgical Press and Hans Christoffersen, in particular, for their superb handling of this project through the many stages of its publication.

Heartfelt gratitude goes to my family, particularly my daughters Mary Clare and Catherine. They are a source of constant joy and pride. They remained good natured and positive all the times when mom had to "go to work." When I would feel frustrated and not sure about how to move forward Mary Clare would say, "Mom, if you don't know what to say just write, 'violence doesn't solve anything.'" So, I add her contribution here. To be equitable, Catherine's suggestion was "always do your best." Thanks also goes to my father, Gene Brantman, who passed away in the course of this project but who would have been among the first to help me celebrate its conclusion. My mother, Kathleen Bell, and stepfather, Dennis Bell, have been incredibly supportive throughout the many stages of this book's development; their generosity in many things helped make this project a reality. I am also grateful to my sister Ally, brother-in-law Mario, nephew Mario, and niece Lulu and to my in-laws, Mike and Karin Colberg, for their help and the respite they provided along the way. Several other teachers, friends, and colleagues contributed to this project in invaluable ways, including Lawrence Cunningham, Richard McBrien, Lamen Sanneh, Randall Zachman, Margaret Farley, Edward Hahnenberg, Christopher Ruddy, Harold Ernst, Rita George Tvrtković, Steve Rodenborn, Elizabeth Miller, Colleen Hogan Shean, and Jennifer Deslongchamps. This book would not be possible without the friendship and support of these people. The joy of this publication stems not only from its content but in recognizing a deep and life-giving network of friends and colleagues who have made the goals I set for myself possible.

CHAPTER ONE

Vatican I and Vatican II as Part of a Living Tradition

*The central hermeneutic problem in the reception of Vatican II is: Is Vatican II to be read in the light of Vatican I, or is the direct opposite the case, or will the as yet unachieved reconciliation of the two councils show the necessity of a further stage in the development of ecclesial self-understanding?*¹

—Hermann Pottmeyer



The First Vatican Council began on December 8, 1869, in Rome's St. Peter's Basilica, and it abruptly adjourned on October 20, 1870, in this same grand church. It was comprised of approximately 737 participants. These bishops and church officials, most of whom were from Europe, set out to work on fifty-one schemas or proposed decrees. They managed, however, to discuss only six of these texts, of which they acted on only two. To be precise, they approved only one part of one text and one part of another text. They departed from St. Peter's Basilica after eleven months following the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War.

¹ Hermann Pottmeyer, "A New Phase in the Reception of Vatican II: Twenty Years of Interpretation of the Council," in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua, and Joseph A. Komonchak, trans. Mathew J. O'Connell (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987), 27–43, at 33.

2 *Vatican I and Vatican II*

The Second Vatican Council commenced on October 11, 1962, also in Rome's St. Peter's Basilica, and it ended there on December 8, 1965. The council included more than 2,600 bishops from all around the world, who sat in bleacher-like rows of seats that ran the length of the church's nave. These bishops and church officials initially received seven draft texts or schemata for their deliberations, and yet after their four sessions they generated sixteen documents, of which four are "constitutions," nine are "decrees," and three are "declarations."

Although these two councils are separated by less than a hundred years, they can seem to stand apart in many ways. In the five decades that have passed since Vatican II's conclusion, there is still no consensus regarding its relationship with its predecessor. It seems that for many scholars, the only link between these councils is geography, or at best, their nomination in the official canon of ecumenical councils. The question thus arises: what is the relationship between these two significant church assemblies? While this question is important in itself, it also surfaces other questions about what came after these councils and the nature of the church itself. In the decades since Vatican II, and particularly within the last twenty-five years, the church has focused increased attention on the theme of reception and shifted to greater governance through regional synods. Some argue that the increased reliance on gathering the bishops in this manner is inconsistent with, or even a rejection of, the notion of papal authority offered by Vatican I. Others assert that the increasing use of synods indicates that Vatican II's teachings have become outdated, and the church has moved beyond them. In light of these conflicting perceptions, one must ask: what does the current shape of the church have to do with either of these councils? While the connections between these developments are not always understood or appreciated, there are critical links between Vatican I and Vatican II and the models emerging in the church today. Recognizing continuity between these councils is essential for understanding them and, more broadly, for appreciating the nature of the church's living tradition.

