JAMES McCARTIN: Well, I would say there are certain things that haven’t changed in the post-conciliar Church by the behavior of this audience. You were very compliant, for which I am very grateful. [Laughter] Thanks for being so cooperative yesterday and throughout today.

First of all, I want to just say a quick word about how impressed I have been with the thoughtful engagement among our presenters and moderators and members of our audience today. For me it has been just a real pleasure to be able to sit there in the front and not have to say very much, but to hear things and be stimulated by ideas that I think are very powerful and that need to be heard. So I am grateful to everyone who has gotten up at this podium over the past however many hours.

I also want to say a thank you to Patricia Bellucci, who has done enormous work in bringing this together; and Carmen Batista and Mariyam Qureshi and Amanda Gonzalez, all of whom have really made this happen. I’m grateful to them. It’s not easy making this look easy, and they do.

Welcome to the final session of Our Inheritance, during which we will concern ourselves with the work of trying to tie together so many of the disparate themes and concerns and conversations that we have had over the past day and more.

For the sake of doing this, I am going to sit down for a while again, because I have recruited two real pros to try to tie things together, to give us a synthesis, and to point us
in a direction. Massimo Faggioli will be our first presenter. He comes to us from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. Following Massimo will be Catherine Cornille of Boston College.

Please welcome Massimo.

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI: Good afternoon, everybody.

First of all, I want to thank you, Jim, for this opportunity. It is a real pleasure and a challenge, because I have to try and find common paths and trajectories that are common to what we have heard in this last day and a half, which is an exercise that is totally arbitrary, of course.

My way of doing this is to identify what I will call three boxes of common themes, common issues, that are related. The three boxes are: first, the issue of authority and globalization; the second box is the box of the new issues — science, technology, gender; and the third box is what I would call Christendom, Vatican II, culture wars — there is a connection between these three.

First of all, authority and globalization. What I am trying to do here is to have an idea of what will happen to this issue from the point of view both from the perspective of a theologian who lives in the Church and, in a certain sense, works for the Church, and from a scholarly point of view what I think we should work on, what I would like to work on in the future.

Authority and globalization: In the Catholic Church, there is an issue of authority since the very beginning of its history. It seems to me that our problem today in the post-Vatican II Church is that we know a lot of information about how authority has been modeled in history, but we are not able to make that knowledge important in a theological manner for the Church.

I will give you just one example. There is much debate now in the Church of Pope Francis between the two synods if we can change the practice for divorce/remarriage. One of the best-kept secrets is that in the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea at Canon 8, the Council decided a penitential practice for divorce/remarriage. That is something that those who say that we have never done anything like that — so why has history not been able to make itself heard in theology or in the Church? That is one issue.

The second sub-issue is John McGreevy said that the Catholic globalization peaked in the 19th century. One big question is: Is the Catholic Church still in globalization, or is it becoming a series of islands with very different issues? That has huge importance for how we frame authority, because if we believe that we are still in a globalized Church, we can bet our money or our status or our intelligence on a globalized, coherent, vertical model of a Church, of a Vatican I, to be very clear. If we think that the Catholic Church is exiting globalization, that has theological consequences that are far, far bigger than we expect.

Pope Francis, I think, understands globalization in its dark side as well. The way I see him doing things in the Church makes me think that he is looking at the Church that is slowly reunderstanding globalization for its internal purposes, in a new way that is very different from John Paul II, for example.

Another third sub-issue in this issue of authority is the issue of membership, of belonging
to something. We tend in the post-Vatican-II critical age, critical against Vatican II, to think that Vatican II destroyed the idea of membership. Now, in my opinion, I think some things could have been done better, let’s say that. I think that we should associate this issue of the crazy[?] membership and so on with other phenomena, like for example people stopping reading newspapers. It is the same process, the crumbling of political parties, worker unions — it is the same process. The Catholic Church has its own issues, but I don’t think we should think about that as a specific Catholic problem. So there is a huge problem of membership.

What Pope Francis called peripheries is he is using a postmodern term for a shepherd looking for the sheep. In another way, what two days ago President Obama said at Selma, the imperative of citizenship — which is not just about voting, it’s about being part of something.

This is a theological issue. How authority relates to this crisis of belonging to something, to anything which is not “I” — iPad, iPhone, myself. This is also a theological issue, a spiritual issue, but it is not something that I think we should look at as only something that is a Catholic problem.

The last of the sub-issues for this first box of authority is the radical change that I see in the Church of Pope Francis from a certain kind of being authoritative to another kind. This would take a long explanation, but just to give you one symptom of that: if you compare the role of the Holy Office in the Church of John Paul and the role of the Holy Office in the Church of Pope Francis, you get the idea. For thirty-five years, the Holy Office was running the show on almost everything. Now the Holy Office is not much more than a postal address, really.

That says something about a transition, I think, from a certain way of teaching of the Church. Pope Francis knows that very few people read encyclicals. Most people look for something else. That says a lot about the authority in the Church.

