

PRAISE FOR
THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL RENOVATION
OF VATICAN II

From the Book Presentation of the Greek Edition,
June 18, 2015, in Thessaloniki, Greece

Fr. Peter Heers' book, *The Ecclesiological Renovation of Vatican II*, is remarkable in every way. . . . I want to congratulate the author, for he labored on his subject with objectivity and sobriety and has presented us with an important work which assists us all, especially when, due to our lack of time and many responsibilities, we are unable to have access to the sources. The book is written in an academic manner, that is, objectively, as the tradition of the Fathers of the Church designates.

Father Peter worked methodically, examining both the theological currents which preceded the Second Vatican Council and the context within which the council itself labored. Moreover, he studied in depth the texts of the council and the analyses of various theologians that followed the council.

Having read this as a dissertation many times and as closely as possible, I have come to understand how papal theology became estranged from Orthodox patristic theology and tradition; how the views of papal theologians with regard to baptism and ecclesiology developed from Blessed Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and subsequent theologians; and how this line of thinking evolved through a variety of decisions and finally arrived at the Second Vatican Council, which then produced a new ecclesiology.

The book which we present today is very important and must be read both by theologians and the wider public. However, most especially it must be read by Bishops, and in particular those who are involved with theological and inter-Christian issues and with the theological and inter-Christian dialogues.

— Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos) of Nafpaktos and Agios Vlassios

The Ecclesiological Renovation of Vatican II is one of the most significant works of Orthodox sacramentology to appear since Fr. George Metallinos' *I Confess One Baptism*. Fr. Peter's work is a fulfillment of Fr. Georges Florovsky's plea that Orthodox theologians "re-experience" the dialectical twists and turns of Western theology, the goal being the clearing away of any unnecessary occlusions that stand between the non-Orthodox and the Church of Christ. Only through such a neopatristic approach as Fr. Heers' are we able to sympathize with the "existential" situation of the non-Orthodox while at the same time preserving and proclaiming the Orthodox faith.

— *James L. Kelley, author of A Realism of Glory: Lectures On Christology in the Works of Protopresbyter John Romanides*

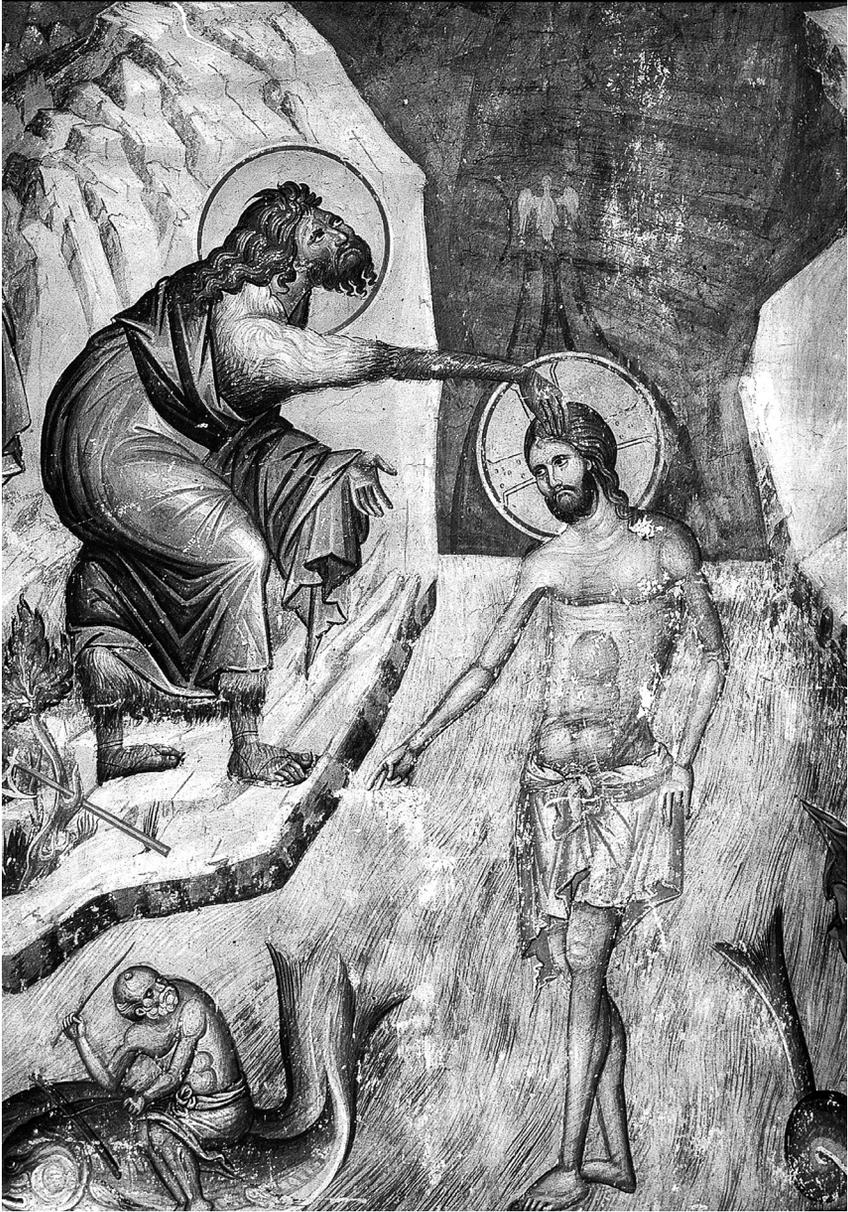
We are very grateful to Fr. Peter Heers for this invaluable contribution! In his book he clearly defines the boundaries of the Church, which is so necessary today for our seminarians who will need to teach and defend this Dogma of the Church. We anxiously await the appearance of his book in our bookstore!

