

THE CONCILIAR DISCUSSION ON THE SOURCES OF REVELATION

The following will describe the course of the debate on the draft text, "On the Sources of Revelation," which was presented for discussion by the Council on Wednesday, November 14, 1962. The most important texts of the debate will be quoted extensively.

The discussion began with Cardinal Ottaviani's *Relatio*. Because of his failing eye-sight, the Cardinal had prepared remarks to be read, but before handing the microphone over, he made four points.

1. Drafts are being circulated that are meant to be substituted for the officially proposed draft. I do not think this is in accord with the provision of can. 222, par. 2, which reserves to the Supreme Pontiff alone the determination of subjects. Nor would it be respectful or obedient to the Supreme Pontiff who offered the officially proposed draft for discussion and whose mind, therefore, is that this draft, and not other ones, be discussed. If there are corrections to be made, let them be made to this draft. Everyone is free to propose corrections and emendations. But the discussion should be about this draft and not about the others.

2. You will certainly hear many talk about the lack of a pastoral tone in the proposed draft. But I say that the first task, the fundamental pastoral task, is teaching: "Teach." The Lord's greatest command is, "Teach all nations." This is the basis of all pastoral activity. As for the style, later those who are responsible for it can give it a more pastoral expression. But note that a Council speaks concisely, clearly, briefly, and not in the fashion of a sermon or of a bishop's pastoral letter or even of Encyclicals of the Supreme Pontiff. Conciliar style has been marked out by the practice of centuries.

3. The remark has been made that the draft lacks the spirit of the new theology. But the spirit of a conciliar address must be the spirit of the centuries, and not that of some school which today exists but tomorrow perhaps is thrown in the oven.

4. I hope that you will use your talent and learning to give the consideration it deserves to a work on which bishops have labored for two years, assisted by theologians and exegetes from all over the world and from different schools, to the work also of the Central Commission which in its various sessions worked hard to perfect the various drafts. The work and the product of the talent and learning of so many men should not be undone.¹

Ottaviani's formal Report was then read by Msgr. Salvatore Garofalo, Rector of the Pontifical Urban University, a member of the Preparatory Theological Commission and one of the chief authors of the official draft. He began with the flat statement: "Everyone knows that the chief duty of an Ecumenical Council is to defend and promote Catholic doctrine." After defending the claim by two citations from Vatican I, he went on to discuss Pope John's goals for this Council.

That it is not renewal that now should be expected, but the "increase of Catholic faith" is clear from the decision of the Supreme Pontiff John XXIII, happily reigning, to call this Council, as can be seen in his first Encyclical. In the address with which the same Supreme Pontiff solemnly opened the Council, we heard this: "The chief concern of the Ecumenical Council is this: that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine be more effectively guarded and presented," so that Catholic doctrine may shine forth in its wholeness, not diminished and not distorted.

There can be no doubt, then, that the first and immediate purpose of the Ecumenical Council is doctrinal, as is most fitting for the extraordinary Magisterium of the Church and as the salvation of souls, which is the first law of the Church, Mother and Teacher, demands.

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AS, I/III, pp. 27-28.

This doctrinal purpose requires a distinct, conciliar mode of speech. And it would also necessarily require the repudiation of errors.

Furthermore, the doctrinal drafts had been drawn up in accordance with the suggestions of the bishops during the Antepreparatory period. There was a harmony, then, between the mind of the Pope and the mind of the bishops on the doctrinal role of the Council, and between the Pope's wishes and the way in which the questions proposed to the Theological Commission had been arranged and explained.

The elaboration of the text was then explained: from the special subcommission to the whole Theological Commission, to the Central Commission, and to the Subcommission on Amendments. The Report then went on to give brief summaries of each of the five chapters.

Finally, the Report defends the proposed text:

Our Constitution, therefore, is dogmatic, not disciplinary. Although the things said sometimes arose out of the circumstances of the times, they must last for centuries; for doctrinal statements of Councils, even if perfectible, are irreformable. That is why the style of discourse is one which is in harmony with the perennial texts of faith and which can last for ever. It does not, therefore, indulge in a terminology which some may now love, but which it is doubtful will still be understandable in a short while.

Out of justice and charity, care is also taken to use words properly so that our separated brethren will be able to discern the teaching of the Catholic Church as clearly as possible.

Moreover, nothing is presented in this Constitution which can really be disputed in Catholic schools and among our scholars, even if sometimes there is a dispute against or outside the common teaching.

And if here or there errors are explicitly mentioned and rejected (as in ch. II, on inspiration, # 8, and in ch. IV, # 21 and 22, on the truth of the Gospels), this is because they do not belong to the things which, as the Supreme Pontiff said in his opening address, "openly conflict with the principles of honesty" and from their effects should readily appear to all to be erroneous.

Solemnly to defend the truth from errors, as was said at the beginning, belongs to the Magisterium of the Council, since bishops, as individuals, cannot act as effectively against errors which are being spread more widely than in the territories where they are the authoritative teachers of the faith.

Finally, the Constitution must be said to be *pastoral* in character insofar as a very clear presentation of doctrine and its protection and defence most especially belong to the pastoral role and provide the solid and necessary foundation for any pastoral undertaking.²

The assault on the draft was led by the two Cardinals who had intervened so dramatically on the very first day of the Council, Cardinals Liénart and Frings. Because they oriented the whole attack, they should be quoted in full. Cardinal Liénart led the charge:

The present doctrinal decree *mihi non placet*, because in its whole tenor I think it is inadequate to the subject it intends to treat.

²AS, I/III, pp. 28-32. This text appears far less negative and aggressive than the text which Tromp read out to a meeting of the Theological Commission on the previous day.

The question is the sources of revelation. On this matter, I think, first, that this draft is seriously deficient or incomplete. It speaks about two sources of revelation, Scripture and Tradition. It is true that revelation is transmitted to us by these two ways, as by the two streams in which it flows. But the decree fails to treat that other source which is deeper, that single source from which those two flow, the Word of God.

That the Word of God is the source of revelation, the Council of Trent carefully stated when it said of the Gospel, the Good News: "what was promised beforehand through the Prophets in the Sacred Scriptures, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first promulgated orally and then commanded that it be preached to every creature by his Apostles as the source of every saving truth and moral discipline."

Before the sacred authors of both the Old and the New Testaments wrote their books under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God had already spoken through Moses and the Prophets. Finally, he himself spoke through human lips in the person of his own Son, Jesus Christ, that we might live by his word and grace, before his deeds and words were written down by the Evangelists.

This decree, therefore, should have discussed the Word of God as the essential source of all revelation.

Secondly, I think this decree discusses these sources in too frigid, too scholastic a fashion, even though we are in the presence of one of the most wonderful gifts God has given us. God has deigned to speak to his creature. He did this in numberless ways, "in many and varied ways": that he might make himself known to us in the ineffable mystery of his life; that we might know him more perfectly than is ever possible by our natural reason alone; that he might reveal his love for us and his most merciful plan that we might thus learn to love him.

Would it not have been particularly appropriate, in this decree, for the Holy Council to pay solemn tribute to the Word of God, especially as our separated brethren look on, they who so lovingly cherish and venerate the Word of God, so that they might fittingly learn that our devotion for it is no less than theirs?

Would it not have been right and just to exalt that Word of God above all, since nothing more sublime, nothing more safe can be conceived? For in that Word is heard a voice, revealing heavenly mysteries, the voice of the one who, because he is Truth, "can neither deceive nor be deceived."

Would it not have stirred hearts to remind everyone how "the Word of God is living and effective, sharper than a two-edged sword," that the Word never returns empty to the God who sent it forth, since it is always accompanied by the grace "which opens the heart to what is said," since to each one of us, in the secret of the heart, the Spirit always speaks "who gives to all delight in embracing and believing the truth," as the First Vatican Council said in Session III?

I deplore the absence of all these things, since for nourishing Christian faith a presentation of the doctrine of truth is more powerful than an exposition and condemnation of errors.

Finally, whatever may be the value of the reasonings and arguments alleged in the text for establishing the importance of Sacred Scripture and Tradition, I think that on a subject of so lofty and supernatural an order as is revelation, we ought above all rely on the documents of faith.

For why does the Church receive Sacred Scripture as the place from which it draws revelation if not because it is certain that it finds the Word of God authoritatively preserved there by the provident action of the Holy Spirit who inspired its authors? Why does the Church receive Tradition as a place from which it draws revelation if not because, as God testifies, it believes that same Holy Spirit was given to it so that by his light it might slowly, without error, make plain all those things which are contained in the divine message? "I will ask the Father, said the Lord, "and he will give you another Paraclete to remain with you forever." "And when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will teach you all truth," or, more precisely in the Greek text: "he will make you walk towards the fullness of truth."

