

CONGAR'S INITIAL PROPOSALS FOR VATICAN II

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In September 1960, the members and consultors of the Preparatory Theological Commission (PTC) were sent a packet of material that included brief outlines of four texts that it was likely the commission would prepare for Vatican II. Observations on the material were solicited, and so Yves Congar, a consultor, wrote the following paper in which he set out rather a different agenda than the one presupposed in the outlines. Congar sent it not only to the secretariat of the PTC but to all of the members as well. He was told that in the future he should communicate only with the secretariat. As far as I know, this text of Congar has not been made public anywhere else.

In accord with the invitation extended to me (CT 4160 of 22.VII.60), I submit to the Theological Commission the reflections dictated to me by an awareness of my responsibility as a Consultor. Three chapters: A) General Remarks; B) On the Four Schemata now being foreseen; C) Additional Remarks.

A) General Remarks

Everywhere, but especially among Catholic lay people, the announcement of the Second Vatican Council has aroused great interest and great hope, above all because His Holiness has given promoting the re-establishment of unity among Christians as the Council's distant goal. For churchmen, this interest and this hope constitute a great Christian responsibility before the world.

What world?

A world in which one person in four is Chinese.

A world in which one person in three lives under a Communist regime.

A world in which Christians are divided, but where there is also ecumenical hope.

A world of practical atheism in an immense number of people; a world of technology and of an almost general conviction among the young that human beings have the power, thanks to this technology, to organize human life rationally and successfully, by themselves.

A world which denounces Colonialism and any sort of Paternalism.

A world in which women are advancing.

To my mind, all the work of the Council should be undertaken as if under the eyes of *this* very world, as if it were watching us, and with consideration of the realities I have just too briefly evoked. Unless the remote finality of the service of Christian unity is merely verbal, the work of the Council should also be undertaken as if under the eyes of *other* Christians and without ever losing sight of the duty to serve, from afar, but effectively, the cause of Unity.

This purpose does not appear in the summary of the "*Quaestiones Commissioni Theologicae Positae*" [Questions posed to the Theological Commission]. For the questions seem to be posed there almost as they might have been at the First Vatican Council, in 1868.

B) ON THE FOUR POINTS ON WHICH "VERISIMILE EST QUATTUOR ESSE FACIENDA SCHEMATA" [It is likely that four drafts are to be prepared]

I think the following remarks important:

I) *De Fontibus Revelationis, scilicet de Scriptura et Traditione* [On the sources of revelation, that is, on Scripture and Tradition].

1) The notion of Revelation was determined by the Vatican Council, and then by the Encyclicals *Providentissimus* and *Pascendi*, under its angle as an action of God. The notion of biblical inspiration, as it must be maintained by all Catholics, has been sufficiently specified by the Encyclicals *Providentissimus*, *Spiritus Paraclitus*, and *Divino Afflante*; it seems that what has not yet been determined is a matter for properly theological work. But to illumine several questions, it would be very important to specify the *content* of Revelation, its formal object *quod*, which is also the content of the Faith and the object both of the Church's competence and of inspiration itself. This content "*primo et per se*" is the religious and salvific relationship. As for God's intrinsic nature, what is needed for this religious and salvific relationship to be founded in the truth, from the side of its decisive term, God, has been revealed. Under the Old Testament, rather little about the nature of God in itself, but much about his sovereignty, about his purpose of grace or covenant; under the New Testament, since the religious relationship must be much more intimate--a relationship of a son and a temple of God--God revealed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Fathers and scholastic Doctors say that the revelation of the Holy Trinity is proper to the New Testament. The scholastic theologians also specified that the content (*quod*) of the Faith, and so of Revelation (and of the Church's competence) is "*quorum visione perfruemur in vita aeterna, et per quae ducimur in vitam aeternam*" [the things the sight of which we will enjoy in eternal life and the things through which we are led to eternal life] (S. Thomas, *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q. 1, a. 6, ad 1; a. 8 sol.; q. 2, a. 5 sol.; a. 7 sol.; Albert the Great, *In III Sent.*, d. 38; Borgnet, t. XXVIII, p. 725). If this content *quod* of Revelation is well marked out, it will be much easier to follow the line indicated by Vatican I concerning theology, its elaboration, and its teaching: "*...e mysteriorum ipsorum nexu inter se et cum fine hominis ultimo*" [from the links among the mysteries themselves and with the final end of man] (Denziger, 1796). If this line had been better followed, people might have avoided the feeling so frequently, almost generally, experienced by priests towards a too purely analytical, almost "atomized" teaching of theology. They and the faithful need to see the synthesis, the organic unity of all doctrine. The liking for the Fathers, the search for a "Kerygmatics," in good part come from this.