The Very Rev. Archimandrite Luke (Murianka), Abbot of Holy Trinity Monastery and Rector of Holy Trinity Seminary

The Ecclesiological Renovation of Vatican II is a book of great importance for our contemporary ecclesiastical life. In it we learn not only of the origins and development of "baptismal theology," unknown to all but a small circle of experts, but also of the consequences this new theory has for the Church today. Highly recommended!

Hieromonk Luke of the Holy Monastery of Grigoriou, Mt. Athos, Greece

THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL RENOVATION OF VATICAN II



The Baptism of Christ by St. John the Forerunner

The Ecclesiological Renovation of Vatican II
An Orthodox Examination of Rome's Ecumenical
Theology Regarding Baptism and the Church

Protopresbyter Peter Heers



UM

THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL RENOVATION OF VATICAN II
AN ORTHODOX EXAMINATION OF ROME'S ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY
REGARDING BAPTISM AND THE CHURCH

First Printing November 2015

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To
Presbytera Kyriaki

Is Christ divided?

– *1 Corinthians 1:13*

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

– *Ephesians 4: 4-6*

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FOREWORD

to the Greek Edition

A basic presupposition for a serious theological dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the heterodox West is a thorough knowledge of Western theology. This knowledge is especially dependable when it arises from an exhaustive investigation of primary research material. Indeed, when it happens that this source material is not only important for academic research but also is the latest official text of its kind, as is the case with the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), then the academic and ecclesiastical interest is piqued.

As is well known, from the middle of the twentieth century, we have been engaged in an important theological dialogue with the Christian West. In particular, beginning in 1980, the Joint Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism commenced its work. This dialogue, from the perspective of the West, has focused especially upon the Second Vatican Council and, in particular, upon the Decree on Ecumenism. Scholarly recognition of this point decisively aids in understanding the character of this joint dialogue.

The book which you hold in your hands by my beloved student and doctor of theology, Fr. Peter Heers, presents, in an unprecedented way, the new Roman Catholic ecclesiology from an Orthodox critical perspective. The study is academically both objective and convincing. For the first time the historical process by which Baptism was separated from the other mysteries

and came to serve as a basis for the “broadening” and “extension” of the Church is exhaustively examined.

In support of his academic findings, Fr. Heers provides lengthy excerpts from the conciliar decrees and documentation, as well as from the leading theologians who drafted and interpreted the documents. With a precise theological critique of the new ecclesiology the author also presents to the reader the main points of Orthodox ecclesiology, achieving a therapeutic result. Such spiritual healing of the discord engendered by the new ecclesiology is the ultimate goal of this present study.

In addition, the author introduces forgotten contributions of Orthodox theologians, which can serve as a corrective to the views of certain contemporary Orthodox theologians and open new horizons for the Joint Theological Dialogue of Orthodox and Roman Catholics. This book thus deserves to be read both by the representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches and by those Roman Catholic theologians who participate in the theological dialogue. In this way, then, our hope (as it pertains to scholarship) for a return of Western Christianity to the patristic vision of the Church increases.

In conclusion, I would like to state that this work by Fr. Peter Heers constitutes, not simply an academic contribution to a very serious theological matter, but rather a study of an ecclesiological nature which offers a great deal to the Church today, for it opens up new horizons for every good-willed reader, whether Roman Catholic or Orthodox. At the same time it contributes dynamically to the existing theological dialogue.

Demetrios Tselingides
Professor of Dogmatics at the Theological School
of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
October 7, 2014

FOREWORD to the English Edition

I consider it an exceptional honor that my beloved brother in Christ, the Protopresbyter Father Peter Heers, has asked me to write this foreword to the English edition of his book. My acceptance was not so much dependent on our personal friendship as upon the importance of his work and its contribution to the contemporary inter-Christian dialogue.

Ecumenism, both political and religious, is the foremost problem of our age, an age that has rightly been characterized as a “new age,” for it has witnessed not only the structural change of the world but a process of globalization, in which the mutual acceptance of all religions (πανθρησκεία) has played an essential part. It has become clear that religious dialogue, both inter-Christian and inter-religious, moves in the same direction and serves the same ends as global political objectives. This is why ecumenism, on each and every level, poses such a great challenge and temptation for Orthodoxy, because for decades now it has continued to take consciences hostage, luring them into grievous errors against our blameless Faith, causing many “of the elect” to fall as Lucifer once did.

Today the Mystery of Baptism is found to be at the center of theological reflection on account of its being the foundation of the unity of the Church, both in its local and universal aspects. Thus, as a basic element of ecclesiology and ecclesiastical identity, it was only to be expected that it would attract the atten-

tion of the inter-Christian unity dialogue, for the sake of which “baptismal theology” was created.

Fr. Heers’ book explores the issues surrounding baptism on the basis of the foundational decree on ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), *Unitatis Redintegratio*. His study fills a gap in the related bibliography and identifies the deeper aims of this key decision of the council, which reordered the relations of Roman Catholicism with the remaining Christian world.

The author, as he makes clear in his work, possesses all the necessary qualifications to examine such a subtle and sensitive subject. He sheds light both on the presuppositions and aims of the Decree, hidden beneath its adeptly crafted façade, and on their relation to the actual objectives of the dialogue itself. The study, moreover, is the only one of its kind, penetrating into the core of both the Roman Catholic and Orthodox teachings on the Mysteries. The central element in the author’s navigation of the subject is his clarification, in the most unambiguous manner, of the entirely different presuppositions concerning baptism held by Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy. With Fr. Heers’ study, many issues are clarified, older positions are overturned, and new research perspectives are opened up for an objective and dispassionate evaluation of the dialogue and its real prospects.