A critical problem today is that many people are unwilling to acknowledge any continuity or positive relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II. They see these councils as offering con-

flicting positions on fundamental themes such as the character of the church-world relationship, the nature of revelation, and the exercise of ecclesial authority. These differences seem to suggest that Vatican I and Vatican II are incompatible and therefore, rather than studying them together, one is forced to decide between them.² This creates the perception that one must choose *either* Vatican I's presentation of the church *or* Vatican II's. Presented with such a dichotomy, it is generally the case that Vatican II's teachings are preferred to those of its predecessor.³ Vatican I's tone, its centralized view of the church, and its definition of papal infallibility appear to be at odds with contemporary sensibilities and, as such, are elements that many are eager to leave behind. Thus, for some, allowing Vatican I to recede into the distance seems to provide the best solution; it allows dialogue to proceed more quickly by avoiding the lengthy detour of engaging Vatican I's teachings more carefully and locating them within the larger Catholic tradition. There are others in the church, however, who resent Vatican II for seemingly disrupting the longstanding certainties of Catholicism. These Catholics would like to see Vatican II recede into the past as the hierarchy rebuilds the church and restores its strong foundation.

The solution of polarizing Vatican I and Vatican II which, on one level, appears to solve seemingly intransigent challenges, in fact, creates critical problems. Setting the teachings of these councils as oppositional contributes to the perception of the church's incoherence on multiple levels. On one level, it frustrates the

² At present there are no monograph-length scholarly studies that consider Vatican I and Vatican II in relation to one another. In recent years, however, increased attention has been directed at exploring the relationship between Vatican II and the Council of Trent (1545–1563). An excellent volume comparing the two councils is *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations*, ed. Raymond Bulman and Frederick Parrella (London: Oxford University Press, 2006). While such studies have borne considerable fruit, it is notable that their success has not yet inspired scholars to produce similar comparisons between Vatican II and its immediate predecessor.

³ Regarding contemporary preferences for Vatican II over Vatican I, a telling anecdote is that when one attempts a Google search of "Vatican I history" the first result which appears is "Did you mean 'Vatican II history'?"

interpretation of Vatican I's and Vatican II's texts by failing to recognize the existence of significant continuity and complementarity between them. The councils convened by Pius IX and John XXIII met roughly one hundred years apart and include the only two constitutions on the church in the conciliar tradition. Reading their presentations of the church together allows them to reflect light on one another, which illumines elements of their meaning that cannot be seen when the councils are viewed in separate silos of interpretation.

On a more global scale, the denial of a dynamic relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II conflicts with critical aspects of the church's self-understanding. Fundamental to Christian theology as a whole and the conciliar tradition in particular is the belief that the Holy Spirit guides the church in formulating its teachings and cannot contradict itself. Accordingly, the Christian paradigm maintains that all expressions of divine revelation legitimately established in the church's tradition norm one another and work together to convey aspects of the one Christian faith. As such, conciliar teachings exist as part of a living tradition; they do not intend to be the only word on a particular topic but a valid presentation of a matter of faith to be held in tension with other valid presentations. This point is expressed by Cardinal Walter Kasper who notes that:

An important concept, valid for all Councils [is that] the church is the same in all centuries and in all Councils. That is why each council is to be interpreted in the light of the whole tradition and of all Councils. The Holy Spirit who guides the church, particularly its Councils cannot contradict Himself. What was true in the first millennium cannot be untrue in the second. Therefore the older tradition should not be simply considered as the first phase of a further development. The other way around is also true: the later developments should be interpreted in the light of the wider, older tradition.⁴

⁴ Walter Kasper, "Introduction to the Theme and Catholic Hermeneutics of the Dogmas of the First Vatican Council," in *The Petrine Ministry: Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue*, ed. Walter Kasper (Mahwah, NJ: Newman Press, 2006), 7–23, at 17.

Giuseppe Alberigo provides a helpful image for conveying this point by observing that the great conciliar assemblies constitute the “spinal column” of the Christian tradition. He adds that “knowledge of their unfolding offers the church an awareness of its basic choral dimensions and evidence of crucial instances of the Spirit’s interventions in history.”⁵ Similar to the way that a chorus derives its beauty not in monotony but in a mix of voices that provide points and counterpoints, the conciliar tradition requires a variety of expressions, held in tension with one another, to illumine the mystery at the heart of the Christian faith. Attempting to polarize the teachings of Vatican I and Vatican II not only threatens a kind of choreographic richness in their ongoing interpretations but also leads to something of a “conciliar scoliosis” or unnatural curvature of interpretation which threatens to miss the Spirit’s full disclosure to the people of God.