The motives that inspire me to make these remarks are: a) This question of the true *content (quod)* of revelation is at the basis of the contemporary discussions of the (*sic dicta!* [so-called]) "new theology," of "Kerygmatics," and of many ecumenical questions, to say nothing about certain problems raised during the modernist era. - b) It is also at the basis of the uneasiness experienced by almost all young priests who note a break between the theology of their clerical studies and the demands of pastoral preaching. - c) I note with anxiety that a hiatus is being created today between the results, so fine, of the biblical renewal and classical or systematic theology. Exegesis speaks of "the history of salvation," while theology is often presented as a supernatural metaphysics. I believe that a good notion of the content of revelation would remedy this regrettable break.

2) For the same reasons, I think that the notion of *Faith* needs to be better stated, in connection with this notion of the content of revelation. Faith is a very rich and complex reality, which has two principal aspects: a noetic aspect, responding to revelation as teaching; an aspect of life-commitment, responding to the saving initiative of the God who reveals and offers his Covenant (Faith, the basis of justification). The Catholic Magisterium knows both aspects, but it has insisted above all on the first, in opposition either to the "*fides fiducialis*" [trusting faith] of Protestants, or to rationalism (the sufficiency of human reason), or to modernism. This aspect certainly should not be minimized; more than ever, one must teach! But one must better explain and stress the aspect according to which Faith is that absolute trust which I open to God so that he may reign sovereignly over my life. It is necessary: a) because it is biblical; b) because it would be very effective pastorally. One of the reasons why so many young people abandon

religious practice is that they have never gone beyond the stage of "faith" as a list of statements to be acknowledged and learned by heart from a Catechism. The religious affirmations have never reached the level of conscience where are formed the responses that must be made to the calls of God. It is rare for priests to propose a fully biblical notion of Faith. My conviction, as a priest who has preached dozens of Lents, Advents, priestly retreats or days of recollection, etc., is that *beaucoup* de mieux would depend on the notion of Faith that we have and propose. c) It would be no less important ecumenically. For we have *often* noted the ambiguities caused by the fact that Catholic authors speak of Faith in the noetic sense, while Protestants remain on the level of life-commitment. Here as elsewhere, we need only to be *fully* Catholic!

The link between an integral notion of Faith, which is also its biblical notion, and the content of Revelation, is easy to perceive.

3) The notion of the competence (of the Magisterium) of the Church is also linked to that of the content of Revelation. This is a very important point. In fact, today, a *very* large number of people would be ready to accept God and the Gospel, but are uneasy before the Church and its magisterium. This attitude, of course, derives from the carnal man. But still it has a lesson for us. Unhealthy in itself, it is, however, a warning to us that is all the more important because it has not stopped being addressed to the Church since the beginning of the twelfth century by a not negligible series of protestations... The question thus posed to the Church is that of the primacy of its function of transmitting and witnessing to the Word of God over its function, a real one, of elaboration and "definition."

It is the question of the primacy of the authority *of God* (of His Word) over the authority--real, very important--*of the Church*: an authority which flows from apostolic institution and mandate.

In no way is this an attack by me on the authority of the Encyclicals, the principal expression of the ordinary magisterium of the Head of the Church. I have read and cited them more than many theologians. I am speaking in the name of apostolic or pastoral experience. Each time a teaching is presented as an immediate echo of the Word of God whose demands one is trying to recognize in obedience, it is listened to and understood much more than when the Magisterium of the Church, using its authority, itself determines doctrine. *This* attitude I cannot attribute to the *carnal* man. It corresponds to the absolute objective primacy of the Word of God which God ceaselessly actualizes in His Church.

II) *DE ECCLESIA* [On the Church]

Studies undertaken especially for more than thirty years permit a *more integral* statement of the doctrine "*De Ecclesia*."