Especially noteworthy is the author’s finding that, with the Decree on Ecumenism, the Second Vatican Council added a “new dogma,” an essential departure from the consensus patrum, such that Rome, with its “new reformation,” is brought closer to Protestantism. Quite correctly, the historic path is traced, with the departures of Western theology being indicated, such that today the convergence of Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism (as it pertains to this issue, as well)

is essentially made impossible, for the reality is that there exist two different understandings. A characteristic example of this is the centuries-in-the-making separation within the Latin Church of the Mysteries of Baptism-Chrismation from the Divine Eucharist, with all the necessary consequences. This finding, as it pertains to baptism, justifies those who hold the view that the “dialogue of truth/faith” should not have succeeded the “dialogue of love” so quickly, since with regard to many issues the former is shown to be, humanly speaking, entirely impossible. A methodical transcending of the problems is not possible by skirting them and tacitly affirming the deviation (as happens now) for the sake of paving the way for the sought-after end within a context of the mutual acceptance of all religions (πανθρησκεία).

The author effectively calls attention to missing pieces of the historical and ecclesiological puzzle, which he then fills in with the unfailing guide of the ancient Christian Tradition, which remains whole and intact within the historical continuity of patristic Orthodoxy. The successive maneuverings for the sake of achieving the aims of Vatican II and facilitating the dialogue are critiqued soberly and objectively. The author’s precision in his critical analysis is successful on account of his rich knowledge of the Orthodox Patristic Tradition and the medieval and contemporary West. His critique consistently remains within the limits of frankness and yearning for an honest dialogue aimed at realization of true unity according to the words of Christ (Jn. 17, 21, 24). He rightly poses the question as to the path of Roman Catholic theology –“*Ressourcement* (return to the sources) or renovation?”– a question that arises from the continual Roman Catholic theological and dogmatic reassessments with respect to baptism.

In my humble estimation, this book is an essential contribution to today's ecumenical relations and will be considered carefully. Traditional, patristic-oriented Orthodox will be pleased reading it. However, the reaction, whether positive or negative, of the "unionist" ecumenists among us is also anticipated. Appearing at a most critical juncture in the dialogue, the book fulfills the aim of its composition: to present "a critical examination of the place and understanding of Baptism in the development of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council." It goes further, however, in its closing thoughts, injecting a direct and categorical intimation: "It is ironic and tragic that precisely when the dead end of Scholasticism and Tridentine Catholicism came into sight and a beginning of a return to the Fathers was made, those Orthodox who were sought out for counsel did not guide them to the consensus patrum but were, in part, a source for further innovation."

With respect to this last point, we are obliged to note something, which the author will, with additional experience and time, come to recognize. His point is correct, of course, that the Roman Catholic side, in seeking the assistance of its Orthodox interlocutors, was probably seeking to test the other side in order to determine the ease or difficulty of the future path of the dialogue; whereas the Orthodox, continuing the practice of the unionists of a Byzantium in decline, were ready to accept the Latin ecclesiological views without contest. (It is, of course, understood that such matters cannot be the object of a doctoral dissertation.) In the final analysis, as the author points out, the new ecclesiology of Roman Catholicism (of Congar, Bea, et al.) has clearly influenced the Orthodox side of the dialogue, as also with regard to other issues of the dialogue. It is enough for one to call to mind the Balamand agreement (1993) and all that was expressed therein.

Fr. Heers' ecclesiological study constitutes not only a contribution to academic theology and the bibliography of the ecumenical dialogue, but also an essential critical check on the supporting discoveries of our ecumenists, such as the "baptismal" and "post-patristic" theologies. However, we would like to believe that a few of the enlightened spirits of Roman Catholic theology—fortunately such do exist—will also welcome the book and recognize its contribution.

It goes without saying, of course, that as it pertains to the Orthodoxy and completeness of the work, my elect colleague, the renowned dogmatician and supervising professor Demetrios Tselingides, is the guarantor.

Protopresbyter George Metallinos
Emeritus Professor of the University of Athens
September 19, 2014

FOREWORD

by Bishop Basil of Wichita

“Do not remove age-old boundaries, erected by your fathers.”

Proverbs 22:28

We will not remove the age-old landmarks which our fathers have set, but we keep the tradition we have received. For if we begin to erode the foundations of the Church even a little, in no time at all the whole edifice will fall to the ground.”

St. John of Damascus

In this present work the author, Father Peter Alban Heers, presents in clear and concise language an in-depth critique of two important documents of the Second Vatican Council, formally known by its Latin title “*Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum Secundum*”: *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism) and the council’s chief ecclesiological document, *Lumen Gentium* (Constitution on the Church). Reading these documents in light of patristic texts and works of past and contemporary Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic theologians, Father Peter explains how the council came to conclusions which redefined who and what constitutes the Church as the Body of Christ.

We are indebted to Father Peter for helping us navigate our way through these documents and for his clarion call to vigilance as we evaluate what the council considered to be a return to the sources (*ressourcement*). In doing so, it would be

beneficial for us to consider what St. John of Damascus counseled when he wrote, “Therefore my brethren, let us stand on the rock of faith in the Tradition of the Church, not removing the landmarks set by our holy fathers; not giving room to those who wish to introduce novelties and destroy the edifice of God’s holy, catholic and apostolic Church.”

Dear Reader, as you wend your way through the following pages make your own the following profession of St. Maximus the Confessor: “In no way will I say anything of my own, but what I have learned from the Fathers, altering nothing of their teaching.”

†Basil
Bishop of Wichita and Mid-America
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

P R E F A C E

At the center of theological speculation within the ecumenical movement today stands the mystery of Baptism. Baptism as the basis for Christian unity has been touted and painstakingly explored by both Roman Catholic scholars, especially since the Second Vatican Council in 1962, and Protestant scholars, within the World Council of Churches. Orthodox theologians have also taken part in this discussion, but largely from the outside looking in. This is because, while Roman Catholics and Protestants share a common history and many common ecclesiological assumptions, the Orthodox approach the question from an entirely different historical experience and set of theological presuppositions. They have an historical memory that retains the patristic consensus of the first four centuries as the starting point and heart of the matter even today.

The potential of Baptism to be the key that will open the door to unity was not fully acknowledged until the Second Vatican Council. With this council's recognition of both the validity and efficacy of non-Roman Catholic Baptism and an already existing ecclesiastical unity, all eyes were set on Baptism.