These texts are of another and loftier value than our argumentations, in which it is not rare for things less certain to appear.

Our faith is not based on scholastic arguments, but on every word which comes from the mouth of God. It is regrettable that the decree on the sources of revelation was not conceived in accordance with that principle, unhesitatingly admitted by all. I, therefore, strongly urge that it be thoroughly revised.³

Döpfner was no less direct:

If I may speak frankly, the draft *non placet*.

1. Because of the language used in this draft and, even more, in the second draft [*De deposito fidei*]. Quite correctly Cardinal Ottaviani said that the first duty of a pastor is to preach the truth. But it makes a difference how one preaches. The proverb applies to preaching too: "It's the tone that makes the music." The same truth can be preached in such a way as to attract men to it and in such a way as to frighten them away from it. At the First Vatican Council, the first draft "On Revelation" was refused by the Fathers especially because of the overly professorial tone in which it had been written by Fr. Franzelin, and another man, Fr. Kleutgen, then had the task of writing a new draft.

Now in the draft proposed to us today I do not think is present or audible the voice of the Mother and Teacher, the voice of the Good Shepherd who calls his sheep by name and the sheep hear his voice. The language is that of the school; it is professorial, and does not build up or give life. That pastoral note is missing with which Pope John, happily reigning, so warmly desires all the statements of the Second Vatican Council to be imbued.

2. Because of two teachings contained in the draft in such a way that they carry the whole edifice of this Constitution.

The first doctrine concerns the two sources of revelation, about which Cardinal Linderath has already spoken so well. Let me add a few things. This way of speaking about two sources of revelation is not ancient. It was foreign to the holy Fathers, foreign to the scholastics and also to St. Thomas, foreign to all the Ecumenical Councils. It seems to have been introduced in the last century, during the age of historicism.

And this talk about two sources of revelation is not profound. It may indeed be verified with regard to the order of our human knowledge, but in the order of being, there is one single source, revelation itself, the Word of God. And it is very regrettable that hardly anything is said in the draft about this.

Finally, it is an argument against this talk about two sources of revelation that, in the first lines which this most holy Council puts out, our separated brethren should not be offended, because a doctrine is being stressed that is controverted by Catholics and non-Catholics, which today does not have the same importance which it had four centuries ago.

The other doctrine concerns the inspiration and inerrancy of Sacred Scripture. I think that the teaching proposed is too rigid; it restricts too much the freedom of science, and it comes close to the doctrine of verbal inspiration. In this area I think that there are two theological opinions. The first proceeds deductively, starting from the definition of the Council of Trent and then by reasoning saying that everything which is inspired can be without any error whatever. The other also begins with the definition of the Council of Trent, but it also looks at the text and at the reality of the texts as they are. Both opinions seem to rest on good arguments. But it is not customary for Councils to settle disputes among Catholic theologians, lest one school seem to anathematize the other, but to condemn only heresies. So, it is doubtless necessary for the Council to condemn false and very dangerous opinions, but not to do more.

3. *Non placet* because of the excessive size of this and the following drafts. These two drafts fill 38 pages. If I am not mistaken, the preparatory Commissions composed around 70 constitutions which fill more than 1000 pages, without the notes. All of the decrees of all the Councils in history filled less than

³AS, I/III, pp. 32-34.

800 pages, as is clear from the very recent Herder edition. How can this Council discuss so vast a mound of material? I think, therefore, that some of the less important drafts should be omitted, others should be radically shortened and combined together. And so I presume to propose that the first two drafts be joined together and be reduced to a quarter of their size, as was attempted in that writing of which Cardinal Ottaviani spoke, so that the end of this Council will not be put off forever, and the Council can come to a happy end in due time, which is the wish of us all and especially of Pope John XXIII.⁴

These two very critical comments were immediately followed by three (Ruffini, Siri, and Quiroga y Palacios [Santiago di Compostella]) which argued for retaining the draft, although each also said he had some emendations to suggest.⁵ Their chief arguments in favor of retaining the draft for discussion were: (1) the great amount of work that had gone into its preparation, (2) that the Pope had approved it for discussion, (3) the delays substituting another text would cause, (4) the fundamental nature of the topics it considers, (5) the dangers of Modernist tendencies.

But then the barrage resumed as in order Leger, König, Alfrink, Suenens, Ritter, Bea, Saigh, Manek, and Soegijapranata all called for a rejection of the draft.⁶ The following arguments were made:

1) The text attempts to settle questions not yet ripe for decision. It prefers one theological school to others, neglects much good recent work on its topics, attacks positions sometimes held by one or two men, ignores the Eastern Church's tradition, and builds chiefly on Church-documents of only the last two centuries.

2) It makes no progress over *Divino afflante Spiritu*. Only once does it praise exegetes, and it usually speaks of them with suspicion and fear of error. It will restrict the work of scholars, close doors, and may involve the Church in another Galileo case. In its blanket statements, it will give weapons into the hands of the integralists.

3) It is not ecumenical. It does not take the view of the separated brethren into account or prepare for further dialogue with them. It simply repeats the antiquated positions of the Counter-Reformation and the Anti-modernist era.

4) It does not deal with issues of any great pastoral concern, but discusses matters under dispute by theologians, when it is not simply repeating matters already declared by the Magisterium. For this reason it does not meet the goals Pope John set for the Council.

⁴AS, I/III, pp. 34-36. In his written text, Döpfner's first point was made more sharply: "This is not the voice of a Mother and Teacher, but rather of a condemning judge" (p. 36).

⁵AS, I/III, pp. 37-41.

⁶AS, I/III, pp. 41-55. The last two bishops named were from Indonesia, and Soegijapranata said he was speaking in the name of the bishops there. Pieter Smulders had been invited to come to Rome to be their theologian.

The last speaker of the day was Archbishop Morcillo Gonzalez (Zaragoza), speaking for the Spanish hierarchy, who tried to mediate, arguing that the criticisms had to be considered seriously, but that the proposed draft was capable of being modified to take them into account.⁷

On the first day of debate, then, the campaign against the draft had already included speeches by major figures in the French, German, Austrian, Dutch, Belgian, Canadian, United States, and Indonesian hierarchies, as well as by the Patriarch of the Melchites and by Cardinal Bea, head of the Secretariate for Christian Unity. All in all, a powerful array!⁸

Most of the criticisms were about the content of the text, but Cardinal Suenens made himself the spokesman of the tactic which was being considered for rejecting the draft. He began by stating his *non placet* for the reasons already adduced by others and by adding that the drafts that were to follow were even more unacceptable. Even if their content were better, they all suffer from their length. He noted that many, if not all, of the bishops were impatient with the lack of progress in the Council debate. "They rightly fear that the Second Vatican Council may become the Second Council of Trent." He then proposed a fourfold revision of method: (1) immediately after a general discussion of the draft, to have a vote on its acceptability; (2) oral discussions would be only about drafts in general, all particular emendations to be put in writing; (3) all the Commissions should set to work immediately at shortening their respective drafts, eliminating things unworthy of the Council's attention which could be given to the Commission for revising the Code of Canon Law; (4) establishing post-conciliar commissions as soon as a text is approved, to prepare for its implementation.⁹ Of these, the first was the crucial one for the debate on the text, because no such orienting vote was provided for in the Rules, and an earlier attempt to have the Council Presidency approve it had been frustrated by the strong opposition of Cardinal Ruffini.

This was the way things looked at the end of the first day of discussion.

After taking Thursday off, the bishops resumed the debate on November 16th. Twelve speakers spoke in favor of retaining the draft as a basis for discussion, even while calling for emendations, some of them quite important. Eight spoke in favor of rejecting the text. The terms of

⁷AS, I/III, pp. 59-62.

⁸Caprile, II, p. 159n, notes how watered-down was the official press release for the day: "The Fathers who revealed their agreement with the draft's approach gave as their reason that it is possible to improve the individual parts through a free and deep investigation in the Council hall. Those who stated their disagreement justified it out of concern lest the Council's work be prolonged too much, since the draft proposed seems long and so many of its parts could be modified, which would demand a difficult and complex study."

