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AFTER VATICAN II

Trajectories and Hermeneutics

Edited by

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with

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Preface

In February 2009, a few months after the appearance of John O'Malley's *What Happened at Vatican II*, I invited in the name of the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies a small group of scholars to gather at the University of Southern California to meet with O'Malley and carry on the conversation. Included in the group was Joseph Komonchak, who has written extensively on the council, has edited the English version of the five-volume *History of Vatican II* (Orbis/Peeters, 1995-2006), and has an extraordinary grasp of the debates, developments, and formation of the documents of the council.

O'Malley devotes the first third of his book to describing the "long nineteenth century," which he dates from the French Revolution to the fall of 1958 when Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli was elected Pope John XXIII. Without a grasp of the main historical realities that constituted the ecclesial dimensions of the Church before Vatican II, it is difficult to understand the significant changes that the bishops at the council agreed to make. The changes that the 2,400 bishops — gathered from around the world for ten weeks each fall from 1962 to 1965 — included clearly affirming religious liberty, strongly supporting ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, calling for significant changes in liturgical forms, and stating unambiguously the continuing validity of the covenant that God made with the Jews. Rather than use, as had been the custom, the language of legal decrees with "anathemas" attached, the bishops at this council wrote the sixteen documents they approved using a quite different style, a decision more important than on the surface it might suggest.

The "issues under the issues," which O'Malley had singled out in his book, were of special interest to the scholars gathered in Los Angeles.