These are just a few thoughts from my point of view.

The second issue is the new issues — science, technology, gender — all these issues for which Vatican II came too early, really. It is interesting to note that between the condemnation of Galileo and the public rehabilitation of John Paul II we have 360 years. But before 1982, Galileo is mentioned at Vatican II in Gaudium et Spes in a footnote of an historian of the Pontifical Lateran University who wrote a book about Galileo, Pio Paschini, and so footnote 63 says something about Galileo. It is a very embarrassed way of saying that.

But what Gaudium et Spes addressed was the issue of the compatibility of science and Scripture. The whole epistemological issue was not there. It’s something new here.

I want to quote a very interesting essay that Stephen Schloesser published a few months ago in a collection about Pope Francis. The title is “Dancing on the Edge of a Volcano.” He said that Vatican II happened while new issues — which he calls biopolitics — were becoming the issue of our moral theology, our understanding of the human being.

So here Vatican II came clearly too early for some things. If there will be another Council, or something like a Council — and I will talk about that later — these are the issues on which Vatican II said almost nothing and on which silence is not a statement. So we
might be induced to take silence as a form of statement, but silence is not a statement of any kind.

That is for Catholic theologians, historians, and intellectuals a challenge, because one symptom that I see, not just in American Catholicism but everywhere, is the tendency to become more introverted/intramural, to be less able to interact with other forms of knowledge that might say something to us. My interpretation of this is that in these last especially couple of decades, we have been so busy fighting for a stable narrative of these last fifty years that we have dissipated the energy to look outside.

That is my experience. My last ten years have been mostly spent on saying basically what happened at Vatican II, to quote the great John O’Malley. But that was the idea. My plans were completely different, but biographically I felt compelled to say, for example, the Catholic Church didn’t believe in religious freedom until 1965. If you read the statement of the Archbishops on religious freedom of 2011, they say there that we have always believed in religious freedom. It is something I felt called to do something. I think that it is important to get out of this intramural championship for the narrative of what happened in these last fifty years.

One particular issue, which may be the most important of what I am going to say, is this. It is at the intersection between box 2 (new issues, gender) and issue 3 (Christendom, Vatican II, and culture wars). What I am concerned about, as a European scholar who came to American six years ago and looking very much forward to the visit of Pope Francis to the West, is what I have called the American problem of Pope Francis, or the American equation, which is this: If this issue, which is a typical issue of the American Church, is acknowledged, is solved, this papacy works or this Church works. If this issue, which is particularly important for my Church, is not solved, this Church doesn’t work.

The other way around is the anti-American equation, which is, for example, the pro-life issue for European Catholics. This is the typical issue of American Catholics; therefore, European Catholics are not concerned by that. This is something that got worse, in my opinion, in these last few years. It has something that got worse.

Here I am transitioning to box 3: Christendom, Vatican II, culture wars. In one sentence I could say this. If you delete the middle-term, Vatican II, you have a short circuit, the culture war trying to get back to Christendom. Without Vatican II, we may think that it is easy to go back to that period.

It seems to me that globally, not just in America, we are becoming more sensitive intellectually, also scholarly, to the issue of experience, so the value of experience, and much less to the importance of history.

It seems to me that many of the problems we have in the Church, with the hierarchy especially, are related to the lack of historical memory. One of the most appealing things for me in Pope Francis is that Pope Francis never speaks about the past in terms of nostalgia — never, never. This is a deep understanding on his part of the spiritual and the intellectual temptation of looking back.

I think history is part of the silver bullet here. Why? Because Christendom is not just something that is in the past, but it is an ideal type that is still very much part of our imagination. So if Christendom is not just church and state but it is religion and politics, there are many Western countries where Christendom is part of how our bishops think, our politicians sometimes think, we sometimes think. So Christendom is not dead. It is
sometimes very much alive. In this I think we missed an opportunity in 2013 — what happened, with Pope Benedict resigning and all that — to make a historical reflection on Constantine, what it means to be a Constantinean church, which is Christendom, that lasts seventeen centuries. So here I think that there is a historical problem.

What is new? Here Vince Miller was very right in saying that, even in the Church of the 1940s and 1950s, division in the Church was politically driven. That is true. One thing that is new, in my opinion, is that back then the Church officially rejected democratic culture. Now we have accepted that, and our divisions are a reflection of a democratic culture.

So now, to use this metaphor, we are out of weapons. We thought that with a more democratic culture or getting rid of Marie Dominique Chenu, who was, as Congar said, a “monophysite fascist” — his famous definition — our future would have been brighter. So we have become more democratic.

Maryann said that this is one of the big achievements of the culture of the Second Vatican Council. Division now is deeper than fifty years ago. I don’t have an answer for that.

Here I am going to conclude in a few minutes. I said here I will give you a lot of bullet points.

If I had a lot of time, a lot of money, a lot of freedom, I would say that I would like to work as a community on two big projects.