1° The question will arise about *which concept* to use in the theological schema "*De Ecclesia*." The Fathers and Scholastics until the end of the thirteenth century, that is, before the Church became the object of a *proper* and separate treatise, spoke of the Church essentially as a realm and a means of *salvation*. The terms used were *Populus* or *Plebs* (the Liturgy), *Communio* or *Congregatio (sanctorum, electorum)* [communion or gathering (of the saints, of the elect)], *Congregatio fidelium* [gathering of believers] (this is St. Thomas' definition), *Corpus Christi* [Body of Christ]. "*Corpus Christi*" was understood, on the one hand, in a sociological sense, as a multitude in which the same Spirit distributes different gifts in the service of the same life, and, on the other hand, as the spiritual totality of people living in grace on the basis of faith: the people saved formed a single *Ecclesia*, even a single *Corpus Christi*, with the just of the Old Testament ("*Ecclesia ab Abel*" [Church from Abel]) and even with the Angels (the Church identified with St. Augustine's City of God). Formal visibility was not an essential attribute of the body; there was also a "*Corpus diaboli*" [body of the devil]

The disputes "*De potestate papali et regia*" [On the power of the pope and of the king] which filled the first half of the fourteenth century (under Boniface VIII, John XXII, and Benedict XII), then the errors, which Wycliff and Hus thought they could justify by texts of St. Augustine, about the *Ecclesia praedestinatorum* [Church of the predestined], and finally the notion of the *Ecclesia abscondita* (Luther) or *invisibilis* (Zwingli, Calvin) [hidden or invisible Church] of the Protestant Reformers, forced Catholic theology not to restrict themselves to the ancient ideas and to develop the character of the Church as "*Societas visibilis inaequalis*"--fully "*sui juris*" and "*perfecta*" (against totalitarian or absolutist statism) [a visible society of unequals, fully autonomous and perfect]. The need to defend the Church against Protestantism, then Rationalism, led even to an almost exclusive consideration of the *hierarchical powers*. The classical treatises of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are significant in this regard.

This reached the point that the first Schema "*De Ecclesia*" proposed to the Vatican Council in 1870, and written by Schrader, which began, "*Ecclesia est Corpus Christi mysticum*" [The Church is Christ's mystical body] was very badly received by the Fathers. They criticized its obscurity, its vagueness, some of them even its Jansenist flavor (!). They wanted a definition like that of St. Robert Bellarmine and, even in this definition, they wanted to replace the word *coetus* [group] by the word *Societas*.

Studies made between 1925 and 1940, at the same time as the Liturgical Movement, led to a renewal of the idea of the Mystical Body. Here and there, especially in Germany, but not with theologians who really counted, this was taken to the point of calling into question some quite certain traditional truths. The Encyclical *Mystici Corporis* of June 29, 1943 was, at this conjuncture, a decisive document. There Pius XII took up all the substance of the treatise *De gratia Capitis* [On the grace of Christ as Head], all the substance of a Christological and supernatural consideration of the mystery. But he identified the concept of *Corpus Christi Mysticum* [the Mystical Body of Christ] and that of the Church as a visible, organized, and hierarchical society. The objection of the Fathers of the 1870 Council received a reply.

To my mind, this is the concept from which to start: *Corpus Christi mysticum*, a supernatural reality, presupposing mystical relationships with Christ as Head and the Holy Spirit as soul, but also taking up the imprescriptible value of "Society," at the same time as the values of "People of God" and "Communion."

With a view to a conciliar elaboration of these notions, I think it would be desirable to have studies on the following points:

- a) Historical, sociological, theological studies on the Church as *Communion*;
- b) Historical and theological studies on the primacy of the Pope seen and exercised in the framework of a Church considered as a Communion of Churches--and, for that reason, a Communion of Bishops.
- c) An exegetical and theological study comparing the great theology of the Encyclical *Mystici Corporis* with the results--ever more concurring, although still problematic on certain points--achieved by exegesis of the meaning of the terms *soma*, *kephale*, *pleroma* [body, head, fullness], in St. Paul. Among the exegetes I know and who might usefully be consulted, I might mention: Msgr. Cerfaux (Louvain-Rome), Fr. Cambier (Louvain), Dom Victor Warnach (Maria-Laach), Prof. H. Schlier (Bonn), P. Benoit (Jerusalem). Only a very serious exegetical study would allow us to see if the great theology proposed in the Encyclical takes up *all* the aspects of the Pauline doctrine. If not, it would be necessary either to re-elaborate the theology or frankly to mark its limits.