In spite of the extensive ecumenical literature on the subject, scholars have neglected to examine important inconsistencies, historical and ecclesiological, contained in the conciliar document of the council on the subject, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism), as well the historical and theological road that led to its drafting. As a result, premature theological conclu-

sions have been reached and even celebrated without due consideration of the patristic and Orthodox outlook.

The Ecclesiological Renovation of Vatican II seeks to rectify this neglect by presenting a critical examination of the place and understanding of Baptism in the unity of the Church as expounded in the Decree on Ecumenism. The critique offered here likewise contributes to a fuller understanding of the Orthodox view of the place of Baptism in the unity of the Church.

In this study, our principal aim is to present systematically the main points of the dogmatic teaching on Baptism and the Church in the Decree on Ecumenism, with important references to the council's chief ecclesiological text, *Lumen Gentium*. In order better to understand the historical and theological context of the Decree, we review key aspects of the historical and theological development of the new ecclesiology it expounds. As our examination is from the perspective of the Orthodox Church, we concentrate on those points that are at odds with Orthodox dogma.

As a secondary goal of our study, we examine the claim put forward by the authors and defenders of the council's new ecclesiology that it represents *ressourcement*, a return to the sources, and that the council, far from being a departure from the Tradition or an innovation, was a new actualization of Tradition. We answer the question: Were the theologians of Vatican II successful in returning Catholicism back to the ecclesiology of the Church of the first millennium, or did they, despite their stated intentions, fail in this regard?

Our study is divided into three parts. In part 1 we present key aspects of the historical development of Roman Catholic teaching on Baptism and the Church. In part 2, we examine the teaching of the council on Baptism and the Church, as it is set forth in the two encyclicals that expressed the will of

the council, and we examine the *communio* ecclesiology as the guiding concept of the council's teaching. In part 3 we offer a summary of our critical examination followed by our conclusion regarding the Orthodox response to the theological challenge before us.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks first of all to Dr. Demetrios Tselingidis, professor of Dogmatic Theology at the Theological School of the University of Thessaloniki, for his invaluable guidance, patience, and instructive assistance throughout the writing of this book. Likewise, sincere thanks are due to His Grace Basil, Bishop of Wichita and Mid-America, for his initial encouragement and continued prayers, and to the Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Xeropotamou on Mount Athos, Archimandrite Joseph, for his unwavering support of this undertaking. Finally, I am indebted to the ever-memorable Metropolitan of Ierissou and Mount Athos, Nikodemos, for his gracious blessing to be absent from my duties in order to do research in the libraries of Oxford and Cambridge. Most of all, however, I thank my long-suffering family for their unflagging encouragement and patient endurance throughout.

Petrokerasa, Greece,
December 12, 2014,
St. Spyridon the Wonderworker

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>De Baptismo</i>	<i>De Baptismo Contra Donatistas Libri Septem</i> , PL 43.107–244, NPNF 4.
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World</i> , Second Vatican Council, Dec. 7, 1965, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing, 1966)
Mansi	<i>Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio</i> (Graz: J. D. Mansi, 1960–61)
NPNF	<i>The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994)
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus series graeca</i> (Paris: Migne 1857–66; Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1960)
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina</i> (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1958)
UR	<i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i> , Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council
UUS	<i>Ut Unum Sint</i> , Papal encyclical, 1995

THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL RENOVATION
OF VATICAN II



The Second Vatican Council

INTRODUCTION

THE HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE COUNCIL

The Second Vatican Council, the Twenty-first Ecumenical Council according to the Roman Catholic Church, was announced by Pope John XXIII on January 25, 1959, and held 178 meetings in the autumn of four successive years. The first gathering was on October 11, 1962, and the last on December 8, 1965.

The world in which Vatican II was convened and carried out was a world undergoing radical change, “marked by the end of colonialism, the rapid spread of industrialization and major advances in communication.”¹ Industrialization in formerly agricultural countries such as Italy, Spain, and Mexico, helped create a new, “more dynamic, often restless” mentality, “more open to innovation, as linked to an industrial economy.”² This state of things on the eve of the Council meant that the Church

1. Raymond F. Bulman, “Vatican Council II (1962–1965),” in *Encyclopedia of the Vatican and Papacy*, ed. Frank J. Coppa (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 429.

2. Giacomo Martina, “The Historical Context in Which the Idea of a New Ecumenical Council Was Born,” in *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives*, ed. René Latourelle (New York: Paulist Press, 1988–89), 10, 13; quoted in Raymond F. Bulman, “Introduction: The Historical Context,” in *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations*, ed. Raymond Bulman and Frederick J. Parrella (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006), 9.

found itself “on the defensive, immobile, in the face of a rapidly changing world.”³ It was in the midst of this situation, and in response to it, that the Second Vatican Council was convoked.

The council drew more than 2,000 bishops from 134 countries, including many from Africa, Asia, and Central and South America. It also included approximately 80 non-Roman Catholic observers from the major Christian denominations, 480 *periti* (theological advisors), and 1,000 members of the world press.⁴

The council’s deliberations produced four constitutions, nine decrees, and three declarations. The Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*,⁵ approved by the council on November, 21, 1964, and formally promulgated by Paul VI on the same day, was the fifth of the sixteen council decisions to be accepted.

Unitatis Redintegratio, at once both the result of a long effort for reorientation and a fairly abrupt and surprising reversal of stance, together with the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*,⁶ stand out among the conciliar decrees for their novel ecclesiological formulations. The authors and signers of *Unitatis Redintegratio* were intent on much more than a simple restatement of older papal encyclicals or regurgitation of worn-out Tridentine slogans. They were striving for a complete reorientation of the mindset of Roman Catholics in regard to their fellow Christians; and, for the most part, they were quite

3. Ibid.

4. Michael J. Walsh, “The History of the Council,” in *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After*, ed. Adrian Hastings (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 36.