The first project is writing a history of the post-Vatican II Church or of the Vatican II Church, because post-Vatican II — I mean the Tridentine Age is still the 17th century — so these last fifty years, or more or less. I think we need in the Catholic Church a stable narrative of these last fifty years with a book that is very similar to one of the best books of political and social history that I read, which is Tony Judt’s Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945.

We don’t have a stable historical narrative for the Second Vatican Council, for the post-Vatican II period, and all the issues that we disagree on are related to a particular historical narrative of Vatican II, of the first few years after. For my students, Vatican II is just the religious appendix of Woodstock, of drugs, of the flower children. So that is the narrative. So we need something like that, a global narrative of what happened in the Catholic Church, that is historical, that can find out what happened, where the culture war never reached those shores like Asia or like Africa. If you see Pope Francis, he is allergic to culture war in any way, shape, or form.

We have established a particular narrative of the Second Vatican Council and of the post-Council period that is focused on the crumbling ideological foundations of the North Atlantic hemisphere. That is not the Catholic Church. It’s one part of the Catholic Church. So that is one big project.

The second project I think is related to that. It is hugely important intellectually and theologically to defragment the fragmented islands in the Catholic Church of today.

I follow Pope Francis every day, more than I should probably. But one thing that happens constantly is the mistranslation, misinterpretation, of what he says, I think. I am Italian. I still think in Italian. I think that the issue we have with translating him is just a
symptom of the difficulty of translating a Catholic language in the Church.

If you are an academic pope, translating you is much easier. The translation of philosophical terms, of academic terms, is settled, it is much easier. A pastoral pope, a street priest, a street fighter sometimes, is very difficult to translate.

But this is not just because Pope Francis says sometimes things that he should wait a second to say, but it is a deep issue of how a certain model of authority, a certain language, impacts a global Catholicism that maybe is becoming more nationalistic, more continentally divided.

These are the two big plans that in my sleepless nights I dream of. Thank you for your patience.

Catherine Cornille: Good afternoon. You have all been incredibly patient, sitting through a very long day. I won't take very much of your time.

First, I want to note that it is an interesting reflection of the global Church to have an Italian and a Belgian respond to the papers that have been presented today. It could, of course, be more global, but that's already a sign that we are moving forward.

I have to apologize. You probably hear that I am severely congested. I feel also quite foggy. I hope that that doesn't come out in my remarks too much.

What I would like to do is to see whether there are certain lines or how one can look at certain trends that appear in the different papers that we have heard yesterday and today. The way I have done this is by looking at two approaches, some that I think are more pessimistic about the Church since Vatican II and some that are more optimistic. I don't think that they necessarily are reflective of singular papers. Some papers have optimism and pessimism about the Church today running through them. But I would like to just sort of run over them, just to refresh our memories, and then we can possibly come back to that in the discussion.

I think yesterday John McGreevy started with a rather pessimistic image of the end of Christendom and the demise of the Catholic Church in the northern hemisphere, with Catholic institutions falling apart and the end of the great Catholic revival.

This morning there was also reference, which we heard just now also, to the Church being swept up in culture wars and that the greater engagement of the Church in the world has led to also greater political divides that now we apparently don't have an excuse for anymore. You can see that again in positive and in negative terms. We can come back to that. But Vincent Miller, of course, brought that out very powerfully in his paper.

Just before we heard from Stephen Grimm how technology may be regarded as something that distracts from spiritual and religious ideals or from a contemplative mindset.

There was discussion about authority in the Church and how that might be abused, about violence within and outside the Church.

Marcello Neri talked about how the Church has gotten stuck in the spirit of modernity in Europe, that the Church is unable to move believers from ideology to action with regard to, for example, the preferential option for the poor, or with regard to questions of
sustainability. Christiana pointed that out also just before.

Michelle Gonzalez reminded us that not very much has changed in the Church with regard to the position of women.

All of these are voices or comments that we heard that I think raise critical and pessimistic notes or light on the Church today. However, I think there is plenty also that was discussed that sheds a more positive or optimistic light on what has happened since Vatican II and that is still reflected in our heritage.

The very fact that so many lay theologians are able to participate in the Church and express their voices I think is an obvious one. That is also clearly reflected at this conference.

Vatican II also brought about an awareness of a Church that is truly global. Of course, globalization in the Church didn’t happen with Vatican II. But, as Tracy pointed out, the presence of so many Asian bishops and their voices being heard was something that was a major change and development, and that then after Vatican II gave rise to the foundation of the Federation of Asian Bishops.

Rather than being directly involved in national or party politics, Maryann pointed out that the Church since Vatican II has played a very important role in the establishment of justice and peace initiatives and movements, and that a lot has happened in the development of democratic governments since Vatican II, also something to be happy and hopeful about.

Recognition of the importance of dialogue with science and dialogue with other religious traditions is something that hasn’t really been raised very much during this conference. It is my particular area of expertise. But Vatican II was truly a watershed event in terms of our dialogue with other religious traditions.