2° In any case it is indispensable that exegetes collaborate in the elaboration of all the theological texts which will be proposed to the Fathers of the Council. If only to avoid the very

serious drawback mentioned above, of a sort of "double truth": that of the systematic theologians and that of the biblicists.

If there is one point which biblical works have shown with substantial agreement it is surely the decisive importance of *the eschatological point of view*. This is something quite different from the classical chapters "*De Novissimis*" [On the Last Things]. It is the fact that *the term* or the saving Intention of God must find its consummation that gives its meaning to everything that happens in history and to all the realities of the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ; it could also be defined as the sacrament or the collective and public institution of eschatological salvation.

Now this eschatological sense, if it *pervades* the texts of ancient Christianity (down to the tenth or eleventh century), is generally not expressed in recent ecclesiastical documents. This absence can be noted by comparing the *ethos* (the spiritual climate) of the liturgical Office of Christ the King, composed of wonderful biblical texts, with the Encyclical *Quas primas* which established the feast. When speaking about the Church or the Ministry or the Sacraments or the Apostolate, it is very illuminating to locate them between the redemptive Incarnation or the Passover of Christ, in which was set down the perfect Cause of salvation, and eschatology, which will give the fullness of its effects and fruits. The Church, said St. Bernard, is "*ante et retro oculata*," it looks back toward Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, *and* forward toward the Parousia, which will be the world's Passover. But rereading, for example, the great ecclesiological text of the Vatican Council, *Pastor Aeternus*, one sees that it relates the Church only to its Cause or Source, the Incarnation, and not to its eschatological term.

Here again we are in 1960 not in 1870. There is room to take up, in the texts of Vatican II, the best and most certain results of the studies which God has raised up since 1870, particularly in the last forty years: studies which have so often returned to the patristic sense of things. If this eschatological dimension and reference were taken up fully, I would see the following advantages (but, to tell the truth, it is enough that the apostolic Revelation entails this dimension and this reference...):

1) To establish and to mark out, at the very heart of one's notion of the Church, an essentially missionary aspect. For this Church, existing between Christ's Passover and His Parousia, is *for that very reason* and rigorously an apostolate and Mission: "*Data est mihi omnis potestas... Euntes ergo...*", says the Lord as he ascends to heaven (Mt 28:18-20); "*Euntes in mundum universum, praedicate Evangelium...*", (Mk 16:15-20); "*Et praedicari... Et ego mittam...*" (Lk 24:47-49); "*Non est vestrum nosse tempora vel momenta..., sed accipietis virtutem Spiritus... et eritis mihi testes... usque ad ultimum terrae*" (Acts 1:7-8). By this very fact we would have and we would present a dynamic notion of the unity of the Church, that is, a notion oriented towards the *catholic* unity, in perpetual growth, which is the goal of missionary efforts. Too often the Church's unity is presented *only* as an already fashioned framework which one must enter and remain in. This is not wrong, but it is insufficient. Unity is ceaselessly to be achieved and promoted, as much on the level of the universal Church as on that of parishes or local communities. This point has great pastoral importance.

2) Properly to locate the relationship of the Church to the World. Today this is not *only* a matter of envisaging the question of the Spiritual and the Temporal on the political level of accords between "Powers"--although this is something that always has to be done. It is a matter of bringing a reply to the questions raised by people, especially by the best among the faithful: the question of the *Christian* meaning of the human enterprise or of the world's adventure, in brief, the question of history, of work, of human creation. This question obviously entails that of the proper role of the laity and that of the *Consecratio mundi* [consecration of the world] of which Pius XII spoke. See chapter III of our *Lay People in the Church*.

3) To address the quite profound and quite serious preoccupations in Protestantism and in the ecumenical movement, which center upon Mission. And also to reply to the objection made by Protestants who accuse us of *confusing* the Church and the Kingdom of God. Finally, to locate the ecumenical effort itself--which, properly understood, must occupy the Council's attention; for this effort has all its meaning in relation to these *two* moments towards which the Church looks *ante et retro*: [ahead and behind] the work of the Incarnate Word in the days of His flesh, *and* the eschatological Fullness to be prepared. Protestants do not give enough attention to the first moment. If we place ourselves, like them, in a full missionary perspective, directed towards the eschatological accomplishment, we will be in a better position to show them the demands or implications of mission in the Incarnation: apostolicity...

