David G. Schultenover, S.J., ed.

50 Years On: Probing the Riches of Vatican II. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015.
Pp. i + 210. Pb, \$39.95.

If one were prone to judging a book by title, the present volume would immediately cause that person to question whether yet another study commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council was, in fact, necessary. To be sure, there has been no shortage of golden anniversary volumes over the last five years. There comes a time when it is necessary to separate the wheat from the chaff. In the case of *50 Years On*, a new standard has been set for scholarly volumes concerning Vatican II. As Stephen Schloesser, S.J., writes in his lengthy and informative Introduction to the volume, “the most important question in theology is ‘So what?’” (xii). It is this question that permeates the pages of each of the nineteen essays (including the aforementioned Introduction and Gilles Routhier’s Afterword) in the volume. Each essay answers “So what?” in one way or another, making the volume’s existence more than simply worthwhile; indeed, it is a necessity for all people shaped by the council.

The editor of the volume, David G. Schultenover, S.J., was editor-in-chief of *Theological Studies* from 2006 to 2014 and decided to run a series of articles in that journal focused on different aspects of the council’s work some fifty years after it took place. His motivation for this volume, as Schultenover expresses it, “was twofold: (1) to provide a text that informs readers about the reception of the conciliar documents during the 50 years following the council; and (2) to inspire readers to return to the documents themselves to see where the articles published here came from” (viii). What becomes clear while reading the essays contained in *50 Years On* is that Schultenover not only received contributions from the most intelligent scholars in the field, but that the essays all complement one another and so make the volume engaging throughout—no small feat in a collection of essays written by different scholars.

The first section of the volume features essays from two scholars who have written more about the council than almost anyone else: John W. O’Malley, S.J., and Massimo Faggioli. In O’Malley’s “‘The Hermeneutics of Reform’: A Historical Analysis,” the reader is treated to a careful study of the dynamics of reform in key points of church history, and of the way that the term “reform” comes into focus when reading the conciliar texts. As O’Malley concludes, “The council, we might now say, was animated by a *spirit of reform*” (34, emphasis in original). For his part, Faggioli provides a scintillating background of the council with his “Vatican II: The History and the Narratives.” In the course of his essay, Faggioli points to two extreme narratives of the council: the ultratraditionalist and the ultraliberal. Neither, Faggioli contends, is helpful for the church as a

whole: "The rise of the narratives in today's church has intellectually weakened the awareness of Vatican II as a historical event" (78).

In dealing with "specific interpretations" of the council, part two of the volume touches on a selection of important issues. Most fascinating to this reader is Francis A. Sullivan, S.J.'s study, "Developments in Teaching Authority since Vatican II." Written with Sullivan's characteristic clarity and erudition, the essay deals with: "(1) the subjects (the authoritative teachers); (2) the object (what they teach about); and (3) the exercise (how they teach)" (115). What follows is invaluable material on the dynamic of teaching authority in the church, focusing on controversial issues such as the USCCB's ill-advised doctrinal notification of Elizabeth Johnson's *Quest for the Living God* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007) in which the American Catholic bishops registered their belief that Johnson's work contained certain "misrepresentations, ambiguities, and errors" concerning the Catholic faith; the doctrinal authority of statements promulgated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; and the doctrine of infallibility.

The third part of the text deals with church mission. Two of the three chapters deal with particular aspects of *Nostra aetate*, and are both outstanding resources. In particular, Mary C. Boys, S.N.J.M., is to be commended for her "What *Nostra Aetate* Inaugurated: A Conversion to the 'Providential Mystery of Otherness.'" Most college instructors who teach the council to their students recognize that the shift in church teaching regarding other religions (especially Judaism) is one of the most eye-opening parts of the council for their students. In an especially astute move, Boys explains that *Nostra aetate* and the post-conciliar documents on relations with the Jews are more helpful than the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* "because a supersessionist perspective pervades the *Catechism*" (266). This essay, along with Edward Kessler's, will assist students in placing themselves into the seismic shift experienced at and after the council.

The penultimate part of the volume deals with the reception of Vatican II in three geographical regions: Africa, Asia, and Latin America. As the volume's subtitle promises, the reader will indeed find a great many riches in these essays. Since Vatican II has often been studied as dominated primarily by European interests, these three essays fill a gap in the scholarship by pointing to the ways in which the global church has benefitted from the council. Most interesting was O. Ernesto Valiente's "The Reception of Vatican II in Latin America" because it traced the roots of Latin American liberation theology. As he explains, "The church's faithful observance of the signs of the times led her directly to the concept of the preferential option for the poor, itself a development of the position of John XXIII, who envisioned the church of Christ to be

a ‘church of the poor’” (325). Clearly, one can trace this lineage directly forward to Pope Francis.

Finally, part five’s essays deal with specific documents of Vatican II. In her “Religious Life in the Vatican II Era: ‘State of Perfection’ or Living Charism?” Maryanne Confoy, R.S.C., engages in a very smart examination on the role of the religious orders after the council. Her conclusion is partly based on the reality that religious orders of women and men can help the church out of the many recent scandals in which it has found itself due to their renewed living of the charisms envisioned by their founders: “Catholics are being invited to a new level of active hope and to move beyond the culture of unquestioning submission of conscience by laity to their ecclesiastical leaders” (414).

In the particular field of Jesuit Studies, the volume is an obvious fit. In addition to the editor, Shultenover, a number of the contributors are themselves Jesuits (Gerald O’Collins, S.J., O’Malley, Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, S.J., Ladislav Orsy, S.J., Schloesser, Sullivan, and Jared Wicks, S.J.). Furthermore, the notes in these essays are filled with Jesuit figures during the council and commentators on the council, including O’Malley himself, Norman Tanner, S.J., John Courtney Murray, S.J., Karl Rahner, S.J., Jacques Dupuis, S.J., and Cardinal Augustin Bea, S.J., among many others. In a more general sense, Confoy’s essay is also essential to understanding the Society of Jesus as a religious order in light of the council.

The book has just a few drawbacks. First, in parts two and five especially, many readers may lament that certain documents received less attention than others, or that certain authors considered only one or two facets of the council and ignored others. Second, it may be that some instructors will find the entire volume unnecessary for their students since all of the articles have been previously published and will therefore be available through their library’s electronic databases for free. Third, and finally, I often wished that the volume contained an index for easier cross-referencing of when particular documents or figures were mentioned. In addition to all of the articles I mention here, this book is filled with the highest scholarship, and even further sources contained in the notes. My few drawbacks notwithstanding, I do not believe it will be possible to find a more stellar collection of essays at such a scholarly level on Vatican II.

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