Tracy pointed, rightfully, to the fact that the description of other religions at Vatican II in Nostra Aetate was thin and that there are still certain elements of triumphalism and so forth in the documents. But I think we can’t forget what a major change came about at Vatican II with regard to the attitude towards other religions, the recognition of other religions as part of the plan of salvation and so forth. That really was the first time in the history of the Church that the Church made any official positive pronouncements on other religious traditions.

That I think is also an incredibly hopeful and important development that has borne incredible fruits also since Vatican II, all of the ways in which the Church is involved in interreligious dialogue, movements that have developed new forms of scholarship. At Boston College, we are particularly involved in an area of theological reflection called comparative theology, where we do cast theological reflection on the Catholic tradition but in dialogue with other religious traditions. All of that would have been inconceivable, I think, before Vatican II.

And then, last but not least, of course, Vatican II’s emphasis on the preferential option for the poor that permeates the different documents.

I don’t know if MT pointed to this or mentioned this in her talk. I don’t know if I heard it. But the Pact of the Catacombs was an incredibly powerful event that I don’t think the
Church knows enough about actually, about that happening and what it gave rise to, indeed, after Vatican II.

Marcello also pointed to the fact of hospitality and restorative justice as two elements among the elements where the Church still can make a difference in Europe.

All of these, I think, are elements of hope and optimism for the Church today.

What I felt throughout the day today, and also yesterday, is a continuing tension still since Vatican II, and probably because of Vatican II’s orientation towards the world and aggiornamento, is a tension between the Church giving itself to the realities of the world, or at least engaging the realities of the world, and maintaining its own distinct identity or its own voice in the world. That is something that I felt, either directly or indirectly, in the papers.

In engaging the world and being involved in developments in science and technology, the question can always be asked: What difference does theology, does the Church, make in all of these discussions? What difference does the Church make in discussions over ecology and the other points that we have heard in ethical discussions? I don’t think that we have really raised these kinds of questions very clearly today or yesterday.

There is a lot of pressure, I think, with becoming a Church of the world, engaged in the world, and all of the challenges that that involves. As we heard before also, there are so many challenges in the world today and we have to be busy with all of these pressing issues in the world.

But how much time do we have, or how much opportunity is there, to reflect on what it is we actually have to offer as Catholics to the world and to all of these distinct questions? I haven’t really heard a lot of discussion on what that access is or what that distinct contribution might be of the Church to the world today.

We see it also in questions of interreligious dialogue and enculturation, where the Church indeed is trying to become more and more open to other cultures and to other religions. But then the opposite is also true. In becoming more open, there is always a threat of losing your distinctiveness or your own identity. I think that tension is certainly real.

Of course, that doesn’t mean that we have to go back to a kind of isolationist position and complete distinction from the world. But I think it is important to continue to reflect on these questions of what it is that the Church and that we as Catholic theologians have to offer to all of these very important discussions.

I want to end by pointing to three areas in which I think the Church needs to move forward in this kind of reflection.

First, I think we have to give some time to reflecting on how we discern what the Church has to offer to all of these discussions. Of course, as we heard before, this should not be a top-down, authoritarian imposition about “this is who we are and this is what we have to offer.” I think as theologians we have a responsibility to work together and to think together about this particular question of the distinctiveness and the contribution of Christianity to the world. But that is really an intratheological reflection, and I am feeling a little bit out of place by saying this after all of these papers that have been so outward-looking. But I think we really do have to look inwardly also, and do it together. I think that is also one of the big challenges of the post-Vatican II Church, is the radical
dispersion and fragmentation, not only of interest but also of research.

We talk a lot about the Catholic intellectual tradition now and we have to return to the Catholic intellectual tradition and what it has to offer. One of the things about the Catholic intellectual tradition is that intellectuals were working together on major theological problems and questions. I think that is not so much the case anymore in theological reflection today. Everyone is doing their own thing and working on their own project, and maybe building on each other’s publications. But there is less of a sense that we are working on a common project, I think, as Catholic theologians. So I think it is really important to do more of that and to find ways to collaborate among each other and to contribute in that way to the common good.

So many theologians in the Middle Ages, nobody knows their names, but they were all working together on how to integrate Aristotelianism into Christian theology. Now everybody knows the names of Catholic theologians. But what I am looking for is a bit more collaboration and cohesion and sense of a common project as Catholic theologians that we might be working towards.

There is, I think, still a need for some degree of theological introspection in the post-Vatican II Church.

The other big question that was raised already yesterday is: How do we transmit this? Has there been a failure of transmitting the tradition to the post-Vatican II generation?

And how do we both maintain a level of literacy? That is, I think, very important. I also am very insistent on the lack of literacy about Catholic history and teachings among our students, and so as educators I think we are responsible for transmitting knowledge about the tradition.

But also, how do we make Catholic faith and what we want to transmit interesting, surprising, and cool among our students? So many times students come to courses in theology and they think they know it all or they are not interested. It is a challenge for us, but it is an exciting challenge also for us.