3° It is in the definition of the Church (n° 1: above) and in this eschatological perspective (2°: above) that a theology of the laity, matched with liturgical, pastoral, and canonical adaptations, will have its place. I have worked a great deal on the question of the laity, before *and after* 1953, the date of publication of *Lay People* (I have just written the article "*Laienstand*" for the second edition of the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*. There I give a schema which might be useful, and if it is desired, I could send a French text and the German text). My studies have shown me that the Church has ceaselessly tried to reconcile: a) a hierarchical structure. This structure is linked to the deeper status of the work of God's salvation and thus of the religious relationship (content of Revelation). God does not communicate his Covenant and his salvation to each person separately, personally, inwardly, but to all, by establishing a public society or a collective sacrament of salvation. A misunderstanding of this point seems to me to be at the basis of the Protestant objection (see my contribution to the *Festgabe O. Karrer*, p. 405ff, and *La Tradition et les traditions: Essai historique*, p. 187ff). - b) a communitarian and, in this sense, collegial exercise of the life of the Church: for the Church is an organic body in which all the members are living and animated by God, each according to the place he is called to occupy in the body.

That is why the three Offices of Christ are communicated under two forms which are not in opposition but which are related to and complete one another: it is communicated under the form of the spiritual quality of personal life, according to a private status, to all the members (they are all, in this way, kings, priests, and prophets), and under the form of *public* power, to some, who are ordained and qualified to be governors, priests, and teachers, on the level of *authority*. I think that these categories are the best way to organize the doctrine on the laity. At least for the priesthood, these are the categories of the Catechism of the Council of Trent.

But it is impossible to be content today with presenting a theological and juridical distinction between the public priesthood and the laity. The faithful are expecting from the Council an authoritative doctrine on their *mission*, on the distinctive conditions (if there are any) of their sanctification; they are expecting that their *activity* in the order of the Church's sacred life and in that of the apostolate will be specified and promoted.

In view of the doctrine "*De Ecclesia*" which the Council will have to discuss and affirm, I think that historical and theological studies should be made on the following points:

1) The three Offices of Christ; their relationship with "powers" in the Church. It seems that the most comprehensive and most satisfying position is the one which distinguishes *three offices* but only *two "powers"* in the strict sense. This, with nuances, is the position of M.J. Scheeben, L. Billot, Nik. Mörsdorf, etc.

The question of what is sometimes called "indirect power" over the temporal. This expression has often been used since the thirteenth century, and even in papal texts. But I believe it can be criticized. I think it expresses a theory, not directly a datum of Revelation that one day might become a dogma. It seems to me that the teaching over the many centuries of History

orients the mind in this direction: there is ONE absolute thesis: "Go, make disciples of all nations." The Church has a divine mission, and thus a divine competence, to teach men the truth about the religious relationship, with all that is implied in total fidelity to this truth. Towards its faithful, the Church fulfills this mission not only with the infallibility which affects its competence in faithfully proposing the message *of God*, but with the jurisdictional authority it has over its faithful, an authority which permits it to *oblige* them to obey and, where needed, to punish their disobedience (coercive power). If it is a matter of the extra-Catholic world, in any case the extra-Christian world, or of institutions which are not institutions *of the Church*, it exercises its mission--always infallibly, but prophetically--without jurisdiction properly speaking. It has a mission, it has a competence, it has an activity and an influence, but not properly speaking a *power* over the temporal as such. "Power" means an ability to determine the action of other persons. The Church has power here by its magisterium, not by its jurisdiction. It must state what is true, it can impose orders on its faithful and take sanctions towards them; it cannot depose a head of state or dissolve a parliament. If it did so in the past, this was, as Pius XI said, in virtue of the public right *of a Christian society*, then acknowledged, not in virtue of its essential mandate as the Church.

3) The theology of apostolicity: apostolicity of doctrine, apostolicity of ministry, the relationships between them. This question is extremely important with regard to questions of the reunion of Christians. It is at the heart of the encounter between the Reform and the Catholic Church.

