

of approaching the Holy See. “Immersed in the problem of conversion and therefore in the so-called postwar normalcy” (xiv), all three Republican administrations of the 1920s showed their almost absolute unwillingness to deal with anti-Catholic sentiments. On the other hand, Benedict XV’s successor, Pius XI—committed as he was to a concordat policy—did not seem to have “any particular intention” (xv) of mobilizing Vatican diplomacy and the American episcopate toward reestablishing dialogue with Washington. A progressive—and radical—change in US–Vatican relations had to await the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932 and his campaign for social reforms.

As C. explains, the substantial convergence of the inspiring aims of Roosevelt’s New Deal and the Catholic Church’s social doctrine prompted the rehabilitation of Catholicism in American society, and also resulted in an unprecedented participation of Catholics in the national sociopolitical arena. The activism of certain prominent new leaders of the American Church helped reestablish a direct line of communication between the national episcopate and the White House. The escalation of the Nazi-Fascist regimes—alarming to both Roosevelt and the Vatican—produced an alignment of views on the common need to preserve world peace and stability, and laid the foundation for a mutual collaboration and strategic partnership—an embryonic “alliance” well symbolized by the 1936 meeting between the just-reelected Democratic President and the then-Cardinal Secretary of State and future Pope Pius XII, Eugenio Pacelli.

Three years after that historical meeting, Roosevelt decided to brave the possible hostility of American Protestant circles by assigning his own “Personal Representative” to the pope—an unofficial diplomatic post specifically created for the occasion. Myron Charles Taylor, an executive of the United States Steel Corporation and an Episcopalian, took on this role, with the personal rank, but not title of, ambassador.

The establishment of full diplomatic relations between the United States and the Holy See would have to wait until 1984. But Roosevelt’s wise move, as C. demonstrates, had already built the first “bridge across the ocean.”

*Andrea Di Stefano*  
*University of New Hampshire in Italy*

*Visions of Amen: The Early Life and Music of Olivier Messiaen.* By Stephen Schloesser. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014. Pp. xxi + 572. \$50.

This dazzling, monumental study of the French composer Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992) is more than equal to the task of charting the life, imagination, and work of a rare genius. The author, a cultural historian thoroughly conversant with theology, is an accomplished musician himself, and perhaps the only scholar who could possibly offer such a comprehensive and penetrating examination of Messiaen, who represented the acme of 20th-century French modernism and a Catholicism of mystical depth and radical theological vision. One of Messiaen’s most memorable works, “Quartet for the End of Time,” was composed while he was a prisoner of the Nazis; he

would also witness upheavals in the Catholic Church, to which he remained devoted to the end, despite reservations about the Second Vatican Council—not unusual among the French artistic and intellectual elite of his generation.

Messiaen was appointed organist at L'Église de la Sainte-Trinité in Paris when he was only 22 years old. S.'s writing shines as he describes how the "mystical" composer (as he came to be called, though not always with praise) improvised during Mass, providing a kind of musical commentary. Inspired by the liturgical and scriptural texts of the season, Messiaen's aim was to bring the listener into the "experience" of the divine as "Invisible." For Messiaen himself, these improvisations were a form of worship. As his mentor, Charles Tournemire, would say, "With Messiaen, all is prayer" (143).

Strongly influenced by the Benedictine Columba Marmion's *Christ in His Mysteries* (1919), Messiaen set out to compose "biblical" music, not to be confused with the liturgical music of the sort composed by his contemporary Maurice Duruflé (much less by post-Vatican II liturgical songwriters). Marmion emphasized contemplation of "the mystery of Christ," which Messiaen took as a musical and spiritual invitation. In 1935, however, Messiaen would take what S. terms a more explicitly "theological" turn toward the development of a "theological aesthetic" (220). Again influenced by Marmion and by Ernest Hello, among others, Messiaen was now working more closely with texts and themes such as predestination, Christ's divine adoption, and the notion of "glory," which, along with "the eternal" and "joy," would infuse his work (as in the nine-part composition, "The Nativity"). Messiaen did not quite fancy himself a theologian. As S. notes, "In his theology, as in his philosophy, astronomy, and other disciplines, Messiaen was a popularizer, not a hairsplitter. Ultimately insoluble theological paradoxes are not so important to him as are the big issues" (233).