But I think it really is a challenge to rethink the way we transmit the tradition and to find new ways to make Christianity interesting and cool and exciting to the new generation. Maybe we needed a certain gap of a generation that was literate but had limited knowledge of the tradition — just enough to do harm — and now that we have a generation of people who are relatively illiterate, maybe we can really now make the tradition again interesting and cool.

I see it with my students at BC. I teach a core course on Christianity and Hinduism. It’s a year-long course where we do the study of those two traditions. The students who take the course, of course, don’t want to hear anything anymore about Christianity; they just want to learn about Hinduism, and they’ll take Christianity with it because they have to in the core course.

But what I see happening much of the time is that the students who have a Catholic background, by learning about Hinduism, suddenly rediscover their Christian heritage and roots and become again interested and enthused by it. But it’s through a different way. So we have to find new ways to ignite the interest of the next generation, I think.
I think so many people have said also over the past day that the interest is there. The thirst, the hunger, for meaning and spirituality certainly is there. We just have to work harder in finding ways to tap into that and do it in new and exciting ways.

And then, finally, how do we share what might be the Catholic surplus, if you will — I am a little hesitant to use that word — or Catholic distinctiveness to the world at large? I think one of the things that is quite interesting about Vatican II is that, for the first time, Vatican II put the onus or the responsibility for sharing the Gospel, for mission, to all Catholic faithful. So we all have the responsibility for evangelizing and for sharing the faith in the world. There has been never less mission than since Vatican II.

This is also again an interesting dilemma: How do we again in ourselves develop a kind of courage and interest in sharing or proclaiming, evangelizing, our faith in world today?

Those are areas that I think are important to reflect on going forward. I certainly don’t have answers for all of these questions, but I look forward to hearing from you on them. Thank you very much.

JAMES McCARTIN: That was hard work for you to summarize so much that we have gone through. I have pages and pages of notes and questions. I am grateful to both of you for being so cogent and clear in your summaries.

First, I have, as I say, a large number of questions that I could go with. But let me throw it to each of you. Do you have anything you want to say to one another after hearing each other speak?

CATHERINE CORNILLE: Yes.

Massimo, a comment you made about globalization. That has peaked, or have we now come to a collection of small churches with separate interests? I was just curious about how you used the term globalization, because it can be used in different ways. A collection of small churches with their own interests as part of globalization? I understand when you use the term globalization you think of it as a monolithic Church that had peaked in the 19th century?

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI: Yes, kind of. The Romanization of the Church, the uniformization. The idea that is typical of the First Vatican Council is that if the nation-state is armed against us, the Church, we should respond with a similar kind of political projection, which is an imperial Church, a pope with infallibility.

So I agree with John McGreevy that the 19th century is the peak. I think that that peak lasts until the Council, that ideal of a uniform Church. In these last fifty years, we have seen a Church that is increasingly diverse, so there are different theological issues.

That is the big question that I have about a possible Third Vatican Council. Is it desirable, or is it more desirable as a moment of consultation in the Church that is done continentally, as it was common practice in the early centuries?

I think that the Catholic Church is aware that globalization is something that is still part of Catholic surplus, as you said, but it is something that doesn’t work anymore uniformly.

I can give you one biographical example. I learned, I heard, I read of women, feminist theologians, in 2008, at the young age of thirty-seven. In my information in Italy, in
Europe, I had never heard of them. I studied with very liberal and progressive theologians.

So it is not that everything can be divided into liberals or conservatives. There are continental and cultural issues that are really different, much more now than one century ago. That is my question.

If I may ask a question of Catherine, we have a common concern here with fragmentation. How do you see, in your experience, fragmentation reconciled with the issue of the legitimate diversity of the Church, when theological opinions on issues are sometimes not just different but are exactly the opposite? How do you defragment that?

**CATHERINE CORNILLE:** When I talk about fragmentation, I don’t think that the opposite of that would be complete uniformity of the Church, of course. But the fact that there are a few — and when I talk about common projects, it doesn’t mean that of course all American theologians have to work on the same thing, but more of a sense of collaboration and of contribution to a greater good that will be at the service of society and of the Church at large.

I think a fragmented Church and the kind of globalization that you talk about, which I also would call globalization, where the Church is genuinely local and involved in its own challenges and issues, I think can still feel like one Church, as long as there is interest and openness and respect for what is going on in other continents and contexts. That is something that I find disturbingly lacking in the Church today with the kind of fragmentation where everyone does their own thing and is barely interested in what is happening in a different continent.

I will give an embarrassing example. We just established a new chair at Boston College. We invite a major theologian from a different continent each year to give a series of lectures. I was very excited about that, that our students were going to learn this year about theology in Latin America and they will be exposed to this fantastic Latino scholar. Five students came, five Ph.D. students. We have seventy Ph.D. students. I was about to pull out my hair, I was so angry about this. Luckily, my colleagues came, so they saved the day. I’m proud that at least my colleagues are interested in the global Church.