⁹AS, I/III, pp. 45-47. He added two other, minor recommendations: that the names of speakers not be published (this would tempt bishops to speak rather than to submit comments in writing!) and that the long honorific titles be abbreviated to a simple "Venerable Brothers" ("Nowhere in the Gospels does it appear that Peter, James, and John honored one another with these titles") (p. 47). The four major proposals of Cardinal Suenens express concerns he had already articulated in his notes to Pope John in March 1962; see "A Plan for the Whole Council," *Vatican II Revisited by Those who Were There*, ed. A. Stacpoole (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1986), pp. 88-105

the debate were similar to those of the first day, with most of the attention being paid to questions of form and style rather than to the substance of the text. For the first time, proposals were made to take a vote at once on whether to use the text for the discussion¹⁰ and to ask for a special commission to resolve the difficulties.¹¹

In the first speech of the day, Cardinal Tisserant briefly reviewed the background to Pius XII's two important statements on biblical studies, *Divino afflante Spiritu* and the 1948 letter to Cardinal Suhard on Genesis. He ended with a simple statement: "In recent years Catholic exegesis has made great progress. I ask you, Fathers, not to put an end to the work of Pope Pius XII, of happy memory, by approving the draft proposed to us."¹²

Archbishop Bengsch (Berlin) evoked the circumstances of his Church where people living under Communism were expecting words of help and comfort from the Council and where ecumenism is a great concern. He concluded: "Forgive me, venerable Brothers, I cannot return to my faithful, some of whom, even young people, are true confessors, carrying a stone instead of bread. With all due reverence and honest charity towards the good and worthy men who prepared this draft, in conscience I have to say: *Non placet*."¹³

The issue of the pastoral nature of the text was also well joined. Cardinal Santos (Manila) argued the case for the text:

The argument is made against the present draft that it is not pastoral, that it is too scholarly and solemn, that it does not respond sufficiently to conditions today, that is, that it is not up-to-date [*"aggiornatum"*], that, finally, it contains doctrinal statements in which questions are decided on which the authors differ.

1. The chief role of an Ecumenical Council is doctrinal: that is, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to present the revealed truth which the faithful must believe with divine faith, which the pastors in the Church must present and explain to them.

If I may begin with a grammatical comment, begging your pardon: "Pastoral" is an adjective; and thus we speak about pastoral activity, pastoral method, pastoral character, as, for example, in the Sacred

¹⁰Cardinal de Barros Camara, speaking in the name of all the Brazilian bishops, asked "that as soon as possible the Fathers be asked to vote in general congregation whether they wish to examine the official draft on Sacred Theology or not. Indeed immediately. The reason: we have to get on with the Council's work without having again and again to hear particular opinions, already known and repeated." They also seconded Suenens' proposals about expediting the Council's method (*AS*, I/III, pp. 68-69).

¹¹Cardinal Silva Henriquez (Santiago, Chile) proposed establishing a special commission of experts from both schools of thought to redraft the text in the light of the comments made (*AS*, I/III, p. 82). Abbot Butler, pointing to the need for moral unanimity on the subject, proposed "a small group which could represent those who want to approve the draft and those cannot approve it" to see if a way could be found out of the impasse. If not, then another draft would have to be prepared (p. 108).

¹²*AS*, I/III, p. 66.

¹³*AS*, I/III, pp. 87-89.

Liturgy, insofar as everything has reference to feeding the flock, which is the role of Pastors in the Church. But the flock is fed by doctrine, which is food therefore, not an adjectival quality but a substance.

For that reason dogmatic constitutions can never be said not to be pastoral. They are the sustenance, the food, with which Pastors must feed Christ's flock. It is the role of Pastors to set that food before the flock, according to its varied condition, so that each one is nourished by it insofar as he needs it or is capable of receiving it healthfully. For some must be fed with milk, and others with solid food.

It follows that the Council must insist above all else that the doctrine which is presented is certain, complete, sound, uncorrupted, so that the flock may be healthfully fed by it.

For the rest, since we are all pastors of souls, we can write Pastoral Letters and hand them over to our sheep. But are we not in such different circumstances of place and reality that we write different Letters or at least write them in different ways? It follows that it is not suitable or prudent for this holy Council to decide with one stroke on one pastoral tactic, precisely because of the diversity of circumstances in the various regions or countries. Its role instead is solemnly to state only the doctrinal principles on the basis of which each of us, in our several regions or realms, can give them a suitable pastoral sense or character, so to speak providing overflowing nourishment for our sheep.

2. From this it follows also that to make sure that the teaching of the solemn Magisterium of the whole Church is certain, complete, sound and uncorrupted, it must be accurately expressed in formulas whose meaning cannot be bent in different ways without forcing the words or statements. The accusation that the draft is too scholarly and solemn, then, cannot be accepted, since that is what is most to be looked for in it. For this loftiest of schools, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, intends to teach the loftiest of all truths, which will remain forever, which may receive further explanation, but cannot be corrected.

3. It follows, further, that it is quite improper to speak of adapting a dogmatic draft to contemporary conditions, of "updating" it. In different circumstances of time and place, the Church can establish different disciplinary norms, for they are means to an end and means can be changed to achieve an end, while the end remains unchangable. So the Church can modify rites and ceremonies, which it itself established, so that they can better correspond to character of the faithful and their various degree of progress in various times and places. It can also modify the very method with which doctrine is explained so that it is more accessible to the faithful. But the doctrine itself, which is dogmatic, needs do adaptation because of differences of time or place. It remains the same yesterday, today, and forever. A dogmatic teaching can be explained further according to the certain conclusions which the science of theology may devise, but there is no room for reformation of it.

4. Finally, there is the objection that the present draft contains statements prejudicing questions which are still under legitimate discussion or at least are different explained and resolved by theologians. But I do not see why this is a reason for rejecting the draft. If this argument were valid, the Church would never have dogmatically defined any doctrine, since there were always contrary doctrines. And this is the special role of an Ecumenical Council: to proclaim the true doctrine about faith and morals. As for the question now whether those questions are pre-judged or not, that is for the Fathers to discuss and decide. For the draft is a presentation of doctrine, and the Council should make a definition about it.¹⁴

Later on the same day of debate, Archbishop Emile Guerry (Cambrai) spoke on the same issue:

What follows is presented with the agreement of all the bishops of France. There is an ambiguity, seriously dangerous to the unity and fruitfulness of the Council, which needs to be completely removed. From the fact that many bishops are asking that doctrinal matters be presented in a different way to the men of this time, in a more positive, living, evangelical, adapted fashion, someone might think that they

¹⁴AS, I/III, pp. 76-79.

are prepared to sacrifice doctrine in favor of pastoral need. Such an ambiguity would divide the Fathers into two parties, one anxious about doctrine, the other placing pastoral needs before doctrine.

For two reasons, we cannot admit this: (1) Because the unity of the Council is a primary good, to be sought by all in the truth and in the love of Jesus Christ. (2) Because we reject this opposition between the two duties: there can be no opposition between doctrinal needs and pastoral needs. Doctrine must shine forth into every pastoral work, "that they may have life and have it more abundantly."

Our first pastoral duty is this: to teach our people the full and pure doctrine, but in such a way that they can hear the Word of God, understand it, accept it in faith, and put it into practice in all their lives.

Perhaps the ambiguity results from the word "adaptation," which could seem to suggest that we want to accommodate the message of redemption to certain contemporary novelties and tendencies, while the exigencies of doctrine would be covered over, and some principles would be not spoken about because they are unwelcome to our contemporaries. This direction would be a crime against our duties as bishops, teachers of the truth.

But we intend something quite different, which has two aspects to it:

1. It is not the doctrine itself that needs adaptation, but the way in which it is presented. The doctrine itself must be handed over with all its power as Gospel truth to illumine life. But it must be presented in such a way that everyone can make his own the complete truth. But what does such a concern for this presentation require of us? Our duty is, in the light of a living faith, to adapt our own minds to the truth, so devoting ourselves to the Sacred Scriptures, theology, the Fathers, the documents of the Magisterium that the truth becomes familiar to us and we are able to present it not only as something open to the minds of our contemporaries but also as giving light, fervent, living, attractive, revealing the immense love of God who wishes all to be saved, drawing them in his Son in the Church, as sons in the Son, and brothers among themselves. In this respect, the theological draft lacks this quite necessary synthesis, a preface which could present "the marvelous deeds of God" in the economy of the world's salvation.

2. The presentation of the doctrine must be adapted to the new conditions and forms of life in the modern world, as the Supreme Pontiff asked, and for three reasons:

a) If we look at our faithful people, it is not only errors which are influencing them today, but a new technical "civilization" is profoundly marking them. And it is not enough simply to condemn or denounce it! We pastors and teachers would be unfaithful if we did not teach our people and help them to reach salvation in their own daily life, in the contemporary world. And this can't be done without difficult thinking and doctrinal inquiry! How much easier it would be simply to repeat the formulas in the textbooks!

b) As for those whom the good news of the Gospel has not reached, the bishop as a "missionary" (the meaning of "Apostle"), has to care about them. Love of Christ and love of such people drives us on to bring the word of salvation to them in a persuasive and understandable way. And this requires a deeper knowledge of doctrine and a catechesis suited for those who are on their way towards Christ.

c) As for the object of this doctrine, this must be said: The Church's role is "to restore all things in Christ." whatever is truly human, therefore--whatever is valuable in the world's reality, in the spheres of art, science, culture, and technology, whatever contributes in any way to human life, love and relations between spouses and families, work, general social problems, relations between nations, peace in the world. Christ came "not in order to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him." Anyone who would exclude anything from the benefits of the Incarnation and Redemption would not be devoted to doctrine.