4) The question of the Episcopate in relation both to the presbyterate and to the papal primacy of jurisdiction and magisterium. In this regard, I wish to draw the attention of the Commission to three points:

a) To satisfy the difficulties of the Orthodox, a better clarification of the question of the relations between St. Peter and the other Apostles. A better clarification of the difference between the way in which the Bishop of Rome succeeds to Peter and the way in which bishops succeed to the Apostles.

b) Also for the benefit of the Orthodox, a good explanation of how in the Church there can be a superior degree of hierarchical power, and even a charism of infallibility, that is not linked to a particular sacrament. This point offers no difficulty to a western mind. It represents an insurmountable difficulty for an Orthodox. It might also be added that the ease of a westerner here, because of a sharp distinction between Orders and Jurisdiction, has the drawback that it sometimes makes him overlook the fact that the Pope is *first of all* the *bishop* of Rome....

c) The question of the origin of the jurisdiction of bishops. It is a fact that the great majority of Catholic theologians today think that it derives from the Sovereign Pontiff. Pius XII himself even expressed this doctrine, in passing, two or three times, as far as I know. Personally, however, we have a very great difficulty in considering this doctrine as definitive and obligatory, or even as capable of being defined. Here are the reasons for this difficulty: 1) The notion of *ordinary* power as power that is linked to an office. As it is not essential that the office be received from the Pope--since it was not for fifteen or eighteen centuries--it cannot be essential, *and therefore definable* as a dogma of faith, that the jurisdiction of bishops is received from him. This may be so in the *present* law; it is not essential nor a matter of divine right, since things were once different. Just as today a Council is not ecumenical unless convoked by and presided over by the Pope (or his legates), but this is not essential, and thus definable as dogma, since it was different in the past. - 2) The charge and power of bishops are of divine right as a *proper* charge and jurisdiction deriving from the charge of the College of Apostles, which was received *directly* from Our Lord: Peter received the powers alone, then the powers were given *directly* by Our Lord to all the Apostles, with Peter at their head. This suggests that the bishops do not receive their power from the Pope, but directly from Our Lord, in a way conditioned by their

communion with all the Catholic bishops, with the Pope at their head. - 3) A definition of the derivation of the power of bishops *from the Pope* would *definitively* exclude all chance of reunion with the Orthodox. - 4) This question is not to be treated in a purely deductive way, but, as always with cases of institutions, also on the basis of the facts of Church history. Now is there an historian or an historically informed person who does not think that the thesis of the derivation *from the Pope* is historically unthinkable? For history shows that things happen quite differently. It is not enough to reply to this difficulty by the idea of implicitness and development, as one could reply, for example, in the case of the Immaculate Conception. For this is not a case of implicitness *in knowledge*. The questions are questions *of fact*. How did the Pope give their jurisdiction to St. Cyprian, to a Persian bishop of the fourth century, to Hincmar of Reims, etc., etc.? If the question has to be addressed by the Council, could we not look in the direction of Bolgeni's position, approved by Mauro Capellari (Gregory XVI), a position adopted again in the contemporary era by Atzberger (continuation of Scheeben), Charles Augustine, etc.? Bolgeni distinguished universal jurisdiction or the right of suffrage: the bishop receives it directly from God with orders itself: orders introduces him into the episcopal body and makes him share in the episcopate *in solidum*; then particular jurisdiction: the bishop receives it from the Church by means of the Pope, its head, as a right effectively to govern a particular Church.

III) *DE PURITATE DEPOSITI FIDEI SERVANDA, MAXIME CONTRA ERRORES FUNDAMENTALES HUIUS TEMPORIS* [On preserving the purity of the Deposit of Faith against the fundamental errors of this time].

These errors, it seems, are, above all, Marxism, Materialism, religious indifference, secularism, the spirit of greed (domination by Mammon!), of violence, and of pleasure. Here I would like to make two general remarks:

1) It is obviously quite necessary for the Council to speak in this realm; it could have a very great echo in the world. But it will be better understood if, rather than insisting on condemnations already made, it were to propose a *positive Profession of Christian Faith and Hope*, entirely composed of affirmations based on the Word of God. It would be necessary to proclaim: "Relying on the Word of God, which is THE truth, bound by it, we believe..., we hope..., we reject...." This would also prevent the declarations of the Council from troubling so many of our Christian brothers who have to live, no doubt for a long time still, under Communist regimes, under the great moral pressure of a propaganda and a general climate very different from those known to the theologians and the Fathers of the Council. It would be necessary that what the Council may state in these realms be, for these Christians, in the concrete situations in which they find themselves, not trouble, but fraternal assistance.