5. Hereafter the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, is abbreviated UR in the notes.

6. In this book the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, will be referred to in notes using the abbreviation LG.

successful. The depiction of the Church and its unity as set out in *Unitatis Redintegratio* enabled statements from the Roman Catholic Magisterium that were previously unthinkable.⁷

It would not be an overstatement to say that this new ecclesiological perspective, consciously, even painstakingly, sensitive to ecumenical concerns,⁸ is the “key” to unlocking the meaning of the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, the ecumenical perspective underlies all the teachings proper to the council.⁹ The primacy of ecumenism in key conciliar documents is seen not only in the texts themselves but also in their origins. Besides *Unitatis Redintegratio* itself, the most novel and controversial texts produced by the Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate* and *Dignitatis Humanae*, began as chapters four and five of the

7. Johannes Feiner, “Commentary on the Decree,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (London: Burns and Oates Limited, 1968), 2:69. As our examination shows, the image of the Church as set forth in article 3 of chapter 1 set the stage for the remarkable statements regarding non-Roman Catholics in article 4 and further on.

8. In his opening address to the second session of the council on September 29, 1963, Paul VI declared: “What attitude will the Council adopt towards the vast number of brethren separated from us . . . what will it do? The question is clear. This Council itself was also called for this reason” (cf. *Vaticanum Secundum* 2:69). W. Visser’t Hooft, head of the World Council of Churches at the time of the council, in his report to the Central Committee of the WCC, says similarly that “the existence of the ecumenical movement was one of the reasons for the holding of the Council.” *Die Zeichen der Zeit* 20 [1966], 197.

9. Referring to Pope Paul VI’s declaration at the start of the second session of the council that ecumenical rapprochement was one of the purposes for which the council was called, Cardinal Walter Kasper stated that, “If due consideration is given to this declaration, all the texts of the Council should be read in an ecumenical perspective.” See Cardinal Walter Kasper, “The Fortieth Anniversary of the Vatican Council II Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*.” Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Unity, No. 115 (Vatican City, 2004), 19.

original conciliar draft document, *De Oecumenismo*, which later became *Unitatis Redintegratio*.¹⁰ Even the landmark Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) contains binding affirmations that are either summed up or developed in the first chapter of *Unitatis Redintegratio*.¹¹ Clearly, *Unitatis Redintegratio* holds a central place among the council's decrees in terms of "setting the tone" and expressing the "spirit of Vatican II."

That the Roman Catholic Church underwent an ecclesiological renovation is admitted even by the council's staunchest supporters.¹² Without doubt there was a new attitude; but, more important, there was a new understanding of the Church.¹³ In spite of claims by Cardinal Walter Kasper of continuity with Roman Catholic theology of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—as in theologians Möhler and Newman, and in

10. Walter M. Abbot, S.J. (General Editor), *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York/Cleveland: Corpus Books, 1966), 660, 672.

11. Kasper, Walter, Cardinal. "Communio: The Guiding Concept of Catholic Ecumenical Theology." In *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity Today*. London/New York: Burns and Oates, 2004.9.

12. Karl Rahner said that "Vatican II was a council which concentrated upon ecclesiology as no other Council had. It proposed a new image of the Church. . . ." ("The New Image of the Church," trans. David Bourke [London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1973], 10:4). Yves Congar said that "the Second Vatican Council was a council of reform . . . One could also say very rightly that it marked the end of the Counter-Reformation. . . . It was open to ecumenism and to a pluralist world." ("Martin Luther sa foi, sa réforme: Études de théologie historique," *Cogitatio Fidei* 119 [Paris: Cerf, 1983], 79.) See also Walter Kasper, "The Decree on Ecumenism—Read Anew after Forty Years," Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Conference on the 40th Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Conciliar Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*," Rocca di Papa, Mondo Migliore, November 11, 12, and 13, 2004.

13. Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 9; see also his "Decree on Ecumenism."

Popes Leo XIII, Benedict XV, Pius XI, and Pius XII¹⁴—*Unitatis Redintegratio* is elsewhere admitted by the same Cardinal to be a clear break with both Leo XIII’s *Satis Cognitum* and Pius XI’s *Mortalium Animos*.¹⁵ In fact, *Unitatis Redintegratio* represents a break not only with the recent past of Roman Catholic theology, but even with a thinker so important to Latin theology as Blessed Augustine of Hippo.

A detailed look at how this reorientation came about is beyond the scope of our purposes here; but we can say that the new ecclesiology was neither simply a benign development of doctrinal formulation nor a blatant overthrowing of doctrine. Rather, it was, paradoxically, a revolutionary development from within, which then unexpectedly came to be advanced from above.¹⁶

Cardinal Kasper forthrightly concedes that *Unitatis Redintegratio* “overturned the narrow post-Tridentine Counter-Reformation outlook of the church,” but he maintains that it was not “modernism” but a return to “the Biblical, patristic and early-medieval tradition.”¹⁷ According to Cardinal Kasper, *Unitatis Redintegratio* even “refers to the confession of the faith of the Church and to the earliest Councils.”¹⁸

14. Kasper, *ibid.*

15. See Reflections by Cardinal Walter Kasper on the “Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue,” http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/sub-index/index_card-kasper.htm.

16. Paul Lakeland, in his introduction to the writings of Yves Congar, bluntly describes the changes brought about at Vatican II as a “theological revolution” that swept away “the ultramontane, neo-scholastic, and plainly world-hating mien of nineteenth century Rome.” *Yves Congar: Essential Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010), 13.