The principle that each council must be seen in the context of the whole conciliar tradition has not always been observed in efforts to interpret Vatican I and Vatican II. Not enough has been done to consider how Vatican I’s teachings, with their seemingly sharp edges, might be better understood and tempered when placed in a wider theological context. Instead, Vatican I’s teachings, particularly its definition of papal infallibility, are regularly isolated from other legitimate teachings of the theological tradition—thus obfuscating their meaning. Similarly, trying to understand Vatican II properly, in the context of the whole Christian tradition, cannot be achieved if its immediate predecessor is eschewed and Vatican II is placed into a tradition that ignores that which directly preceded it. In recent years, considerable attention has been given to Vatican II’s relationship with the larger conciliar tradition and, in particular, to the question of whether Vatican II represents rupture or continuity with the rest of the conciliar tradition.⁶ Strikingly, Vatican I’s voice is rarely introduced into the

⁵ Giuseppe Alberigo, preface to *History of Vatican II*, vol. 1: *Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak and Giuseppe Alberigo (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books; Leuven: Peeters, 1995), xi–xv, at xi.

⁶ A good summary of some of the central aspects of this debate and its implications is found in Neil Ormerod, “Vatican II—Continuity or Discontinuity?”

conversation.⁷ Given Vatican I's and Vatican II's chronological proximity and shared focus on the church, the question of Vatican II's relation to tradition ought not to be adjudicated apart from considering the ways that it can be seen as continuous and discontinuous with its most immediate predecessor. To fully understand Vatican I and Vatican II, they must be subject to the normal and common principles of dogmatic hermeneutics which demand that they be viewed in relation to one another and within the conciliar tradition as a whole.

Finding harmony between Vatican I's and Vatican II's positions requires re-readings and re-receptions of their texts to discern how their teachings work together to shed light on the oneness of the Christian faith. Such re-readings and re-receptions do not suggest a failure of original readings and receptions; nor are they an *escamotage* [sleight of hand] used by theologians to paper over insurmountable theological problems.⁸ Rather, returning to these

Toward an Ontology of Meaning," *Theological Studies* 71 (2010): 609–36. The sense that the council, while maintaining deep continuity with tradition, introduces elements that are discontinuous with what came before it is most often associated with Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komanchak, eds., *History of Vatican II*, 5 vols. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995–2006). Also critical to this perspective is David G. Schultenover, ed., *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* (New York: Continuum, 2007). The sense that there is no real rupture in Vatican II's documents is associated with Agostino Marchetto, *Il Concilio ecumenico Vaticano II: Contrappunto per la sua storia* (Vatican City: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2005). This work has been published in English as *The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council: A Counterpoint for the History of the Council* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2010).

⁷ Despite the overall lack of attention to the relationship of Vatican I and Vatican II, there are some scholars who have noted its interpretive potential. Two critical sources on this topic are Hermann Pottmeyer, *Towards a Papacy in Communion: Perspectives from Vatican Councils I and II* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1998), and William Henn, *The Honor of My Brothers: A Brief History of the Relationship between the Pope and the Bishops* (New York: Crossroad, 2000). Some important texts on this issue are, Pottmeyer, "A New Phase in the Reception of Vatican II"; Pottmeyer, "The Petrine Ministry: Vatican I in the Light of Vatican II," in *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin* 65 (2004): 20–24; and Kasper, "Introduction to the Theme and Catholic Hermeneutics of the Dogmas of the First Vatican Council," in *The Petrine Ministry*, 7–23.

⁸ Kasper, "Introduction to the Theme and Catholic Hermeneutics of the Dogma of the First Vatican Council," 13.

texts and engaging them anew is indicative of the way that Christian teachings are not merely stacked one upon the other but integrated into the life of the faithful through the spirit of Christ. Such re-readings and re-receptions are tasks that are characteristic of a community that witnesses to a living tradition. Kasper writes that:

The concept of reception, which has often been neglected in the past, is fundamental for Catholic theology, particularly for ecumenical theology and the hermeneutics of dogmas. Such reception and re-reception do not mean questioning the validity of the affirmation of a Council; rather, they mean its acceptance on the part of the ecclesial community. This is not merely a passive and mechanical acceptance; rather, it is a living and creative process of appropriation and is therefore concerned with interpretation.⁹

Ongoing efforts to read and receive the teachings of ecumenical councils do not undermine the importance of earlier readings and receptions. The church must avoid the temptation of seeking to resolve the tensions between them too easily and instead strive to see their differences within the context of the profound realities that unite them.