But that is where I am talking. We don’t all have to be always working on the same projects, but a kind of openness and receptivity to what goes on, and a sense that what goes on in the Church in Latin America or in India might be relevant, not only out of curiosity, but for the way I practice also.

I have worked a lot on questions of enculturation also, and that’s all fine. But what the Church in India has become is fascinating for the Church in America and in northern Europe. So to bring back to the Church at large what is going on in areas of enculturation I think is absolutely needed.

Yes, working together on common projects, but then maintaining always a dialogue with each other in the Church and, ideally, with the hierarchy of the Church, of course.

**JAMES McCARTIN:** I want to throw a question out there for your consideration. I mentioned earlier that there are ways in which we are still like the pre-conciliar Church, and I want to come back to that point.
It struck me as very heartening that we heard mention of a full range of intellectuals, Catholic, Protestant, and beyond — Robert Putnam, Bella, Derrida, Kristeva, Piketty — over the course of today, which strikes me as a good sign, that Catholic thinkers are engaged with a full range of people who are having serious conversations about big ideas, whether they are secular or sacred in their own personal identification, whether they are religious or secular.

But you’ll note, if you were paying attention today, that one name kept coming up over and over again, the name of Pope Francis. It brings us back to this question of authority, too, in part. If you read, for example, moral theology in the 1940s, you see citation after citation to papal documents. It strikes me as something that we ought to think about, the extent to which we are referencing papal authority, in some ways — I don’t want to use this word — but in some ways without thinking carefully about what that means, what it means to reference papal authority so persistently.

I guess I’m a little bit concerned that we have put so much stock and energy in and we expect so much of this particular papal authority that it could be problematic for us as a thinking Church. I just want to get your thoughts on that.

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI: You are exactly right, because at some point it will end. One of the main paradoxes of this time is that ultramontanist Catholics have all become liberal and all liberal Catholics have become ultramontanist, so Pope Francis is the beacon. In this there is a danger.

I want to make a public confession here about my fascination with Francis. If you listen to him, if you look at him, he is the resuscitation of the Second Vatican Council. You see him and you see Helder Camara, you see Congar, whom he read, so that’s why.

Here the important thing to understand for Francis and Vatican II is this: Pope Francis and Vatican II do not create a paradigm, a set of things; they create a model to get beyond a paradigm. So here Vatican II is not a paradigm; it is a paradigmatic event. It tells us something about how the Church makes decisions. Pope Francis is the same.

So I am less concerned than you are maybe, because if you read the exhortation, which is the first encyclical really of Francis, you see that, for the first time, he makes important statements based on statements of the national bishops conferences, which is turning upside-down the way magisterium was. I think that what he is doing is he is recreating the conditions of existence and not a hyper-personal thing.

All that said, it is something that is not going to last forever. Here there is this danger of an ultra-papalist Church with the best intentions. I take that as a personal criticism. But you are right, it is a real issue.

CATHERINE CORNILLE: I was also going to raise that question. I think we can spoil ourselves for a while. We have now a pope we can look up to and who is really making a difference in the Church. So in one sense I think it is really understandable that we are really still giddy about Pope Francis.

On the other hand, I think you are absolutely right, it is very dangerous that we idolize him, for one, and that we put all our stock in what he is going to represent, because he won’t be pope forever. I think, as you pointed out before, sometimes we like what he says, but who knows what he is going to say tomorrow? So we have to continue to do the work ourselves and to take up our own responsibility for continuing the work of Vatican II also.
I just wanted to give an example of what you just said about his quoting the National Bishops Conference, and this refers also to what Tracy was talking about. In Evangeli Gaudium, when he talks about interreligious dialogue — no surprise that I am interested in those paragraphs — he says this dialogue is “a duty for Christians as well as for other religious communities. This dialogue is in the first place a conversation about human existence or simply, as bishops of India have put it, a matter of ‘being open to them, sharing their joys and sorrows.’” So he is quoting the bishops of India, which I think is a good example again of what you were saying.

But you are absolutely right, the responsibility for continuing theological work and engaging the great intellectuals of our time is certainly our responsibility. I thought you were suggesting that we didn’t do that enough maybe as Catholics, that we are too inward-looking.

JAMES McCartin: I think, Catherine, that is often the case. I have to say that there was a lot of engagement in the conversation today. But I think too often we are not as engaged as we need to be with the full range of work being done by intellectuals — openly engaged, critically engaged.

I think it is detrimental to us in trying to project some kind of authority in the public square that we have, to use Massimo’s word, a lot of times intramural conversations that are of no interest to people outside our circles. It worries me when we do that. I don’t necessarily think that was the case today, but I think it is a disease that we sometimes suffer from.

If you will, one question for you that brings us back to a point in part made by Vice Miller this morning, and then I want to throw it out to the audience for their response to this question and to throw their own questions in the mix.