This is our conclusion about the general aspects of this first draft: A pastoral orientation, so far from excluding or diminishing doctrine, opens new and vast space even as it provokes it to further investigations, so that through the united work of all who love the truth and men the Word of God can be

proclaimed to all men, in all conditions, and may illumine the whole life of persons, families, and societies.¹⁵

On substantive issues, Cardinal McIntyre argued the need for statements on the issues in the draft:

The draft proposed to us contains many things which need confirmation and clarification today, concerning the relationship between Tradition and Sacred Scripture, the inspiration and historicity of the holy Books, the authors of the New Testament. We should not make light of the contribution of experts in sacred theology, Sacred Scripture, Church history, archeology, and even scientific matters. But some experts, who claim to be offering some new theology today, should not easily, I beg, depart from doctrines which for almost twenty centuries the Fathers and Doctors of the Church and the Roman Pontiffs have handed on to us and which the Catholic people has accepted. As Fathers of the Council to whom, under Peter and with Peter, the role of shepherding the sheep has been entrusted by the Lord Jesus Christ, we must acknowledge our responsibility and among the various and sometimes opposed interpretations of the experts, which sometimes are trying again to rend the seamless garment of the Church, we must safely and without doubt show the way of truth and salvation to the clergy and Christian people.¹⁶

Cardinal Caggiano argued that the question about the twofold source of revelation was not a disputed issue but had been settled at the Council of Trent,¹⁷ an argument to which Cardinal Browne added several citations from the ordinary Magisterium of the modern Popes.¹⁸ Archbishop Florit, perhaps as a way of avoiding settling the issue, proposed citing the text of Trent, but he also thought the questions raised by contemporary exegetes who made use of *Formgeschichte* did threaten the doctrine of biblical inspiration and the historical authority of the Gospels.¹⁹

On the other side, Bishop Alba Palacios (Tehuantepec, Mexico) argued that the draft was using a new and quite recent vocabulary in discussing Tradition and Scripture; and, as for the interpretation of the New Testament, the criticisms made of contemporary views are often exaggerations or even calumnies. "Many authors are being accused whom we have not read or are

¹⁵AS, I/III, pp. 99-101. Levillain (pp. 250-51) notes that the lack of specific recommendations in this speech reflects the division among the French bishops who, on the night of November 14th, had voted on the draft: 85 for a rejection, 35 for a complete rewriting, and 3 for a simple discussion of it not affecting the essence of the text.

¹⁶AS, I/III, pp. 70-71.

¹⁷AS, I/III, p. 72.

¹⁸AS, I/III, pp. 82-84. "Regarding ecumenism," Cardinal Browne added, "I do not think our separated brethren have anything to fear from this draft. There principal difficulty, as I see it, instead regards our doctrine about the Church and its head on earth. Indeed, I would say that the solution to that difficulty, insofar as it depends on us, hangs rather on our love in dealing with them, in resolving their doubts, in convincing them that the Church, Bride of Christ and Mother of us all, considers nothing more important than embracing them and holding them to her bosom so that she may lead them with us into eternal life."

¹⁹AS, I/III, pp. 101-103.

only beginning to read."²⁰ And Abbot Butler, in the written text he submitted along with his oral comments, commented on the question of biblical interpretation:

The draft discusses the inspiration and inerrancy of Sacred Scripture in words which go beyond what has already been defined, words which could be understood in the sense of a biblical "Docetism," while what people need to hear from us is that Scripture is the Word of God, an inspired and trustworthy Word, written by men in a human language. Whatever more we might say on this would not be "for building up" of the people, but "for the destruction" of Catholic experts. And this would cause scandal to our more intelligent lay people...

Literary and historical science, moreover, as it is applied to Scripture today--and legitimately applied, since the Scriptures, for all their being books inspired by God, are documents of human history--the application of this science is quite recent and, so to speak, still in the cradle. The relationship between this science and scholastic theology must be carefully and gradually worked out, something which this Council cannot do. It should not be decided prematurely, especially in a sense which would make such science most difficult, even impossible, for Catholic scholars. And it is a science very necessary both for apologetics and for our spiritual life.

Further, the draft, in some of its parts, seems to me to reveal an antimodernist mentality. But there are hardly any modernists to be found among Catholics today; and if there are any among non-Catholics, they are hardly going to listen to the Vatican Council. I do not deny that errors occur in such scientific inquiry, errors made even by Catholic exegetes who are most often men of profound fidelity and Catholic integrity and most worthy of our praise. For the subjects they discuss and the methods of inquiry are such that it is almost inevitable that errors will arise on the way to the truth. But until the questions are mature, these errors are much more effectively corrected by other exegetes and through the development of the discipline itself than by frequent interventions by the Magisterium. And if there are exaggerations and rashness, they are better corrected by the ordinary discipline and by the ordinary magisterium of the Church than by the extraordinary Magisterium of an Ecumenical Council. This was the prudent norm of the Biblical Commission in recent years, and I think it should be sustained and continued and not hindered.

And if the Holy Office fears that it does not have sufficient power to correct rash views, the rest of us can respond that we have full confidence in its severity and only fear that it will be too severe.

Catholic exegetes and biblical scholars have for some time been engaging in dialogue with non-catholic exegetes and carrying on a truly excellent work on behalf of the Catholic faith and tradition. But if, in the present circumstances in which many questions on these topics are not mature, we give non-Catholics reason to think that Catholic scholars decide issues not for intrinsically scholarly reasons but only because of a statement of the solemn magisterium, the authority of our scholars in this whole area will be destroyed. I know from my own experience that Catholic conclusions on biblical matters can in fact be neglected by non-Catholics precisely because they suppose us to lie under such statements. It is, therefore, not opportune for such questions, disputed even among Catholics, to be settled by the Council's magisterium except in a case of some manifest need to safeguard the faith. And it has not been shown that such is the case.²¹

On November 17th, the third day of debate, nine bishops spoke in favor of the proposed draft, eight against, and one was indecisive. The debate seemed to become heated again.

²⁰AS, I/III, pp. 104-107. His speech was co-signed by Mendez Arceo (Cuernavaca).

²¹AS, I/III, pp. 109-110.

Cardinal Döpfner, in the third speech of the day, addressed the argument, repeated several times in the first days of debate, that the Council should not reject a draft so carefully prepared by so many qualified people and approved at various stages beforehand. He said he wanted to complete the remarks made by Cardinal Ottaviani and others about the preparation of the text:

The Report given by the most Eminent president of the Council's Theological Commission might give the impression that the draft before us had in the preparatory phases been elaborated and emended tranquilly and with everyone's applause, having encountered no major difficulties. That is why the Reporter thought it only right to expect and to propose that the draft written in the course of two year's hard work--which certainly is true--would be accepted by the Fathers of the Council.

But, to the contrary, in the conciliar discussion up to now by different Fathers, especially Cardinals Liénart, Frings, Leger, Alfrink, Silva Henriquez, Bea, and other Fathers, very serious doubts have been raised about the draft. I confess I labor under the same doubts and I believe that the draft proposed should be rejected and completely rewritten.

But I want to add some things which seem of some importance to me in order to discern the method by which this draft was discussed up to this point and, consequently, would be treated in the future.

As for the work of the Preparatory Theological Commission, already in the Central Commission we heard that the draft had been written by theologians from different countries and schools. But even then the impression arose again and again that a one-sided influence had prevailed too much in the Preparatory Theological Commission. It might be put in this way: concern for the purity of the faith and for the danger of errors, which of course is legitimate and even obligatory for us gathered in Council--that concern was given more attention than the problems, difficulties, and temptations which today trouble theologians, pastors, seminarians, and the faithful who truly love the Church and who all are waiting for help from the Council. At that time a proposal was refused which had been made by the Secretariate for Christian Unity, that disputed matters in this area be discussed by a mixed commission or by common cooperation. Precisely because of this concern, it seemed to various members of the Central Commission that it should be asked that the draft should be rediscussed in the Preparatory Theological Commission with new theologians, especially the best-regarded exegetes, being invited to take part.

In the Central Commission difficulties and doubts quite similar to those we have heard in these days were raised by several members. But only very few things were changed in the final redaction. This is not surprising since in the Central Commission votes were not taken individually on particular amendments, and sometimes the suggestions made were rather vague. Thus a great deal of room was left to the pertinent preparatory commission in passing judgement on the proposed amendments.

For these reasons, anyone aware of these things could easily have anticipated that sharp disagreements would arise again in the Council itself. And now it is necessary that we all, speaking freely and openly, pass judgement on everything said for or against the matter and seek a conciliar judgement on which all can freely give our assent.