I. Identity Crisis

The perceived incompatibility of Vatican I and Vatican II frustrates the church's ability to adequately interpret its own teachings and contradicts its own hermeneutic principles; it also hinders its capacity to speak meaningfully in the modern context. Attempts to polarize the teachings of Vatican I and Vatican II contribute to an identity crisis in the church described by Kasper.¹⁰ Kasper argues that a fundamental aspect of the church's struggle to convey

⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰ Kasper has a particularly interesting development of this argument in his article "Nature, Grace and Culture: On the Meaning of Secularization," in *Catholicism and Secularization in America*, ed. David Schindler (Notre Dame, IN: Communio Books, 1994), 31–51.

its message effectively today is that it does not know its own faith well enough to express it convincingly. While the church's difficulties are often attributed to outdated and otherwise ineffective presentations, Kasper argues that the problem also stems from internal tensions and a lack of clarity regarding critical elements of the church's own identity. This lack of self-understanding contributes to an impression that the church's message is at best incoherent and at worst contradictory. Ultimately, Kasper argues that the church must work to determine *what* it has to say to the modern world rather than just considering *how* to present its message.¹¹ It is important to clarify that Kasper's argument that the church must turn inward to achieve greater self-understanding so that it can speak meaningfully in the world does not exclude the opposite approach, namely, the need for the church to reach out to the world so that it might come to know its own identity more deeply. In other words, Kasper's call for the church to look *ad intra* to promote greater clarity *ad extra* is not exclusive of a recognition that the ecclesial community can often come to know itself most deeply, particularly through its encounters with those outside its visible boundaries. These two approaches are complementary, not mutually exclusive.

The inability to articulate a coherent relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II contributes to the church's "identity crisis" in at least four distinct ways. First, the fact that the church cannot see harmony between the positions of its two most recent ecumenical councils conveys the sense that it is unable to comprehend its own teachings and suffers from a critical lack of self-understanding. The perceived dichotomy between Vatican I and Vatican II forces believers into a type of schizophrenia or amnesia regarding the church's own most authoritative teachings. This unresolved tension also raises questions about whether the church is, in fact, guided by the Holy Spirit and a reliable teacher. If Vatican I and Vatican II cannot be reconciled, and Vatican I is deficient as some perceive, then can we say that the Spirit is always reliably present, especially in the work of councils? This calls into question the nature of the church's tradition and a core element of its identity.

¹¹ Kasper, "Nature, Grace and Culture: On the Meaning of Secularization," 32.

Second, the perception that Vatican I and Vatican II assert seemingly contradictory views on two of the most fundamental issues of the post-Enlightenment world, namely, authority and freedom, creates major problems for the church in the modern context. In order to speak meaningfully today, the church must offer a satisfying account of human freedom and demonstrate that authentic freedom is not inhibited by either divine providence or the exercise of ecclesial authority. Some fear that Vatican I's definition of papal infallibility is fundamentally irreconcilable with modern views of freedom so that its affirmation only confirms the incompatibility of the church's worldview with modern sensibilities. Ultimately, the church's apparent inability to offer a coherent account of authority and freedom, two loci which stand at the center of modern men's and women's self-understanding, fosters the sense that the church is a relic of a previous age and is incapable of providing satisfying answers to the most urgent contemporary questions.

A third way that the polarization of Vatican I and Vatican II contributes to the church's identity crisis is that it produces division within the Catholic community by creating a sense that members must choose *either* Vatican I's strong presentation of papal power *or* Vatican II's affirmation of collegiality. The impression that there are two distinct options or models of church leads to a sense that there is more than one type of Catholic—for example, a "Vatican II Catholic" or a "traditional Catholic"—and that one of these is more "authentically Catholic" than the other. This division weakens the church at a time when unity is desperately needed.

Finally, the perceived incompatibility of Vatican I and Vatican II generates critical problems in the ecumenical sphere. Issues of authority are at the heart of some of the most difficult ecumenical exchanges, and Vatican I's view of the papacy is often seen as "the largest and most scandalous stumbling block" to dialogue.¹² Marginalizing Vatican I's teachings as "not our real position" does not advance authentic dialogue but can only support facile agreements which distort Catholic positions and disrespects our dialogue partners. On the other side, insisting on Vatican I's model of the church as the only valid model, without reference to and

¹² Maximos Vgenopoulous, *Primacy in the Church from Vatican I to Vatican II* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013), 3.

integration with the larger conciliar tradition, presents a seemingly insurmountable obstacle in the quest for Christian unity. Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, rejected a rigid insistence on this model and advocated, instead, for the need to “find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation (UUS 95).”¹³ For ecumenical dialogue to flourish, the church must find ways to see Vatican I as part of a larger whole and demonstrate that it is compatible with the view of episcopal collegiality presented at Vatican II.