I got to thinking about the people who have taught me over the years, who have been mentors and friends to me, who are from the Vatican II generation or the pre-Vatican II generation. One of the things that comes to mind when I think about them is that they were fully invested in and integrated into institutions that were life-giving to them in some way, that were faithful in the sense that they were attached to faith communities, and also intellectual. And they had a community.

This brings us back to some things that both of you were saying earlier. That is not the case among young Catholic intellectuals today. There is not a sense of shared projects, there is not very often a sense of shared institutions, there is not very often even engagement across disciplinary lines, which we tried to do some of here today. I think that is enormously important.

If I were to press you, what do we do about that problem? Do you have any prescriptions to help us get beyond that? And, to bring back a point that Vince made, what are the habits of unity that we can cultivate among younger Catholic intellectuals so that we are seeing ourselves as part of a community, with shared projects and visions and so on?

Massimo Faggioli: Two things. Pope Francis is in my mind the first born-again Pope. After his term as Provincial, he went through a very difficult period of darkness, and that is why he is not afraid of anything now. But he never questioned the legitimacy of the thing, which is a very Vatican II thing.
All the great theologians who made Vatican II in 1950, and some of them even before Chenu, they went through a decade at least of Siberia. They never thought of leaving the Church. Congar thought at some point about taking his own life, but he never thought of leaving the Church. So their faith was not just faith in the Church; it was faith in history, that this is not the end, that it is the power of ideas that will find recognition, even in the Church, in the Holy Office, of the 1950s.

So there, there is a teaching for me — and I found that that works with my students — that staying there, even when it is difficult, when the Church punishes you, it is not giving up, it is not giving yourself to the Church, it is keeping faith in some kind of acknowledgement in the end, which is a sign of strength.

I repeat, Vatican II was done all by these great theologians, those ideas of John Courtney Murray, all of these things. If they had left, nothing would have happened.

It is similar to Pope John. He was a pope, yet he had a terrible time with the Roman Curia in the seminary. So in this teaching for a method in theology, there is a spiritual teaching, there is an intellectual teaching for me there.

CATHERINE CORNILLE: That is very helpful. I think it also points to the symptom of our day. All of those great thinkers and theologians were also religious. They never thought of leaving. They belonged to a community that was their home, that was their whole life. Now theology — we talk all the time about lay people participating in theology. They are not committed to the institution in the same way as these religious were. I think that is just a sign of the times.

The other thing is that theology has become professionalized. We have become professional theologians and we are all working on our careers and trying to live up to the expectations of our institutions and get tenure and promotion and all this. So everybody is under so much pressure to move up and meet the requirements of institutions that the greater good or bigger ideas or working together — I think those are things that get lost in this social reality of theology today.

Now, that doesn’t mean that it cannot be changed. I think this is one area. If Catholic universities are really serious about the Catholic intellectual tradition and they have theologians who want to invest in the Catholic intellectual tradition in a more communal way, then that should be counted or it should be recognized also by Catholic institutions.

I think we just have to be more creative about the ways in which we compensate for the kind of commitment that these great thinkers had in their day and work together in new ways. It just takes initiative, I think. It just takes people taking the step, selling it to their institutions, and then bringing people together and moving forward that way.

There are all kinds of really big and interesting theological problems also that we haven’t even touched on today. I am particularly interested in the dialogue with Asian religions and how theologians today are trying to use Asian hermeneutics to completely rethink Christian theology and doing biblical exegeses on the basis of a world view that is not Greek or Hellenistic but Mahamaka or Advaita. These are very challenging and exciting and dangerous areas that we could be working together on. That’s just one area of theology. But all of this is so important that it needs a lot of brains, I think.

JAMES McCARTIN: There has to be someone who wants to ask a question or give a comment. Hopefully, there is more than someone. Please raise your hand.
QUESTION: Massimo, I want you to describe a little bit more, or flesh out a little bit more, this middle-of-the-night wish for a narrative of the last fifty years. Some of that concerns me. I want to hear how you would flesh it out. That may be the stuff of my nightmares.

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI: It's a big plan that is no plan, I mean literally. The conflict or the battle for meaning around Vatican II is something that is typical of the Western European and, especially, North American Church. The instability of that narrative is inspired much more sociologically and politically than theologically. You cannot seriously today make a serious theological argument against Vatican II. You can make a socio-political argument, saying, “Well, this happened and then we had Woodstock, we had Roe v. Wade, and all these things.” So it is an impure kind of connection, and it is geographically and culturally very limited.

If we believe in the Catholicity of the thing, we should consider the huge impact of the Second Vatican Council in countries where Catholics are a minority. I don’t have much experience of Asia, but I taught two weeks two years ago in Indonesia, last September one week in Hong Kong. They don’t fight against Vatican II because that is their Church. They don’t question that ever. For the first time in my life, at one of my lectures I had three bishops showing up and taking notes and asking questions. Vatican II there is no threatening.

Here we need intellectually a work to have a bigger view because Vatican II was done not for the churches in Italy or in North America, but it was done for the whole world. What was happening in terms of secularization was happening in the 1930s and 1940s already. The liturgical movement happened because of that.