We should not fear such discussion at all, so long as in seeking the truth we manifest union and charity in the Lord's Spirit; nor should such discussion be considered irreverence towards the Supreme Pontiff. For in the Rules established by the Supreme Pontiff himself, we read that any Father may speak on every draft proposing that it be accepted, amended, or *rejected* (art. 33, 1). From which it follows that no pre-judgement arises in virtue of the preparatory work, and we retain complete right to determine what should happen with each draft, and therefore with this draft too. After the general discussion there should be a vote as to whether to accept the whole draft or not. After that vote is taken, we will see how to proceed in the future. If the present form of the draft is acceptable to a majority of the Fathers, it should be taken as the subject of further work. If it is not acceptable, a new draft should be composed. The latter, in my humble opinion, seems preferable, because from the start it could take account of the different tendencies and concerns.

And in doing such work, we strongly and insistently ask the president of the Commission on faith and morals, while making use of the judgement of the members, he also designate from among the scholars named by the Supreme Pontiff those who are well versed in the problems on which difficulties have arisen, so that in our Commission theologians of different schools may work together. Besides the excellent things said in our draft, use should also be made of the comments made by the Fathers as well as of the examples of drafts offered by some people, which certainly cannot be considered definitive and perfect drafts, but as useful and fruitful attempts. The proposals of the Secretariate for Christian Unity should also be given careful consideration.²²

Three speakers later, Cardinal Ottaviani spoke in reply to Döpfner's remarks which he was sure came "not from bad will but from insufficient information." He denied that he had said that everything had been peaceful. Disputed matters had been brought to the plenary meetings of the Preparatory Theological Commission, where they had been decided by majority vote. Nor could he accept that the Constitution reflected only one school. The membership of the subcommission on biblical matters had been international, with the head of the Biblical Institute, Msgr. Volk, and the Louvain scholar, Cerfaux, participating. Then he went on:

As for the Central Commission, around 60 Fathers are witnesses how the discussion proceeded. And now it is said that the process was summary. No! everyone spoke. Everyone who wanted to spoke and made remarks. The Commission for Amendments sent the objections to the Theological Commission. The Theological Commission replied to the objections. Some were received and the draft of this Constitution was amended accordingly. On some matters this did not happen, and the draft remained as it had been; because some of those amendments had been proposed only by some, or by one Father, with the others not agreeing. And so, of course, we could not take all of them into account.

He concluded by repeating what he had said in his oral remarks on the first day of debate that he thought the proposal to reject the draft violated can. 222, 2 of the Code. At that point, Cardinal Gilroy, who was presiding that day, said that one of the Council Fathers had written him a note quoting the Council Rules, about acceptance, amendment, or rejection. "Attention is directed to the word 'rejected,'"²³

The debate shifted focus when Archbishop Parente followed Ottaviani to offer a distinction between the substance of the draft and the form which he said was accidental. He proposed as a way out of the impasse that votes be taken on the substance of the various topics in the draft, on the basis of which it could then be rewritten as to form, with a final vote being taken on the revised text. The remainder of his talk was devoted to a defence of the draft's position on Scripture and Tradition, largely based on the Council of Trent and subsequent theologians and magisterial statements. When he was told his time had run out, he hastily added:

For lack of time I have presented only very few things in accordance with sound theology, which is neither Roman nor French nor German nor Spanish, neither old nor new, but is simply Catholic theology. And I have said these things so that it may be clear to everyone that the draft "On the Sources of Revelation" does not sin against the truth nor does it indulge this or that school of theology, but is in

²²AS, I/III, pp. 124-26. At the end of his speech, Döpfner said: "I have offered these remarks having consulted with and received in a meeting the explicit consent of the bishops of Austria, Germany, and several other German-speaking Fathers."

²³AS, I/III, pp. 131-32.

essential harmony with sound theology, relying on twenty centuries of tradition. Our draft is not the best possible one--which it would be difficult to achieve--but it is worthy of your consideration and discussion, so that it can be improved.

Among the remarks in his written text which he did not have time to say were the following comments on the interpretation of the Council of Trent:

Some recent authors, addicted to ecumenism, have attempted with all their might to weaken the clear line of Catholic doctrine which we have outlined above. They find things which no one else ever saw before. One of them (J.R. Geiselman) distorted the text of Trent to make it favor Luther's formula about *Scriptura sola*, which he, how I do not know, dares to ascribe to the Fathers of the Council. Another scholar, who agrees with the first one, is more honest in admitting that the mind of the Fathers of Trent was in favor of the twofold source of Revelation, but he adds that the mind of the Holy Spirit was different, for with the word "and" (in place of the words "partly-partly") he left the door open for future ecumenists to favor the Protestant formula. The Holy Spirit's game, therefore, which was repeated at Vatican I: Will it be repeated again at Vatican II? Fr. Boyer wrote about all this quite recently, but he, although very concerned about the separated brethren, is not afraid, as it is only right, to profess and present Catholic doctrine in accord with its genuine meaning and with the integrity and honesty it deserves, relying on valid historical, exegetical, and theological arguments.²⁴

One speaker later, Cardinal Frings briefly replied to Parente that he had never denied that in the order of knowledge there are two sources, but that in the order of being there is only one source, divine revelation. Because his eyes were failing, he had been unable to read his text, and he had forgotten to add: "from which two streams flow, Sacred Scripture and Tradition."²⁵

Two other speeches are worth noting. Bishop Simons (Indor) ended his talk with these remarks:

It should be noted that in this draft and others, when speaking of the Church and its magisterium, we should avoid any appearance of vain-glory which alienates many people from the Church today. Yes, we should remember the divine help which, promised by Christ, is always present to the Church and to its teaching and governing authority. But we should also remember the innumerable acts of weakness, ineptitude, and ignorance and, indeed, the errors and sins which Church history clearly shows even in the highest places in the Church.²⁶

Shortly afterward, Bishop Charue (Namur), speaking on behalf of the Belgian bishops and of several other bishops of Belgian extraction, repeated the litany of criticisms of the text. He argued that the Council should not involve itself in particular disputed points: "An Ecumenical Council cannot play the role of the Holy Office." It should avoid giving the impression that it denies the existence of some real problems, as, for example, the origin of the Gospels. In that connection, he distinguished between the technical or philological methods employed by From Critics and the rationalistic presuppositions of Bultmann and Dibelius.

²⁴AS, I/III, pp. 132-36. The unnamed scholar in Parente's comments is Yves Congar, and the reference is to *Tradition and Traditions*, pp. 165-69.

²⁵AS, I/III, p. 139.

²⁶AS, I/III, p. 140.

Think, venerable Brethren, about the condition of all those who must reconcile their scientific work in universities, in all spheres of knowledge, with the Catholic faith. The example of Galileo and other more recent examples should be enough! Premature decisions of a Council, because of their solemn character, could burden for a half-century the conditions of scientists.²⁷

On Sunday evening, November 18th, a meeting was held of eighteen bishops and theologians (among them, Volk, Schroeffler, Schaufele, Ruesch, Garrone, Elchinger, Pourchet, Jenny, Rahner, Häring, Daniélou, de Lubac, Smulders, and Philips) to discuss how to get out of the impasse. The Germans proposed that three misunderstandings had to be dissipated: (1) that concern for the "pastoral" did not mean lack of concern for doctrine; (2) that criticisms of scholasticism did not mean eliminating it, but concentrating on Christ; (3) that ecumenical concern did not mean diluting doctrine. As for strategy, if a vote on the whole text could not be taken or if were to fail to obtain a majority for rejection, then the text would have to be revised either by enlarging the Doctrinal Commission and relaxing its methods or by the appointment of a mixed commission of members of the Doctrinal Commission and the Secretariate for Christian Unity or at least by an expansion of the Doctrinal Commission so that it included theologians and exegetes neglected in the preparation of the official draft. The Rahner-Ratzinger draft was no longer being proposed as an alternate text.²⁸

On the fourth day of debate, November 19th, nine bishops spoke in favor of retaining the proposed draft and nine against it. Perhaps the most important speech was that of Bishop de Smedt (Bruges):

I speak in the name of the Secretariate for Christian Unity.

In the discussion of the draft "On the Sources of Revelation," many Fathers have displayed a real ecumenical concern. [All sincerely and positively want out drafts to promote unity.] But while some have said that the draft answers the requirements of sound ecumenism, others have denied it. So that you can make a better judgement on this issue, perhaps you would welcome hearing from the Secretariate for Christian Unity what precisely ecumenicity is ["what precisely is the ecumenicity of a proposition. For our Secretariate was established by the Supreme Pontiff to be of service to the Fathers in examining drafts with respect to ecumenicity"].

The problem is this: What is required in a doctrine and in the style of a draft so that it can truly promote better dialogue between Catholics and non-Catholics?

