

as “an invaluable resource and a landmark of collective scholarship” (20), D’C. repeats some defamatory remarks about these five volumes. Rather than expressing “dry humour” (41), the remarks were ugly and inaccurate.

D’C. has a proper regard for what the authors of the conciliar texts intended to say and for all that was involved in the genesis of the documents, while correctly insisting on the primacy of the final text itself (22–23; see 139). He wisely warns his readers against presuming that the experts who helped draft those documents necessarily “have a privileged understanding of the final text” (83; see 203). What D’C. writes about historical, literary, and theological hermeneutics repays study. The volume could be improved with an editor who has a better eye for spelling.

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The Second Vatican Council: Message and Meaning. By Gerald O’Collins, S.J.
Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2014. Pp. xiv + 219. \$24.95.

We are on the way to celebrating the 50th anniversary of Vatican II’s closure, this year on December 8. O’Collins’s book on Vatican II’s “message and meaning” gets us into the thick of the council—its sometimes-fierce debates, the major topics it tackled, and particularly the mosaic of its final texts. Few minds in the worldwide Catholic community of theologians could bring such a rich background of scholarship to such a study. Working with the original Latin texts and giving his own translations, O’C. has written on the Second Vatican Council for decades, and he brings his encyclopedic and synthesizing mind to bear here. One line in the preface prepares the reader for the riches this book offers: “For fifty years I have been studying Vatican II; yet the documents can still astonish me with the golden bits” (ix). Indeed, O’C.’s book is a treasure trove of those golden bits.

The book does not claim to be a total synthesis. It is deliberately selective in the themes it treats and the documents it draws on, mainly three constitutions (*Sacrosanctum concilium* on the liturgy, *Lumen gentium* on the church, and *Dei verbum* on divine revelation and its transmission), as well as the decree *Ad gentes* on the church’s missionary activity, and the declaration *Nostra aetate* on the church’s relation to other living faiths. Key themes brought to the fore include the central place of the liturgy in the life of the church and the central role that *Sacrosanctum concilium* came to play during the council; the supreme importance of *Dei verbum*’s teaching on divine revelation as above all a loving personal encounter with God; and the council’s revolutionary shift in attitude regarding other religions. Through O’C.’s artful selection of these themes and documents as his focusing lenses, we are provided with a clear picture of the fundamental vision of the Second Vatican Council. A particular strength of the book is the way it investigates a theme across all the documents, beyond its treatment within the specific document devoted to that theme—for example, “revelation” in *Dei verbum*.

Without the spin of some commentators on the council who say that Vatican II did not really intend any discontinuity with the Church's official self-understanding as it was before the council, O'C. shows how, on many matters, Vatican II constituted—to use his felicitous phrase—an “official ‘about-face’” (46). But these shifts were grounded in the rich Catholic tradition going back to the very origins of the church. O'C.'s first chapter on the impact of the so-called *ressourcement* scholarship of the decades before the council, a “return to the sources” that the council embraced, shows clearly its desire for continuity with the past, what O'C. calls “the apostolic identity of the church” (55–56). For that identity to be maintained, however, the council well knew that *aggiornamento* was needed: *ressourcement*, for the sake of *aggiornamento*. Proposing a distinction between “essential” and “nonessential” elements of the tradition (55), O'C. sees the issue underlying all the issues at Vatican II was the desire to rejuvenate this “apostolic identity” of the church within the contemporary world.

I suspect that O'C. submitted this manuscript before Pope Francis's election. I would imagine that, if O'C. had time to assess the vision of our present pope, a final chapter would have indeed shown that Pope Francis's interpretation of the message and meaning of the Second Vatican Council coheres with his own: the biblical vision of a merciful God proclaimed by the prophets, with primary concern for the suffering of the poor; a church less concerned about calling attention to itself but rather turning the camera on the God who calls the church into service as a missionary on behalf of God; a church that values equality of all in the church as much as proclaiming the equality of all Persons in the Trinity; a church that sees itself as a servant of humanity, working for unity and peace among religions and nations.

I highly recommend the book for a wide range of readers, from theologians to educated nontheologians, as a valuable contribution to the literature on the Second Vatican Council.

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No Irrelevant Jesus: On Jesus and the Church Today. By Gerhard Lohfink. Translated from the German by Linda M. Maloney. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2014. Pp. vii + 330. \$34.95.

Lohfink explains that his title refers to contemporary efforts to “tame” Jesus, presenting him as just another rabbi or prophet, rejecting his views on divorce, reducing his preaching to the psychological, his eschatology to the ethical, or individualizing his emphasis on the kairoitic and the communal. But L. depicts Jesus as God's final and ultimate word, “the Word in which God has spoken God's self totally and without exception” (3). His book is about Jesus, but also about the church, the eschatological people of God Jesus founded and for whom he ultimately died. The book originated in a series of lectures given over the last several years; thus the chapters are relatively brief, easy to digest, and written to maintain the interest of the audience.