The theological turn is reflected in the book's title, which is also the name of a 1943 composition for two pianos that begins with the creation, moves through the agony of Jesus, and concludes with the final judgment and consummation of the world. S.'s treatment of "Visions of Amen" (almost 150 pages) is its heart and climax, and offers some of its most exhilarating writing. "Vision 2: Amen of the Stars, of the Planet with the Ring," for example, takes us from Pascal to Heidegger to John Updike, not as a rhetorical trick, but to link us directly to the heart of Messiaen's imagination. "Vision 7: Amen of Consummation" offers a concise yet fully adequate summary of Aquinas's defense of the bodily resurrection, an article of faith to which Messiaen adhered against any attempt to demythologize it. We learn, too, of the influence of Messiaen's life-long study of birdsong, of Greek and Hindu dance rhythms, and Peruvian influences on this composition and others—a truly catholic imagination at work, all finally and resplendently on display in Messiaen's 1983 opera, *St. Francis of Assisi*.

Those delighted with S.'s earlier work, *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism in Postwar Paris, 1919–1933* (2005), will not be disappointed here. Not every writer can bring together in a few illuminating paragraphs a 19th-century work called *The Hashish-Eaters Club*, the sound-color experiments of Charles Blanc-Gatti, and Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, all in the service of illuminating a musical oeuvre that requires expert interpretation and massive contextualization. This book is not for every theologian, nor

every musicologist, for that matter. Yet any theologian concerned with how theology informs and can be informed by the density of culture—intellectual, political, and ecclesiastical, as well as artistic—will find this book a rare stimulus to the imagination. S. elucidates for the venturesome a whole cosmos in which faith found a home in the life and work of this singular artist, whose outlook and accomplishment both transcend standard theological categories and illuminate them at the same time. Like Messiaen's works, this book is itself breathtaking, full of light and sheer intellectual joy.

Paul Crowley, S.J.  
Santa Clara University

*El Vaticano II como software de la Iglesia actual.* By Peter Hünemann. Foreword Carlos Schickendantz. Santiago de Chile: Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2014. Pp. 348. \$19.25.

Almost three years after the election of Pope Francis and the new theological horizons that his pontificate has opened, one wonders if another book on the hermeneutics of Vatican II is really necessary. After all, what seemed like a key disputed theological issue in the previous two pontificates would, under Pope Francis's tenure, seem arcane and out of place in a new ecclesial epoch of openness, change, and ongoing reform. Hünemann's essays in this volume, however, remain relevant, for they grapple with important questions of how to understand the development of doctrine, interpret the *sensus fidelium*, and read the signs of the times. Even in the time of possibility that Francis has ushered in, these issues remain hotly debated among hierarchs and theologians, as we have seen during the lead-up to the ordinary synod of bishops on the family in fall 2015.

H. is perhaps best known for his updating of Denzinger's *Enchiridion symbolorum* with conciliar and postconciliar magisterial teaching. Equally important are his numerous articles on the legacy of Vatican II and its correct interpretation and implementation. Among those who advocate for a hermeneutics of discontinuity, continuity, or continuity in reform, H. is squarely with those who emphasize the novelty of the council as an ecclesial event and the language of its documents, even while quibbling with the categories and constructs of the proponents of the hermeneutics of discontinuity for bringing the novelties of the council to the fore. The current volume, prepared by the Chilean Jesuits' Manuel Larraín Theological Center, gathers nine articles by H. on Vatican II and the theology that is informed by its methodology, not previously available in Spanish. A lengthy and helpful introduction to the articles and H.'s thought is provided by Carlos Schickendantz. The criteria used to select the articles to be translated reflects the Larraín Center's concern to engage in theological reflection informed by the council and to attend to the signs of the times in the southern cone of South America. Anglophones, however, will find that most of the articles included are already available in English.

As mentioned above, I found several articles particularly relevant to current debates about interpreting the *sensus fidelium*, the signs of the times, and understanding the