I answer: All those honored to be called Christian agree in this, that they acknowledge Jesus Christ. [What was communicated by the Lord himself constitute the deposit of faith and is our salvation. Everyone, Catholic and non-Catholic, approaches to this one source.] But when the question is about the way in which we approach Jesus Christ, then it is that disagreement begins. For many centuries now we have been divided from one another ["we are brothers separated from one another"].

We know that this disagreement is against the will of Jesus Christ. When will our division cease? For many centuries we Catholics have thought that a clear, limpid, and complete exposition of our doctrine was enough. Non-Catholics thought the same. Each party presented its doctrine in its own terminology, in its own optic. [Each party thought that this was the best method.] But what Catholics said was

²⁷AS, I/III, pp. 143-45. Besides Döpfner and Charue, other speakers declared they were speaking for many others: Zoa for very many Africans ("*omnino non placet*") (p. 149), and Rosales for the majority of the Philippine bishops ("*placet*") (p. 155).

²⁸See Levillain, pp. 251-52.

misunderstood by non-Catholics, and vice-versa. In fact, with this method no progress has been made in reconciliation; on the contrary, on both sides, prejudices, suspicions, and strife have increased.

But now in these last decades, a new method has been introduced. It is called ecumenical dialogue. What is it?

It is a characteristic of this method that it is not only concerned with the truth but also with the way in which doctrine is presented, so that it can be understood correctly and exactly by others. Christians from the different denominations are helping one another so that the ones can understand more clearly and exactly a doctrine of the others to which they do not assent.

Ecumenical dialogue, therefore, is not deliberation or discussion on how to bring about union; it is not a Council of union, nor an attempt at conversion. It is, for each party, a serene, objective, lucid, and psychologically adapted witnessing to one's own faith.

This new method, by the will of the Supreme Pontiff, is now to be employed in our Council. Our conciliar presentations will have an ecumenical spirit [and will greatly promote ecumenical dialogue] if we employ the means appropriate so that non-Catholics [by our way of speaking] may more clearly understand how the Catholic Church [Catholicism] sees and lives the mystery of Christ.

But to compose drafts in an ecumenical style is not easy task. Why not? Every appearance of indifferentism has to be excluded. An ecumenical presentation must faithfully explain the complete and integral Catholic doctrine on a particular matter. How can non-Catholics hear from us what Catholicism teaches if we present a truncated, distorted, confused doctrine? [It has been insinuated in this hall that an ecumenical way of speaking is opposed to an integral presentation of the truth. Anyone who says this appears not to have understood the nature of ecumenical dialogue. The non-Catholic brethren do not come to such dialogue in order to be deceived by us. How difficult it is to compose a draft in an ecumenical style, secondly, is clear from what follows. If we wish our presentation to be exactly understandable by non-Catholics, we must:] Such dialogue is not begun so that some can be deceived by the others, but so that they may hear the full truth about each doctrine. If we want our presentation to be exactly understood by non-Catholics, many conditions have to be fulfilled. Here, in these pages of mine, I have listed nine conditions, but for brevity's sake, I will only indicate four of them:

1. We have to know, Brothers, what is the teaching today of the Orthodox and Protestants, in other words, we have to know well their faith, liturgical life, and theology.

2. We have to know what their opinions are about our doctrine and on what points they understand it correctly or incorrectly.

3. We have to know what non-Catholics believe has been omitted or insufficiently explained in Catholic doctrine [(e.g., on the Word of God, on the priesthood of the faithful, on religious freedom). If we keep all this in view as we begin to compose texts, we must consider the following:]

a) We have to examine whether in our way of speaking there are forms or formulations which it is difficult for non-Catholics to understand. Here it must be said that the scholastic method, a quasi scholarly method, constitutes a great difficulty for non-Catholics [and is often the origin of their mistakes and prejudices]. The same thing must be said about the abstract and purely notional way of speaking which is not understood by Orientals. On the contrary, a biblical and patristic way of speaking of itself avoids and prevents many difficulties, confusion, and prejudices.

(b) The terms used must be carefully chosen (words, images, qualifications), account being taken of the reaction which they produce in the minds and sensibilities of non-Catholics.

c) Judgements are to be weighed and examined in the context within which they will be received by non-Catholics.

d) Arguments (citations, reasons), the argumentation and arrangement of the text should be so presented that they are persuasive to non-Catholics.

e) All sterile polemics must be avoided.

f) Errors should be clearly dispelled but in such a way as not to offend the persons who hold the errors.]

Conclusion. From all this it is clear, venerable Brethren, that a text is not ecumenical by the mere fact that it presents the truth. [It is a very difficult and very delicate task to make a text or presentation truly ecumenical.]

The Supreme Pontiff gathered in the Secretariate for Christian Unity specialists, bishops and theologians, who have great experience in ecumenism. To these specialists the Pope entrusted the task of assisting the other preparatory commissions and especially the Theological Commission so that the drafts would be composed in a truly ecumenical spirit.

Our Secretariate offered its assistance to the Theological Commission, but the Commission, for reasons it is not for me to judge, refused. We proposed the establishment of a mixed commission, but the Theological Commission replied, "No, we do not want it."

The result was that it was the Theological Commission alone which attempted the very difficult task of giving our drafts an ecumenical character. With what success?

We have here heard many Fathers express their judgements about the ecumenicity of the draft proposed. Some have said that it lacks an ecumenical spirit, the view stated by Fathers who live among Protestants or in the East. Another view was expressed by Fathers, many of whom live in Catholic regions. [But others, who live in Catholic regions, stated that the draft really does have an ecumenical spirit.] To them it seems that the text is not lacking an ecumenical spirit. Forgive us, but we humbly ask, pray these Fathers to consider whether they have taken enough account of the true nature of the new method, called ecumenical dialogue, and of its conditions and consequences [written text, after "consider": "whether they have enough competence to pass judgement on the ecumenicity of these texts. In such an important matter, what need to be weighed exactly are the actual doctrine, the actual aspirations, the actual difficulties of non-Catholics."]

I conclude: In any case, from the Supreme Pontiff we have received the task of working so that the dialogue with the non-Catholic brethren can proceed happily in this Council. We ask you all, venerable Brethren, to listen to the judgement of the Secretariate for Christian Unity on the proposed draft. Our opinion is that the proposed draft is notably lacking in ecumenicity. For dialogue with non-Catholics, the draft does not represent progress but a backward step, not a help but a hindrance, indeed injury. [And since an ecumenical character must pervade all the material, we do not see how the present text can be corrected sufficiently.]

Most venerable Brethren, please consider that the new method was finally introduced so that a fruitful dialogue could be initiated. The fruit of this dialogue can already be seen in this hall, in the presence of the Observers. It is a providential hour, but a serious hour. If these drafts of the Theological Commission are not written in a different way, we will be responsible for the fact that the Second Vatican Council annihilated a great, vast hope, the hope of all those who, following Pope John XXIII, are expecting in prayer and fasting that now, finally, a serious step, a notable step will be made towards the fraternal union [mutual comprehension] of all those for whom our Lord Jesus Christ prayed, "That they may all be one."²⁹

One speaker later, Archbishop Garrone (Toulouse) seconded the comments of Bishop de Smedt but concluded with some practical suggestions: (1) that a preface be added on revelation

²⁹AS, I/III, pp. 184-87. The text given combines both the oral and the written text submitted by de Smedt, with the latter phrases, where possible, indicated by brackets. The transcription from the tape-recording of the session says that after de Smedt's speech there was "Plausus Patrum."

itself; (2) that the text be rewritten to accommodate the concerns expressed by both sides. Since this requires a complete rewriting, the text should be sent back to a commission, and this commission should be composed of members from both the Commission on Faith and the Commission on Unity.³⁰

Many of de Smedt's concerns were also echoed in the speech by Archbishop Denis Hurley (Durban), who, addressing the question of the pastoral nature of the draft, proposed that the "very beautiful" draft composed by the Secretariate, "On the Word of God," be printed and distributed to the Fathers. He seconded Abbot Butler's call for a bipartite (or even tripartite) group, "if the Theological Commission cannot propose a solution of its own." But he then went on to speak about the cause of the present split among the Council members:

But this division over the pastoral character of the Council goes far beyond the limits of this discussion. I am quite certain that this division will pervade almost all the discussions. By the Supreme Pontiff's kind grace, I was a member of the Central Preparatory Commission, and as far as I recall, the most frequent remark about the drafts and especially about the drafts on faith and morals concerned their insufficiently pastoral character. After all these remarks I am surprised, therefore, to find that the drafts were little, and very little, changed in a pastoral direction. Now, after the discussion in these days, I understand the reason, namely that those responsible for amending the drafts did not understand the word "pastoral" in the same way as those who made the comments.