17. Kasper, “The Decree on Ecumenism.”

18. Walter Kasper, “The Fortieth Anniversary of the Vatican Council II Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*.” Information Service of the Pontifical

In the decades leading up to the Second Vatican Council, two parallel but essentially opposing currents of thought flowed within Roman Catholicism vis-à-vis ecclesiology and the movement for the unification of Christians. On the one hand, for the first half of the twentieth century, with rare and only superficial exceptions, the leadership in the Vatican maintained an uncompromising, polemical stance against the ecumenical movement, always deeply suspicious of theologians who actively engaged it.¹⁹ This was the “official” position, which had as its

Council for Promoting Unity, No. 115 (Vatican City, 2004), 21. These are weighty claims that stand out for an Orthodox observer—claims that this study examines and critiques.

19. Yves Congar is perhaps the most notable example of those “under suspicion.” He was ordained a priest in the Dominican order in 1930 and from the outset had ecumenical sensitivities and goals. In 1937 he published a trailblazing book on principles for a Catholic ecumenism, *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion*. The book immediately brought him under Vatican suspicion for having argued that separated Christian communions had preserved elements of Christianity more vitally than the Catholic Church had, so that a possible reunion would bring qualitative as well as quantitative enhancement to the church. Remarkably, this idea was later incorporated into UR (4) and is now a widely accepted idea among Roman Catholics. See the papal encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* of Pope John Paul II (UUS, 14, 28, 57). In section 14, Pope John Paul II writes: “The elements of this already-given Church exist, found in their fullness in the Catholic Church and, without this fullness, in the other Communities, *where certain features of the Christian mystery have at times been more effectively emphasized*” (emphasis mine; see also Kasper, “The Decree on Ecumenism,” 2.5). In 1950 Congar wrote another ecumenically significant work, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l’Église*. A response to calls for renovation arising from the creative postwar years in Catholic France, the book set out the conditions and criteria for reform without schism. This book, too, brought him under suspicion, and translations of it were forbidden. In February 1954, Fr. Congar was forbidden to teach, and along with fellow colleagues Fr. Marie-Dominique Chenu (whose book *A School of Theology: Le Saulchoir*

reference point Scholastic²⁰ and Counter-Reformation theology, and which used phrases like the “true church” and “a return of the dissidents.” This stance found expression in the encyclical *Mortalium Animos* of Pius XI in 1928, which condemned the ecclesiological assumptions prevalent in the ecumenical movement and forbade any involvement of Roman Catholics. Pius XI made it very clear that Christian unity was a matter of return and not mutual reconciliation, of bringing back to the fold lost sheep instead of trying to realize an existing but incomplete communion: “The unity of Christians can be achieved only through a return to the One True Church of Christ of those who are separated from it.”²¹

Doubtless this was the established Roman stance; and it continued through the decades of the forties and fifties, when Catholic observers were forbidden to participate in the assemblies of the World Council of Churches held in Amsterdam in 1948 and Evanston in 1954. Only with the instruction *Ecclesia Catholica* in 1949 did this posture relax slightly, allowing for limited and supervised ecumenical engagement.

was condemned and placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1942), Fr. Henri-Marie Feret, and Fr. Pierre Boisselot, was expelled from Le Saulchoir and sent into exile. All his writings were subsequently subjected to prior censorship—see Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar’s Vision of the Church in a World of Unbelief* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 10. However, in June 1960 everything changed for Congar when he was unexpectedly appointed a consultant to the theological commission that was to prepare doctrinal texts for the council. His contribution to the council would end up being enormous and crucial, especially for effecting a reversal vis-à-vis ecumenism.

20. Pope Pius X, in his encyclical *Pascendi*, held that Scholasticism, and in particular Thomas Aquinas, was the remedy for modernism.

21. Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos*, January 7, 1928.

Beneath this official veneer of intransigence, however, there was, from the 1920s onward, a growing movement of dissatisfaction and a desire for a new approach. A new development in France heralded the widespread portrayal of the church as a “theandric union” of all Christians with Christ. Although this initial effort at reform did not entail an overthrow of the juridical model of the church developed in Scholasticism and afterwards, “by the end of the 1930s a new militancy had emerged in favor of the spread of what has been described as ‘vitalism.’”²² The theologians of this French effort were convinced that “the only way to attract non-catholics into the Church was through its presentation in terms of the vital and organic.”²³ Out of this arose a new movement that came to be known as the *nouvelle théologie*.²⁴

Nouvelle théologie was a dynamic movement of theologians—mainly in France, Belgium, and Germany—who were decidedly “ecumenical” in outlook and who worked for reform by way of *ressourcement*, that is, a return to the sources. *Ressourcement*, as defined by one of the movement’s leading figures, the French Dominican theologian Yves Congar, was “a new examination [reinterrogation] of the permanent sources of theology: the Bible, the liturgy, the Fathers. . . .”²⁵ There were many aims of this new movement: to recover that which had been forgot-

22. Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar’s Vision of the Church in a World of Unbelief* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 33–34.

23. *Ibid.*, 34.

24. The phrase *nouvelle théologie* is a standard representing a diversity of visions, which, however, share the same goal of restoring the connection between theology and experience and thus with the sources of the faith. Theologians of the movement preferred to describe their efforts as *ressourcement*, a French term meaning a return to the sources.

25. Yves Congar, *La Foi et la Théologie dogmatique* (Tournai: Desclée, 1962), 1:271, quoted in Gabriel, *Yves Congar’s Vision*, 28.

ten or neglected in the course of history; to enact a theological renewal; to move beyond Scholasticism; to establish closer links with modernity; to return to the Fathers; and to clarify the link between nature and grace.²⁶

These new theologians rejected the domination of Thomism as a system, seeking instead a “return to the Thomas Aquinas of the thirteenth century, to the patristic period, and via the Church Fathers to the Bible and the liturgy.”²⁷ Alongside this movement, and influenced by it, was what R. Guardini called an “awakening of the Church in the soul,”²⁸ which, translated to the theological level, included a movement for the renovation of ecclesiology. This new perspective was the “unofficial,” “underground” voice of Roman Catholicism, which came to be accepted as mainstream during and after Vatican II.²⁹

The leading figures of this movement were the theologians Maurice Blondel (1861–1949), Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955), Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895–1990), Father Henri de Lubac (1896–1991), Yves Congar (1904–1995), Karl Rahner (1904–1984), Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1998), Jean Daniélou (1905–1974), Louis Bouyer (1913–2004), Ed-

26. Flynn, *Yves Congar’s Vision*, 34.

27. Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie, New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (New York: T and T Clark International, 2010), 142.