These four challenges, individually and collectively, create the impression that the church does not fully understand its own message and, as such, cannot serve as a fruitful dialogue partner or a valuable resource for modern men and women. Demonstrating core agreement between Vatican I’s and Vatican II’s presentations which appear, at best, in tension with one another and, at worst, in direct conflict would manifest an important step toward ameliorating the identity crisis in the church today and augment its ability to speak meaningfully to contemporary questions.

II. Hermeneutic Challenges

The failure to recognize a dynamic relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II stems largely from the fact that both have regularly been subjected to noncontextual readings. Interpreters of Vatican I and Vatican II have often approached the councils’ teachings apart from their relation to particular historical and theological settings or have removed them from the wider context of a larger document or collection of documents. Additionally, as noted above, their teachings have often been considered apart from the conciliar tradition as a whole. As a result, neither council’s teachings have been fully received as a body of texts that are

¹³ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint* (On Commitment to Ecumenism), May 25, 1995, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html.

inherently connected, reflective of a particular historical and theological situation, and part of a larger theological tradition.

While both Vatican I and Vatican II suffer from inadequate, noncontextual readings, it is also the case that each has its own specific interpretive challenges. In regard to the interpretive problems associated with Vatican I, the extent of the misunderstandings of the council's teachings was captured by the late John Tracy Ellis, professor at The Catholic University of America, when he said, "It is doubtful that any event in the history of the modern Church ever gave rise to a greater flow of misinformation than the First Vatican Council."¹⁴ According to Ellis "a web of error, misunderstanding and misinterpretation" surrounds Vatican I and has made it difficult to discern the council's true meaning and import for contemporary theological discussions.¹⁵ A central difficulty fueling this misunderstanding is the fact that insufficient attention has been directed to the nature and intent of the council as a whole. Many studies of the First Vatican Council are, in fact, studies of the question of papal infallibility and are found in books about the issue of Petrine authority. The tremendous attention paid to the definition of papal infallibility in the fourth chapter of *Pastor Aeternus* has led to a lack of substantive engagement with the overall theology represented in the council's teachings.¹⁶ Additionally, the fact that papal infallibility has often been assessed

¹⁴ John Tracy Ellis, "The Church Faces the Modern World: The First Vatican Council," in *The General Council: Special Studies in Doctrinal and Historical Background*, ed. William McDonald (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1962), 135. Archbishop Kenrick of St. Louis also commented on the high degree of misinformation associated with Vatican I. His conclusion was that much of it was intentional. On returning from the council, he described it as "the one event in recent times, the history of which is most disputed and most studiously concealed from the knowledge of the public." See Peter Kenrick, *An Inside View of the Vatican Council* (New York: American Tract Society, 1871), 5.

¹⁵ Ellis, "The Church Faces the Modern World," 135.

¹⁶ Some notable exceptions to the dearth of substantive scholarship on the First Vatican Council as a whole include: Roger Aubert, *Vaticanum I* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1965); Cuthbert Butler, *The Vatican Council*, vols. 1 and 2 (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930); Klaus Schatz, *Vaticanum I 1869–70* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1992); and Ulrich Horst, *Unfehlbarkeit und Geschichte* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1982).

juridically rather than theologically has further contributed to the lack of a holistic reading of this council.

A second factor complicating the reception of Vatican I is the persistent sense that a maximalist interpretation of its texts represents the only proper reading of them. This perception gained prominence shortly after Pope Pius IX adjourned the council on October 20, 1870. A small number of church officials and scholars who avowed an extreme and rigid interpretation of Vatican I's definition of papal infallibility were quick to promote the view that the council had both ended conversations regarding the pope's power and effectively concluded all debate on authority in the church. They presented its texts not as one legitimate view of ecclesiastical power but as *the* definitive view. In other words, they sought to present Vatican I's teachings as "the definitive culmination of ecclesiology and the ecclesiastical order."¹⁷ This position was held by only a small fraction of bishops at the council, but for a variety of reasons that will be explored later, it grew unchecked after the council's suspension. The way that the maximalist perspective has come to dominate the interpretation of Vatican I has given rise to the impression that the council presents papal power in a severe and unyielding way, one which is all but impossible to integrate with other models of ecclesial authority.¹⁸

Turning to Vatican II, a distinct interpretive challenge facing that council has been the long-dominant practice of generating separate commentaries on each of its documents as a means of disseminating their teachings. Even before the council's conclusion,

¹⁷ Pottmeyer, *Towards a Papacy in Communion*, 111.