We are now at the key turning-point of the whole Council, and as I see it, we will experience this same division in the discussion of 90% of the drafts. What must be done? As I now see, when we complained in the Central Commission about the non-pastoral character of the drafts, we were voices crying in the desert. No one was there who paid attention to our cry, who could or should have concerned himself with the deficiencies of the preparatory work. There was no central direction. There was no person or commission who might clearly interpret the pastoral purpose of the Council, who might direct and coordinate the work of the preparatory Commissions towards the stated purpose, who might establish the limits of the material to be proposed to the Council. Here is the basic defect of all the preparatory work. Here is, so to speak, the original sin of this Council.

Venerable Brethren, we cannot spend ten or twenty years discussing drafts which fill a thousand pages, experiencing for each page the same division about the meaning of the word "pastoral."

I am not denying the usefulness of the discussions during these weeks, for they revealed the profound division about the interpretation of the purpose of the Council. But, knowing this, we cannot discuss forever each particular manifestation of this disagreement. The matter has to be settled either by a general discussion and vote in this hall or with the help of a special commission established by the Supreme Pontiff to discuss the question between the first and second Sessions. And if such a commission is established, the very broad mandate should be given to it to revise and shorten the drafts and to revise the order in which the discussions will take place.

Only if in this or some similar way, the original sin of the preparatory work is redeemed, can the Council be brought to a happy end.³¹

³⁰*AS*, I/III, pp. 189-91.

³¹*AS*, I/III, pp. 198-200. Hurley was later, during the discussion of the draft "On the Church," to repeat his complaint about the lack of unity and coordination; see *AS*, I/IV, p. 197. For an attempt in part to defend the preparatory work, see Carbone, "Gli schemi preparatori," pp. 76-86.

Hurley was followed by Bishop Ruotolo (Ugento-S. Maria de Leuca), who offered a compromise solution to the Council's impasse. A preface would be composed, containing "a 'panoramic' and serene recapitulation of the whole divine economy of salvation, the most wise and most merciful God's plan in all of human history (creation, redemption, Church, sacraments, etc.) and a solemn affirmation of its multiple presence in the world." Here the Church would speak as a Mother, and so the style would be pastoral, positive, ecumenical, adapted to contemporaries, as so many Fathers had asked. It would be composed by a mixed commission representing both theological and pastoral interests.

While that preface is being written, discussion can begin immediately on the drafts proposed by the Pope. In these dogmatic texts, dealing with technical questions, the Church would speak more as a Teacher, concisely, more coolly, both positively and negatively, as Councils always have in the past.³²

Ruotolo's suggestion was one of several made as, at the end of four days of discussion, appeals for a vote in general on the text and for the appointment of a special commission were becoming more common.

On November 20th, the fifth day of debate began. It was announced that thirteen bishops had requested to speak on the general principles of the official draft. Four of them spoke, three in favor of the text, and one of uncertain orientation. At that point, Cardinal Frings, who was presiding, interrupted the discussion to allow Archbishop Felici to read "a very important proposal which the Council Presidency had taken:"

Having completed the discussion in general on the scheme of the fonts of Revelation, it is in order to proceed to the discussion of the individual chapters of the schema. However, since some of the Fathers consider it inopportune to proceed with the discussion of the present schema, the Council of Presidency has decided to seek an expression of the desire of the Council Fathers in this matter. Wherefore, the following question is being submitted to your vote. The question is: "Should the discussion on the schema, on the dogmatic Constitution *de fontibus Revelationis* be discontinued, terminated?" Those favoring discontinuance should so signify by marking their ballot in the *Placet* square. Those opposed to the discontinuance, should so indicate by marking the ballot in the *Non placet* square.

I repeat. The question is: "Should the discussion of the present schema be discontinued?" Those favoring discontinuance, mark their ballots in the *Placet* square. Those opposed to the discontinuance, mark their ballots in the *Non placet* square.³³

In the volume in which have been bound the transcription of the tapes of the oral interventions, at this point the report reads:

Post Exc.mi Secretariis [sic] Generalis communicationem maximum in Aula Conciliari studium et ardor fit: quam plurimi Patres, e suis sedibus egressi, undique conveniunt ante Confessionis Altare, ad Secretariae sedes. Plures Patres ciculatim inter se concitate disserunt in primis in alis Basilicae et prope Officium Mechanographicum, quo complures se conferunt ut explicationes accipiant vel schedulas ad

³²AS, I/III, pp. 201-203.

³³AS, I/III, pp. 220-22.

suffragationem per errores signatas permulent. Complures Patres Exc.mum Secretarium Generalem vel Subsecretarios interrogant; alii colloquuntur cum Praesidibus. Inter Patres per Aulam vagantes etiam plures Em.mi Cardinales notantur.³⁴

After Felici read his text in Latin and before it was read in modern languages, Frings said, "Although it does not satisfy our wishes in all respects, I personally agree to it with all my heart, because it seems to me the best and a peaceful solution, bringing honor to the Church, and most suitable in every respect."³⁵

Apparently confusion began almost immediately. When the modern versions of the announcement had been made, Felici repeated the question in Latin, explained the meaning of the votes, and said that anyone who had mistakenly voted already could ask for a new ballot. Cardinal Ruffini then asked to speak and he made it clear that the word "interrupted" meant that the text would have to be revised and that the official text would not be discussed any longer.³⁶ Eleven minutes later, Felici repeated the explanation of the vote. Voting *Placet* means an interruption *sine die*, the end of the discussion in general and of the discussion of particular chapters. Again he said that those who had made mistakes in voting could ask for a new ballot.³⁷

While the votes were being counted, the general discussion continued. Seven bishops expressed support of the official text, and one opposition. Two of these speeches were notable. Archbishop de Proença Sigaud (Diamantina, Brazil) spoke darkly of a crisis so grave that it threatens the life of Christianity. He had experienced it in Brazil, but principally because good and orthodox seminarians, sent to Europe to study, had come back as priests "filled with dangerous ideas, full of the spirit of socialism, rationalism, and modernism." The errors condemned by *Humani generis* were still present in the Church, especially in biblical exegesis, where a practical denial of the Bible's historical value was growing.

The historical value of the whole Pentateuch is being denied, and it did not, they say, have Moses as its author. The creation of man, the sin in paradise, the election of Abraham, the flood, are being reduced to fables and legends. The history of the Jewish people in the desert, of the patriarchs, of Moses, of the Judges, are considered mere epics, of the genre of "*chansons de geste*", and should be compared to other epics, such as the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Chansons de Roland*, or *Cid, el campeador*. David is a figure of the same type as Siegfried. With a smile of pity, the stories of Judith, Esther, Ruth, and Tobias are reduced to the genre of pious and fantastic novellas, with no account taken of the Church's Magisterium, the holy Fathers, and Tradition. The story of Jonah the prophet is dismissed as a fable. Nothing historical is found in the prophets. In this immense shipwreck, it might be possible to salvage, as historical, the Chronicles of Solomon and Nehemiah.

³⁴This is from the mimeographed transcription from the tape-recording of the 23rd General Congregation, p. 27.

³⁵*AS*, I/III, p. 220.

³⁶*AS*, I/III, p. 223.

³⁷*AS*, I/III, p. 223. When the speeches had resumed and one speaker had given his address, Frings again explained: "With regard to the interruption of the discussion, allow me to say that this interruption means that there will be no further discussion of this draft until a new draft on the same matter is presented" (p. 229).

As for the New Testament, hardly anything historical remains. St. Luke's chapters on the vision of Zachariah, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity of Christ are said to be pious and fantastic songs. The angel Gabriel was never physically present in Mary's house in the city of Nazareth. These are pious narratives. What St. Matthew narrates about the conception of Christ and the Magi deserves no better fate. Magi never came from the East to Bethlehem nor did they find the Infant with Mary, his Mother. The scene, which is quite fundamental for Catholic faith, of the confession of St. Peter near Caesarea Philippi was created, in all its points, to explain the primacy of St. Peter. The Resurrection of Christ must be considered after the fashion of a hellenistic apotheosis.

These things are not being taught only by non-Catholics. They are being preached to our nuns in conferences and meetings. They are being handed on to our seminarians as true exegesis. They are being presented to the faithful in Catholic periodicals. They are being affirmed to us bishops here in this *alma Urbs* itself, as the latest results of true hermeneutics.

This is the reality which must not be ignored. It demonstrates the urgent need for some magisterial act of the Council to put an end to so vast and abominable a confusion of doctrine and souls.³⁸

The other speech to be noted was given by Bishop Carli (Segni). After seconding the compromise proposed by Bishop Ruotolo, Carli questioned the juridical validity of a vote on rejecting the text as a whole on the grounds that no such provision could be found in the Rules of the Council. He even said that if a vote were taken in positive form, such as "Should the discussion of the particular articles begin?", it would be an invalid vote which any Council member might appeal to the Council's administrative tribunal. Only reluctantly could he admit the possibility of a vote on the negative question: "Should the draft be rejected?"³⁹ It may be that legal questions of the sort Carli here raised accounts for the negative way in which the vote on the text as a whole was phrased.