28. R. Guardini, *Vom Sinn der Kirche* (1922), in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 1.

29. Mettepenningen, in *Nouvelle Théologie*, also states: “The Thomistic *ressourcement* was followed by a theological *ressourcement*, and the French-speaking implantation of the *nouvelle théologie* was followed by a period of internationalization that contributed to a broader support base for the assimilation of the central points of the *nouvelle théologie* during Vatican II” (143).

ward Schillebeeckx (1914–2009), Hans Kung (1928–), Jean Mouroux (1901–1973) and Joseph Ratzinger (1927–).³⁰

The great break for these theologians came when most of them were invited by Pope John XXIII and the bishops to serve as *periti* (theological experts advising the Bishops) at the Second Vatican Council. Thanks to their influence, “the Roman Catholic tradition of reform attained its fullest expression at the Second Vatican Council.”³¹ It is widely recognized that the theologians “were the engineers of the massive reforms that were initiated at Vatican II.”³² Their contribution “was remarkable. . . . The bishops of Vatican II were aware of the importance of the theologians.”³³ The Council extended official acceptance to their decades of work for the renovation of theology, and in particular, of ecclesiology.³⁴

30. Although sharing much in common, the theologians of the *nouvelle théologie* school held a diversity of opinions on just how far the renovation of the church should extend. This divergence became most apparent after the Second Vatican Council when two separate international theological journals were formed: *Concilium* and *Communio*. *Concilium* was begun in 1965 by Marie-Dominique Chenu, Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Hans Kung, among others. *Communio* was begun in 1972 by Hans Urs von Balthasar, Herni de Lubac, Joseph Ratzinger, Walter Kasper, Louis Bouyer, and others. Of the two, *Concilium* is recognized as more “liberal” in its approach to theology.

31. Flynn, *Yves Congar’s Vision*, 61. See René Latourelle, *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives*, 1:xv–xix.

32. Leonard Swidler, “The Context: Breaking Reform by Breaking Theologians and Religious,” in *The Church in Anguish: Has the Vatican Betrayed Vatican II?*, ed. Hans Kung and Swidler (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 189, as quoted in Flynn, *Yves Congar’s Vision*, 57.

33. Yves Congar, *Le Théologien dans l’Église aujourd’hui*, 12, as quoted in Flynn, *Yves Congar’s Vision*, 57.

34. See Mettepenning, *Nouvelle Théologie*. “[T]heir influence, as we can see from the *acta* of the Council and different Council diaries, turned

For those opposed to this new departure from traditional (Post-Tridentine) Latin theology, the mark these theologians left on the council's decrees amounted to heresy.³⁵ They asserted that the new ecclesiology that Vatican II had adopted, and especially its approach to ecumenism, stood in direct contradiction to the universal teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.³⁶ In particular, they pointed out that the new view enshrined in *Unitatis Redintegratio* and developed by such theologians as Yves Congar—the view that unity is no longer a matter of return to the one true Church but of mutual reconciliation—is directly opposed to the teaching of *Mortalium Animos* of Pius XI. The council's stance “is not ecumenical as an echo of the constant and universal teaching of the Church, but because it has established as the basis of its theories a clearly ecumenical will that lacks any foundation and that the entire prior Magisterium condemns.”³⁷

Cardinal Walter Kasper, representing defenders of Vatican II, responded that, “It would be . . . erroneous to interpret the Second Vatican Council, and especially the Decree on Ecumen-

out to be quite considerable” (6). See also Thomas G. Guarino, *Foundations of Systematic Theology* (New York: T and T Clark, 2005), 288: “The names associated with this movement . . . were ultimately to give impetus to some of the great theological themes of Vatican II.”

35. For an extensive critique of Vatican II from this perspective, see Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum: A Study of the Changes in the Catholic Church in the Twentieth Century* (Kansas City: Sarto House, 1996).

36. Lanterius, “The Dogma of Ecumenism,” in *Si Si, No No*, June 2005, Vol. XXVIII, No. 6, trans. Fr. Du Chalard (Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press).

37. Fr. de La Rocque, “Le présupposé oecumenique de *Lumen Gentium*,” in *Penser Vatican II quarante ans après: Actes du VI Congrès Théologique de si si no no* (Rome: Publications Courrier de Rome, 2004), 307–308.

ism as a break with tradition. Actually, one of the most important reasons for this council was a *ressourcement*, a return to the sources; the council dealt with a new actualization of Tradition, and in this sense, with its *aggiornamento* . . .”³⁸

Kasper’s description reveals just how deep the imprint of the *nouvelle théologie* on the council was. Supporters and critics of Vatican II agree on one thing: “the theological objectives . . . of [the] reforming theologians were realized at Vatican II.”³⁹ From an Orthodox point of view, however, important questions arise, such as: To which sources did they return? How did they interpret these sources and on what basis or experience? How can ancient Church Tradition, from which the Post-Tridentine, Counter-Reformation interval had separated Roman Catholicism for centuries, be “actualized anew” when the very meaning of tradition is to hand down from one generation to the next, especially by word of mouth?

Indeed, the degree to which the tables had been turned at Vatican II is remarkable and revealing: the very men who had such an influence on the council were, in the years leading up to it, on the Vatican’s “black list.” Karl Rahner, John Courtney Murray,⁴⁰ Yves Congar, Edward Schillebeeckx, Henri de Lubac,

38. See Kasper, *The Fortieth Anniversary*, 21.

39. Flynn, *Yves Congar’s Vision*, 53.

40. John Courtney Murray (1904–1967) edited the magazine *America* and the journal *Theological Studies*. In 1954, after a decade of publishing on church-state issues and religious freedom, he was ordered to cease writing on these topics by the Vatican because the Roman Curia had objected that his views were unorthodox. Ten years later, however, with the Pontificate of John XXIII, he was invited to serve at the Second Vatican Council as an expert on religious freedom. He was largely responsible for drafting the “Declaration on Religious Freedom,” considered one of the most important documents by supporters and most unacceptable by detractors of the council.

Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Joseph Ratzinger had all been singled out at one time or another as being “under suspicion” of heresy.⁴¹ But, now, at Vatican II, they rose to become highly regarded consultants to the bishops, instrumental in shaping the theology of the council and Catholicism for generations to come.

It is significant that forty years later Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who would later become Pope Benedict XVI, referred to the four decades leading up to the council (1920–1960) as a period “full of ferment and hope,” leading to the adoption of the new “theological currents and tendencies” as “part of the patrimony of the whole church.”⁴² During those same four decades, however, the Vatican leadership saw in these very currents and tendencies not signs of hope for the future but signs of “the heresy of modernism.”⁴³

There is no doubt, then, that Vatican II was an epoch-making event for Roman Catholicism. At its heart was the *nouvelle théologie*, both as a movement—with its chief representatives

41. See *Informations Catholiques Internationales* 336 (May 15, 1969), 9. See also Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie*, where he discusses the measures taken by the Vatican against these theologians during the decades leading up to Vatican II.

42. Joseph Ratzinger, *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II*.

43. Pope Pius XII, in his encyclical *Humani Generis, Concerning Some False Opinions Threatening to Undermine the Foundations of Catholic Doctrine* (sections 29, 30, 32, and 34), issued on August 12, 1950, condemned some theological opinions and doctrines held by these theologians as expressing “neo-modernism.” The charge against this movement or school of theology is that it departed from Thomism using relativistic historical analysis and employing modern philosophical axioms, such as positivism or existentialism, and that many of these scholars expressed dogma with concepts of modern philosophy (existentialism, immanentism, idealism, or other systems).

present as theological experts—and as a new spirit and outlook⁴⁴ decidedly ecumenical in its expression and directly opposed to earlier papal decrees. It left its mark on all conciliar documents, but in particular on *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which demarcated a great divide with Catholicism’s theological past. For with *Unitatis Redintegratio*, together with *Lumen Gentium*, a new theological vision of the Church had arrived.

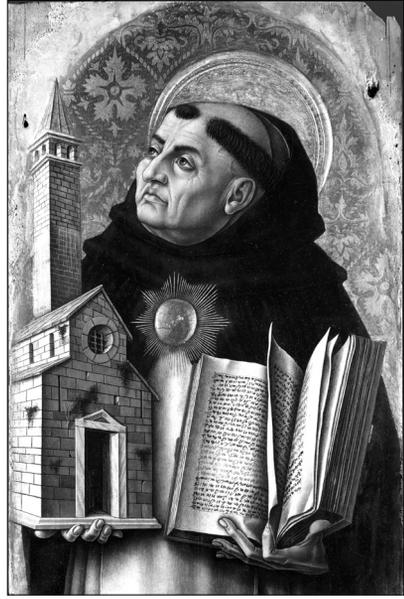
44. John W. O’Malley says that, of the three categories that the council wrestled with (*aggiornamento*, development, *ressourcement*), “*ressourcement* was the most traditional yet potentially the most radical. It was also the most pervasive at the council.” John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 301.

I

Key Aspects of the Historical Development of the Roman Catholic Teaching on Baptism and the Church



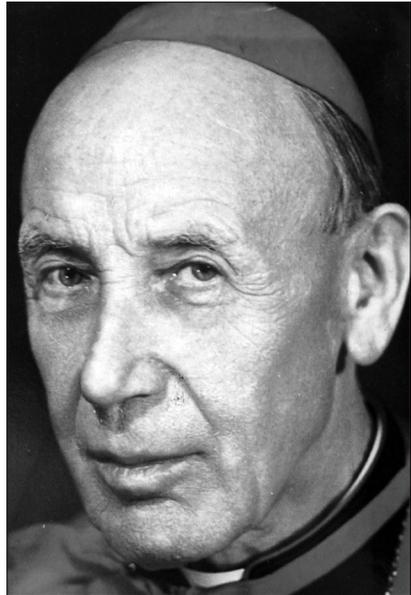
Blessed Augustine



Thomas Aquinas



Yves Congar



Augustin Bea

From the outset our Lord Jesus Christ placed Baptism at the foundation of man's salvation (John 3:3, 3:7; Matt. 28:19) and at the forefront of the evangelical preaching and mission of the Church. Baptism was everywhere and always understood as the portal both to salvation (1 Pet. 3:21) and to the Church, for salvation was given in and by the Church to the world (Acts 2:38–42). The mystery of salvation, the mystery of the Church, and the mysteries of the Church were understood to be indissolubly bound together. All men were understood to be baptized by “one Spirit . . . into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13), for there is only “one body, and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all” (Eph. 4:5–6).

The newly illumined one became not only a Christian believer but a Spirit-bearer (1 Cor. 3:16), one who had put on Christ (Gal. 3:27). Acceptance of the preaching was but a prerequisite of Baptism unto salvation, not salvation itself (Acts 2:41). Baptism was considered, moreover, not merely a washing away of sins but an initiation into the new state of being that is experienced in the life of the Church.

The Lord commanded the Apostles to make disciples, baptize, and teach (Matt. 28:19). They made disciples by way of the kerygma, the preaching of the Gospel calling all to repentance and entry into the Church, which came by Baptism. After Baptism there was a second teaching, in order that the regenerated might retain the salvation given in Baptism by observing “all things whatsoever” Christ had commanded (Matt. 28:19). Baptism was the indissoluble link between the preaching of the Gospel and the living out of the Gospel; after Baptism one