¹⁸ Some, most notably Hans Küng, have raised questions over the legitimacy of Vatican I, given concerns about the level of freedom at the council. Thus, Küng would suggest that it is not that Vatican I has been underexamined but that it should be intentionally left out of the conversation all together. While the issues raised by Küng are important, it is not the case that they necessarily require a rejection of the council. Yves Congar made a similar assessment, noting that Küng's questions "invite us to a new 'reception' of the dogma of *Pastor Aeternus*, a 'reception' under new conditions thanks to a more comprehensive and better balanced ecclesiology, with a deeper knowledge of history, particularly that of the Roman See with the East." See Congar, "*Le journal de Mgr Darboy au concile du Vatican (1869–70)*," ed. André Duval and Yves Congar, *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 54 (1970): 417.

there were many initiatives on the diocesan, national, and universal levels to publish texts to describe and interpret Vatican II's positions on topics such as the liturgy, the laity, revelation, and religious freedom. This method certainly bore fruit and played a critical role in the initial stages of the council's interpretation. The encapsulation of particular themes and individual texts, however, through lengthy commentaries, had the unintended double effects of distancing readers from the actual documents and obscuring the council's overall theology. This type of introduction to the council's work yielded the unfortunate result that "people acquired a somewhat overly abstract idea of Vatican II, as though it were simply a collection of texts, too abundant a collection!"¹⁹ The council, for many, came to be understood as "nothing but words."²⁰ What was lacking was a theological perspective capable of integrating the council's diverse expressions by providing an overarching framework for its documents.²¹

Another impediment to Vatican II's interpretation arises from the documents themselves. While there is serious tension over how to best read and interpret the council's texts, it is also the case that there are significant tensions within the texts themselves. In other words, the tensions related to Vatican II's teachings are not only perceived—they are real. At various points between the conciliar documents, and even within particular documents themselves, seemingly conflicting positions are articulated and then left unresolved. This tension does not arise from an error but is a product of the fact that the council was content with "descriptive

¹⁹ Alberigo, preface, *History of Vatican II*, 1:xi.

²⁰ Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), xiii.

²¹ Many excellent studies on the interpretation of Vatican II have appeared in recent years including, Ormund Rush: *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004); Edward Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2007); *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II*, ed. Catherine Clifford and Richard Gaillardetz (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012); Catherine Clifford, *Decoding Vatican II: Ecclesial Identity, Dialogue and Reform* (Paulist Press, 2014); and *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?*, ed. David Schultenover (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007); Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012).

exposition rather than synthetic explanation."²² It tolerated such tension because its goal was to hold up elements of the church's life, but "left it to theologians to construct a synthesis of them."²³ Given that real differences exist within Vatican II's texts, it is possible, and in many senses easier, to read the council's teachings selectively rather than holistically. By engaging in noncontextual readings of Vatican II, it is possible for multiple readers to find warrant for conflicting and even contradictory positions within its texts. As such, interpreters can argue for different positions from common readings of texts with each using compelling textual evidence as support. Without recourse to contextualized hermeneutics to determine which view constitutes the most appropriate reading of a particular passage, interpretations of conciliar texts can seem helplessly mired in irreconcilable differences of scholarly opinion.

Surveying the weaknesses and questions surrounding the interpretation of Vatican I and Vatican II, it becomes clear that their teachings are neither fully understood nor, consequently, fully received. Further contextualization is needed so that both councils can be interpreted more accurately. A deeper appreciation of each council, in turn, allows for the relationship between them to be seen more clearly and illumines critical aspects of the nature of the tradition of which they are both a part.

III. Looking at the Councils through the Lenses of *What, Why, and How*

This project seeks to transcend some of the interpretive problems that have plagued the reception of Vatican I and Vatican II—and blurred the nature of their relationship—by providing additional contextualization which allows for a more adequate interpretation of each council. This contextualization is achieved, largely, by expanding on two critical insights that have been developed in ef-

²² Joseph Komonchak, "The Significance of Vatican Council II for Ecclesiology," in *The Gift of the Church: A Textbook on Ecclesiology*, ed. Peter Phan (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 69–92, at 76.

²³ *Ibid.*, 76.

forts to advance the interpretation of Vatican II. The first, developed by John W. O'Malley, SJ, is that to understand *what* Vatican II teaches one must recognize *how* it expresses its teaching. In other words, one must attend to the form or style of conciliar documents and not merely their content in order to discern their meaning.²⁴ O'Malley argues that the authentic meaning of Vatican II's texts is often missed because their uniqueness is overlooked. For decades, scholars have attempted to employ hermeneutic strategies developed in relation to other councils in their efforts to interpret Vatican II's texts without realizing that the distinctive aspects of the council's content and style could not be fully appreciated through these conventional interpretive strategies. An adequate interpretation of Vatican II, according to O'Malley, demands that one look not only at *what* the council taught, namely, its content, but also at *how* it taught it—its style.