2) The style, the tone of these texts, will matter a great deal. It is *a fact* that *the style* of the Syllabus (1864) today no longer finds much echo. To my mind, it would be necessary that the solemn declarations of the Council be formulated in terms: a) as biblical as possible, this being, moreover, the tradition of the Councils; b) "kerygmatic", that is, centered on the announcement of salvation in Jesus Christ; c) *pastoral*. Recall the reaction of the Fathers of Trent to the text *De justificatione* [On justification] prepared by the theologians, or that of the Fathers of Vatican I to the schema on the Faith: they found them abstract, too scholastic; d) finally, in terms displaying a feeling for God, for Jesus, for the people loved by God and Jesus....

IV) *DE ORDINE MORALI ET INDIVIDUALI ET SOCIALI* [On the moral order both individual and social].

Here too we would like to offer three general remarks:

1) The best part of "the social teaching of the Church" seems to us to be the Christian anthropology. It would be necessary to center the doctrine on *man*, and anthropology on *the image of God*. Here again, we should define the Christian very positively, very kerygmatically, very evangelically, and make a call to holiness resound.

2) While vindicating the natural law, the defense of which is part of the Tradition and the competence of the Church (secondary object), we should clearly subordinate it to the Christian contribution [*au positif chrétien*], to what is specifically Christian, so powerfully expressed in the New Testament. Too often expositions of "Christian morality" are only drawn from natural law or from Stoicism, not from the Gospel. Here also the exegetes must be consulted.

3) A certain number of the questions that would be addressed in this chapter are among those in which eternal truths or principles are joined to human or social matters that are rather changing and a scientific knowledge of which, in any case, today is in full development. In fact, the biological, psychological, sociological, and medical sciences of man have not said their last word. There are questions in which we should not be hasty in "defining": we could be quite embarrassed by them in a few years. This does not mean that we have to capitulate to or be content to follow the movement of the world. We must give firm directions by making quite strongly the *positive* or negative affirmations of the Word of God, but, on certain questions, abstain from putting a final period. Remember Galileo (who, of course, was not condemned by an ecumenical Council!)... We are thinking, for example, about questions such as those of demography and birthrate, of birth control.

We ourselves are struck by the great importance of the following questions:

a) War and peace. The question of atomic weapons. People are expecting a creative and courageous effort by the Council, a truly Christian word, which re-opens to them perspectives of peace and security, which commits the world in the direction of love, of effective mutual aid. The Council should be accompanied by some gesture which strikes public opinion and opens a current in this direction.

b) Religious freedom. "Freedom of conscience," as Pius XII put it. This is an extremely important point, both ecumenically and in terms of "the lay" (in the French sense of the word: a morality independent of the Church's Orthodoxy). As for Catholic public opinion, at least in certain countries, it is calling for changes in the procedure for the Index. *All Catholic* jurists whom I have seen acquainted with the current discipline have criticized it quite severely. To my mind, the request that is most solidly based and most easy to satisfy is the request that no one be condemned without having been warned and without having things clarified to his immediate superiors. There is also surely a place for giving another form to the prohibition of reading which, as such, no longer seems appropriate. It would also be necessary that information about moral dangers to Catholics include, besides reading, other realms (Cinema, various forms of propaganda, etc.), and that, here too, there be a *positive* insistence on the duty of the mind with regard to the Truth.

c) The growing socialization of existence, in its relation to personal life. Perhaps it would even be possible to clarify further a certain ambiguity in the condemnation of "Socialism." It is true that this does not have exactly the same face in the various countries: this could lead the Council to address the question in a formulation designed for the whole world...

C) ADDITIONAL REMARKS

The very brief indications given about the four probable Schemata of which the letter of July 28, 1960, speaks do not allow one to calculate to what degree the Theological Commission

will have in mind the remote ecumenical goal which the Holy Father has assigned to the Council and which plays so great a role in the interest of the faithful. Here again, if this remote goal is *real*--not verbal or feigned--it must be present in *all* the works of the Council. Normally, on each of the great questions to be treated, we should have from the Secretariate for Christian Unity reports, written as much as possible by the Dissidents, on the Protestant, Orthodox, etc. position... I would like to draw the Theological Commission's attention to the following points which my ecumenical vocation, which dates from 1928-29, and considerable experience lead me to regard as important:

1) An Anglican author has remarked about the Catholic Church and its dogmas: "She cannot change, but she can explain." Dogmas are brought to bear, but they can be more or less favorably explained on certain points which history shows have been points of blockage and occasions of misunderstandings. The more complete declaration of the *true* Catholic sense of such or such a formula or doctrine, constructed in a desire to encounter Orthodox or Protestant difficulties, could be extremely valuable and, I believe, serve the Purpose of God.