In a way, it is my way of articulating some kind of restorative justice for Catholics outside of North America and Europe who are just used in this thing which is a fight that they never had the desire to fight. I don’t know how to do that in practice. But this is something that is, I think, very, very necessary.

QUESTION: My name is [microphone malfunction] Hoffman and I work [inaudible] campus minister. First of all, thank you to everyone who spoke today and last evening and for facilitating such a thoughtful and provocative conversation.

In my role as campus minister, I have the opportunity to work with eighteen-to-twenty-two-year-olds fairly regularly. Something that has been percolating for me throughout this conversation is the question of engagement with them, but also with all those other groups that we have talked about who have perhaps left or who are seeking and growing.

One of the things that stands out to me from my work with them is that you are right, Catherine, that desire is there and that they crave authenticity. I think that is something that Matt Malone was alluding to last night when he talked about joy and the importance of living our faith joyfully. So they crave that authenticity of relationship and those meaningful relationships but also the authenticity of spirituality.

We were talking this morning about the “spiritual but not religious.” What I’m wondering is if — as we look back at the fruits of Vatican II and the documents, we have been talking a lot about the implementation on a macro level, but I’m curious about its possibilities on a spiritual level and how we might actually be able to incorporate them into our faith communities on the local level to provide religion that is more spiritual.
CATHERINE CORNILLE: Thank you very much. You probably have my daughter as one of your students who is here at Fordham.

The question of spirituality, indeed, hasn’t come up I think very much in these two days, although I was a bit foggy, as I mentioned. That is maybe also a symptom of the Church, indeed, turning to the world and becoming interested in politics and interested in technology and ecology and all the worldly important issues of the day but sort of maybe losing a bit its own heart and compass.

It’s amazing to me how students light up when you have them read John of the Cross or Teresa of Ávila, and they don’t know anything about that. To make Catholicism spiritual, to bring the spirituality back into the Church and to make it part of our lived tradition and what we transmit to the next generation is, I think, very important.

But I think we have such a rich spiritual heritage that we very rarely tap into and really use to its fullest benefit. I think those are incredibly rich resources in the tradition, and that would be a way to awaken that kind of enthusiasm again for the tradition.

I always start my class with students who are nominally Catholic and so on and who are “spiritual but not religious” talking about what that means, of course, but also then showing them how rich the Catholic tradition is in terms of its own spirituality. They have no clue. This is not stuff that we teach in CCD until maybe they get to college, and then they start reading the mystics and the spiritual tradition of the Church.

But there is so much in it. How do we tap into that? It is also one of the elements that gives me hope about the Church going forward.

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI: Very briefly, I would do what Pope Francis is doing with Vatican II, which is he is doing Vatican II without ever mentioning it. It works splendidly with no theologians.

So if you read the Bible, if you have a rich understanding of the tradition, if you think that faith is something that must be authentic and not something for show, you are a Vatican II Catholic and there is no need to label that with “Vatican II.” That might antagonize them.

Unless it is in a theology course, academic — yes, I use Vatican II a lot, but not in an existential context, where “Vatican II” might sound like “eat your peas,” this kind of thing that you have to acknowledge because I am invested in that. No.

JAMES McCARTIN: There is a gentleman in the back who has had his hand up and he will get the last question. He has to know, however, that he stands between everyone in this room and the food and drink in the back of the room.

QUESTION: That’s a tough act to follow. My name is Kevin Tortorelli. I’m a Franciscan friar and a parish priest at Holy Name of Jesus Parish up on the Upper West Side, on West 96th Street.

I wanted to say that one of the things in terms of authority that has been very much on the floor here today — when Jesus speaks, the congregation says, “He speaks with authority and not like the scribes.” Well, the scribes will be speaking out of a long religious and statutory tradition, and Jesus is speaking somehow differently. I think it is important not to see that as a write-off or a one-off. It’s the standard, I think, to which
the whole Church is called — to be developing a spirituality of authenticity so that I listen, I’m not afraid of what you say, I’ll walk with you along what you’re directing me toward, I’ll accept what you’re sharing with me.

To steal a page from Bernard Lonergan, this is the way in which I think the dialectical oppositions, which can be pretty intractable, begin to break down, when we are prepared to develop the spiritual authenticity, which is deeply human — it’s not particularly Catholic or particularly anything, it is just particularly human.

But I do think when people say “He speaks with authority and not like the scribes,” that’s the standard to which the Church is called.

**JAMES McCARTIN:** That’s a good last word. Thank you, Kevin Tortorelli.

I couldn’t be more pleased about the conversations that took place today. Thanks to all of you who were involved in one way or another, even if you were just here in the audience listening.

Please make time right now to go to the back, grab a glass of wine or a beer or a water and some food and enjoy yourselves. Thanks so much.

Bye-bye. You’re dismissed.

[Adjourned: 5:35 p.m.]