The second insight, offered by Steven Schloesser, SJ, extends O'Malley's provocative insight by emphasizing the role that Vatican II's historical location plays in determining what happened there.²⁵ Schloesser argues that Vatican II's break with the past is "painfully obvious" and, further, that O'Malley's work provides a "genuine revelation" for grasping this historical shift and its implications for the council's interpretation.²⁶ He notes that O'Malley's insight consists in recognizing *how* Vatican II broke with the past in some ways while still remaining faithful to the tradition. This change is epitomized by the council's move beyond the restrictive task of defining theological realities—which was what councils were "expected to do"—to employing the humanistic genre of epideictic oration.²⁷ After affirming

²⁴ John W. O'Malley has considered this question in several forums. Among these are, "Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?," *Theological Studies* 67 (March 2006): 3–33; and *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

²⁵ Stephen Schloesser, "Against Forgetting: Memory, History, Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 67 (2006): 275–319.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 276.

²⁷ O'Malley characterizes this expression as "a rhetoric of praise and congratulation" meant to "heighten appreciation for a person, an event, an institution, and to excite to the emulation of an ideal." See O'Malley, "Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?," 76.

O'Malley's advances, Schloesser builds on them by asking *why* Vatican II's changes were necessary. He writes:

It is important to investigate *how* the council employed this genre. But it also seems important to survey *why* the council—in the years 1962 to 1965, framed by 1956 and 1968—needed to use such language. O'Malley has shifted our focus from *what* to *how*, from *content* to *form*. I would like to draw our attention from *form* to *content*—from *how* to *why*.²⁸

Schloesser argues that O'Malley's perspectival step back from the council's content to consider its style invites another step back, this time to consider its historical context. He argues that the experiences and anxieties of a generation who lived during a time of "historical rupture" made the changes which took place not only possible but also an "ethical necessity."²⁹ This context constitutes a key factor in *why* the council taught what it taught. Schloesser thus adds to the contextualization begun by O'Malley by pointing out the importance of attending not only *what* the council taught and *how* it taught what it taught but also *why* it taught what it taught.

The present study expands O'Malley's and Schloesser's insights by directing questions of *what*, *why*, and *how* at Vatican I's texts and posing these questions to Vatican II in new and sharpened ways. To a greater extent than its successor, Vatican I has been subjected to ahistorical and atheological readings which have seriously distorted its interpretation. Engaging questions regarding Vatican I's context and style affords a fresh consideration of this complex council and its relation to its successor. This contextualization allows Vatican I's authentic voice to be heard and to speak more effectively in contemporary conversations. This rehabilitation of Vatican I initiates something of a chain reaction; specifically, the proper contextualization of Vatican I sheds considerable light on issues of *what* Vatican II taught, *how* Vatican II taught, and most important, *why* Vatican II taught. Seeing Vatican II against this new horizon in turn facilitates a greater awareness of the signifi-

²⁸ Schloesser, "Memory, History, Vatican II," 279; emphasis in the original.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

cance and the character of the conversations that have followed it. Thus, the end result of this chain reaction is not only an enhanced understanding of each of these councils and the developments which succeeded them but also a deepened understanding of the church itself. This increased self-understanding helps lead the church out of its identity crisis and, in turn, enhances its ability to convey its message more effectively.

After applying the questions of *what*, *why*, and *how* to Vatican I and Vatican II, one can see that various interpreters have often answered these questions incompletely, if not mistakenly. A proper contextualization of Vatican I and Vatican II in light of these questions illumines that the councils share many common questions, commitments, and proximities. Yet, it is also clear that these proximities and continuities exist amid significant differences. The challenge which arises is demonstrating the way in which the unity between Vatican I and Vatican II forms a shared horizon that is sufficiently strong to maintain their differences as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Arriving at this goal requires contextualizing Vatican I and Vatican II in terms of *what*, *why*, and *how* so that our efforts to understand their relationship are guided by their authentic voices.