Examples:

State better that the dogma expressed in the "*Filioque*" formula respects the absolute character of the Father as First Principle (*Deitas fontalis*: St. Bonaventure, St. Albert the Great);

The "*ex sese*" [of themselves] of Vatican I (Denzinger, 1839).

Faith in its total sense (see above): a very important point for Protestants who understand by justifying Faith the faith by which Christ dwells in us. Similarly, the doctrine of the Council of Trent on justification could be taken up and explained again. I have several times had the personal experience that, well presented, it removes one of the greatest Protestant difficulties. Such a result would be worth the effort!

The doctrine of transsubstantiation could be better presented, with a great respect for the mystery and by stressing that it does not mean anything more than what was stated in the other traditional formulas: *transformatio*, *conversio* [transformation, conversion...]

There would also be many other points to "explain." For example, for the sake of Protestants: "*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*" [Outside the Church no salvation]; "*ex opere operato*," the cult of the Virgin and the saints, cooperation with grace, merit, etc... To do this well, there would have to be a special subcommission to undertake this work under the Council's control, in the sense that it would receive from it a sort of "*Nihil obstat*" without committing it as dogmatic constitutions commit it. Before, during, and after the Council works or research would have to be encouraged that would aim at showing, without concordism, the convergences of *intention* between the doctrines as they have been formulated by the Catholic Church and certain presentations made by dissidents in other terminologies or categories. This is what St. Thomas never failed to do. It is what the Council of Florence did for the "*Filioque*" [and from the Son] and the "*A Patre per Filium*." [From the Father through the Son]...

2) It would also be necessary to evoke, encourage (prudently) works of other competent and reputed Catholic authors which try to extricate the meaning of the great Christian breaks: the one between the East and the West and the Reformation. I want to express here to my confrères on the Theological Commissio one of the chief convictions of my life, a conviction acquired through the faithful work of thirty years. I think that the Reformation entailed many serious heresies. But it cannot be reduced to that. It posed and it still poses to the Catholic Church questions that need to be listened to. My conviction is that Catholicism will not avoid these questions. Protestantism today has a very great vitality of Christian convictions. It is in the name of these convictions and in the name of the Gospel that it poses critical questions to us, in which

the profound meaning of the Reformation is expressed. My conviction, for which I am ready to give my life, is that these questions have not yet been taken seriously by us; that the popular apologetical image that some Reformers have of us is not correct. The Catholic Church will not have to draw its replies to these questions from anywhere but from its own profound tradition, but it will have to listen to these questions.

I would say the same thing, with the appropriate distinctions, with regard to the Orthodox East.

3) Certain points of discipline also have a particular importance in a perspective that has the promotion of the unity of Christians as a goal. They could be addressed today in a much more favorable manner on the basis of good historical studies and thanks to a healthy and pacified theological climate. Historically, they are always the same three points: the communion of the faithful in the chalice, the non-obligation of celibacy for priests, the use in the liturgy of a language which the faithful understand.

I have personally given a little study to the first and third of these points, historically, theologically, and pastorally. I am sensitive to the reasons which can be cited against the chalice and in favor of Latin, but they seem to me to be slight compared to the much more serious reasons in favor of the chalice and of a language which people speak and understand. I have not given any special study to the question of celibacy. But I would like to see a way for an honorable departure from the sacerdotal state for priests who cannot bear celibacy. This way of departure does not exist today so that in a not insignificant number of cases the result is either an absolute abandonment and a seriously irregular situation or a double life or frequent failings. I know what is said: "if we open the door a little, too many priests will want to go through it..." If the presupposition which dictates this reply is correct, it proves that there is a real problem. There are hardly more than three possible solutions: delay ordination to the priesthood by offering clerics the possibility of a prolonged diaconal service until they have recognized either a true *vocation* to celibacy or a vocation to serve God in marriage which could continue to be a diaconal service; or a way of honorable and regular departure, even including the possibility of a Christian marriage in a secular life (this is difficult to conceive...); or the existence of a double clergy, married and not married: but the economic, pastoral, and spiritual problems posed by this existence seem extremely difficult....

Strasbourg, the Feast of
Our Lady of Mercy,
September 24, 1960

fr. Yves M.-J. CONGAR,
of the Friars Preachers