IV. Both Vatican I and Vatican II

Vatican I and Vatican II are connected by more than just St. Peter's Basilica. There would be grave consequences for our understanding of the church's nature and Christ's presence within it if geography were the only link between them. Hermann Pottmeyer captures the fundamental import of recognizing Vatican I and Vatican II as part of a single living tradition; he states, "Is Vatican II to be read in light of Vatican I, or is the direct opposite the case, or will the as yet unachieved reconciliation of the two councils show the necessity of a further stage in ecclesial self-understanding?"³⁰ What Pottmeyer's question probes, in part,

³⁰ Pottmeyer, "A New Phase in the Reception of Vatican II," 33.

is the question of whether the hermeneutic lenses and notion of catholicity that we apply to these councils are sufficiently flexible and inclusive in the catholic sense. In particular, is our approach to Vatican II adequately dynamic so that we can hold its teachings in tension with those of its predecessor, or do our lenses necessarily exclude them? Put another way, is the problem that a given text from Vatican I or Vatican II is inappropriate, or is it that the lenses by which we have approached them are inadequate? Showing the compatibility of Vatican I and Vatican II highlights the fact that expressing the fullness of the church's catholicity requires developing lenses for interpreting its tradition that are capable of integrating all its legitimate elements. Developing such lenses, as Pottmeyer suggests, has the power to inaugurate a "new phase of ecclesial self-understanding."³¹

This book is about Vatican I and Vatican II and their relationship, but it is also about the nature of the church as a whole. It argues that achieving greater self-understanding regarding these issues enhances the church's ability to speak meaningfully today by providing satisfying answers to urgent questions posed by modern men and women. Doing so does not imply that no differences exist between Vatican I and Vatican II or that their points of contrast can be resolved with a theological *escamotage*. Highlighting the relationship between these councils does not mean that Vatican I is free from interpretive or substantive challenges or that its teachings are as adequate as Vatican II's. On the contrary, this book seeks to understand what can be learned from these councils, and the conciliar tradition in general, by seeking to integrate their apparently divergent positions within a greater theological reality. This study develops a more adequate understanding of the relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II which is consistent with the church's own long-standing principles of dogmatic interpretation and consonant with a vibrant sense of catholicity as a *both/and* rather than an *either/or* reality. It is only in recognizing *both* Vatican I *and* Vatican II as contributing essential insights into the nature of the church that its true nature and the mystery at its heart can be preserved.

³¹ Ibid.

This book explores the relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II and the way in which this relationship is representative of the church's living tradition. Nevertheless, the study does not examine and interpret every text belonging to these councils. For example, Vatican I has two constitutions—*Dei Filius* (Dogmatic Constitution on Catholic Faith) and *Pastor Aeternus* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church). Here, we will only consider the latter. Additionally, the study will focus on Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) and even more specifically, its treatment of ecclesial authority. In many ways, the argument about the relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II could be expanded to *Dei Filius* and *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation). This study has elected to examine specific questions which motivated the council's larger purpose as well as those that affect unitive themes in their texts. To that end, *Pastor Aeternus* and *Lumen Gentium* receive primary attention because they offer the greatest potential for direct and fruitful comparisons. While a focused concentration on select texts runs the risk of non-contextual readings—the very thing this study seeks to overcome—it also has the potential to establish a vital lens for reading, relating, and interpreting the larger corpus of texts from both councils. This book thus aims to elucidate a way of understanding and relating Vatican I and Vatican II through a comparative reading of *Pastor Aeternus* and *Lumen Gentium* which may then be applied more broadly to the rich teachings found in both councils. In this case, setting aside cross-comparisons among all eighteen major texts (two from Vatican I and sixteen from Vatican II) clears the way for focus on key points of connection, making it possible to introduce a new hermeneutic for reading the councils as part of a common tradition.

Chapters 2 and 3 seek to achieve a greater contextualization of the First Vatican Council. Chapter 2 directs Schoessler's question of *why* at Vatican I, examining the way that serious external and internal threats motivated the calling of the council and the character of its response. Chapter 3 applies the questions of *how* and *what* to *Pastor Aeternus* to consider the ways that readings of the council have often misunderstood its content and the genre of its teachings. The fourth chapter examines the period immediately

following Vatican I and the way in which the council's immediate reception informs later understandings of its texts and their proper interpretation. Attention then turns in the fifth and sixth chapters to Vatican II. Chapter 5 looks at the issue of *why* Vatican II taught what it taught in light of an enhanced understanding of Vatican I and its legacy. Chapter 6 builds on chapter 5 and examines the ways in which *what* and *how* Vatican II taught are compatible with the teachings of its predecessor. It highlights the continuity between Vatican I's and Vatican II's presentations of ecclesial authority by comparing elements of style and content in *Pastor Aeternus* and *Lumen Gentium* 18–23. The seventh and final chapter leverages the insights of the preceding ones to discern the nature of the relationship between Vatican I and Vatican II as well as the character of the church's living tradition. Attention to this tradition suggests that recent developments in the reception of Vatican II, as well as many present-day questions about ecclesiology, authority, and freedom, constitute natural extensions of conversations undertaken at Vatican I and continued at Vatican II.