After eight speakers had addressed the assembly, Archbishop Felici announced, "The result of the vote will be communicated tomorrow,...and, if necessary, a second vote will be taken. Meanwhile, since it is in possession, the discussion of the draft "On the Sources of Revelation" will continue, and with chapter I. I announce to all the Fathers that if perhaps the draft is to be changed in virtue of the vote, the new draft, to be discussed on next Friday, will be "On the Instruments of

³⁸AS, I/III, pp. 224-26. In his written text, de Proença Sigaud expressed his view of the Rahner-Ratzinger text circulated by the European bishops: "It is more a poem than a doctrinal Constitution, and indeed a romantic poem, nebulous and obscure. The natural and supernatural orders, it seems, are confused. Some things smack of pantheism, some of gnosticism, and could only be explained in a Catholic sense with great effort. The terms seem to have a peculiar meaning, unknown to us, so that a reader of the draft could think he has in his hands an almost hermetic or esoteric document. Some things remind me of things I have read in conferences of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. If the Council were to understand and explain the text of the new draft, it would have to write a complete book of hermeneutics. What is worse, it is silent about the vital and most urgent question of the historical value of Sacred Scripture" (p. 229). These criticisms were echoed later by Bishop Ferro (Reggio Calabria): "Some new drafts are being circulated. They are more like pious meditations on the salvation of all men, more subtle and more difficult to understand, smacking of an apologetical method and an abounding oratory than that sober and dense temper which alone is fitting for the authority and majesty of the Church's universal magisterium. Mystical moods vary in many ways in accordance with differences in time and place and indeed can be interpreted in opposing ways by each person's subjective character, but the truth of the Lord remains forever" (p. 244).

³⁹AS, I/III, pp. 231-32. To his written text, Carli apparently appended Ruotolo's suggested compromise (pp. 232-33).

Social Communication."⁴⁰ Three speeches were then given about chapter I of the official text, at which point, closing the day's session, Cardinal Frings said that the Secretary General would announce the result of the vote. Felici then said:

Since, unexpectedly, we have the result of the vote, by order of the most Eminent President, this result will be announced immediately.

Present and voting: 2209.

Placet votes, meaning that the discussion of the whole draft is to be interrupted: 1368.

Non placet votes, meaning the discussion is to continue: 822.

Null votes: 19.

The required two-thirds majority was 1473. Since, therefore, the *Placet* vote did not achieve this majority, it cannot be in possession. Therefore, by order of the President, the discussion of the draft on Revelation will be continued.⁴¹

When, however, the next morning's session opened (November 21st), Archbishop Felici immediately made the following announcement:

The vote taken yesterday seems to have caused some concern. In terms of the Council Rules, it was indicative enough, but not definitive. Therefore, considering the discussions of the previous days and the arguments adduced by the Council Fathers, it is anticipated that in the discussion, although it contributed much to illuminate the topic, the different positions cannot easily be reconciled. Therefore, it seems necessary for the proposed draft to be cleansed of those defects which this solemn gathering continues to discuss without coming to the desired conclusion.

The August Pontiff, taking these causes of concern into account and bowing to the wishes of several people, has graciously decided to entrust the matter for examination by a special commission to be composed of some of the most Eminent Cardinal Fathers and the members of both the Theological Commission and the Secretariate for Christian Unity. The task of this Commission will be to amend the draft, to shorten it, and to perfect it, especially by insisting on the more general principles. Everyone knows that this doctrine was already presented by the Councils of Trent and Vatican I. It will then be presented again for the Council's judgement so that they can vote on it.⁴²

Such were the events of the last two days. Several questions remain about the decision to put the draft to a general vote, about the phrasing of the question voted, and about Pope John's decision to appoint the special mixed Commission.

On November 14th, before the debate on Revelation began, the Council Presidency asked for a vote on the draft on Liturgy. The first part of this vote asked for approval of "the general directives" found in the text.⁴³ This vote, of course, took place after the long discussion of the

⁴⁰AS, I/III, p. 248. In the transcription of the tape-recording, after Felici said, "The result of the vote will be communicated tomorrow," there is a note: "(Risus)" (p. 64).

⁴¹AS, I/III, pp. 254-55.

⁴²AS, I/III, p. 259.

⁴³AS, I/III, p. 10.

successive chapters of the Liturgy Constitution. According to Levillain, at a meeting of the Presidency that same day, a proposal was made by some for a vote of orientation, after discussion in general of the draft on Revelation, to decide to accept or to reject the text. Cardinal Ruffini was so strongly opposed to this proposal that he was able to prevent its being examined.⁴⁴

Again according to Levillain, the decision to put the draft to such a vote was made by the Council Presidency at their meeting on November 19th.⁴⁵ This would appear to be likely, but it does leave unexplained why the vote was announced and taken only after four speakers had addressed the assembly on November 20th. Why was it not announced at the beginning of the day's session?

The wording of the vote has been a matter of controversy ever since it caused such confusion on the Council floor. Cardinal König recently renewed the controversy:

It was a stratagem devised by the General Secretariate of the Council, whose Secretary, Pericle Felici, favored the Roman school. We in the French-German school gathered as was our custom for special occasions at the Collegio dell' Anima to take stock of the situation. We decided to choose representatives, among them Cardinal Frings, to inform the Pope of the dangers in such a method of voting which could cause confusion, as in fact happened.⁴⁶

Caprile argues that the wording was proposed by Cardinal Ruffini. He reports a telephone conversation between Ruffini and Frings, who was to preside over the next day's session, in which Bishop Kempf took down under dictation a formula very similar to that announced by Archbishop Felici. But this formula also gave a clue as to why this phrasing was chosen, which was not announced by Felici:

The reason for asking for the vote in this fashion is this: *Per se*, the draft must be discussed. For it not to be discussed, it is necessary for a majority to desire this and by vote openly to say so by marking the ballot *Placet*, that is, *Placet* that the discussion be interrupted and a new draft be prepared.⁴⁷

The problem was that the Council Rules made no provision in the examination of drafts for a vote in general. Article 39, however, provided that a two-thirds majority was necessary for votes taken in public sessions. The day that the vote was taken, in fact while it was in course, Bishop Carli raised the question of its validity, which he acknowledged only reluctantly if it were expressed in the form, "Should the text be rejected?" To ask "Should the discussion go on to the particular topics?"

⁴⁴Levillain, p. 245. This proposal may have been presented by the French because two days earlier in the large meeting on the eve of the discussion, the French proposed a two-step procedure: general discussion, followed by a vote of orientation.

⁴⁵Levillain, pp. 247, 253.

⁴⁶Franz König, *Where is the Church Heading?* (Middlegreen: St. Paul Publications, 1986), p. 29. One problem with this interpretation is that Cardinal Frings volunteered that he agreed with the proposal to vote (although I suppose it is possible to take his words to mean that he agreed with suspending the discussion). This may also, of course, mean that the protests brought to the Pope did not succeed.

⁴⁷Caprile, II, p. 176n. It is also an argument in favor of Ruffini's authorship that it was he who intervened to explain the import of the vote.

would so violate the Rules that a Council member could legally challenge the vote. It may be that this consideration entered into the decision to put the vote in the form it had.

The effect of this wording, of course, was to place the responsibility for reaching a two-thirds majority on those who wished to suspend discussion of the text. If the vote had been phrased, "Do you wish the discussion of the text to continue?", only one-third of the Council-Fathers would have had to vote *Non placet* to secure that the draft would be rejected.

When the announcement was made that Pope John had decided to follow the majority-vote on the draft, everyone began to ask who was responsible for his action. Umberto Betti gives the chief role to Cardinal Bea and quotes the two jokes making the rounds: *Bea culpa* being the watchword of those disappointed, and "Fly BEA!" that of those delighted.⁴⁸ Caprile claims to know on good authority that Bea's part was limited to a chance encounter with Cardinal Cicognani who asked him how to get out of the delicate situation created by the vote. Bea proposed the solution seconded also by Cardinals Frings and Liénart. This was brought to the Pope's attention and he approved it.⁴⁹

On November 24th, *Osservatore Romano* announced the composition of the Mixed Commission. Cardinals Ottaviani and Bea were the co-presidents, with Fr. Tromp and Msgr. Willebrands serving as secretaries. Five Cardinals were appointed by the Pope: Liénart, Meyer, Lefebvre, Frings, Ruffini, and Quiroga y Palacios. In addition there were 25 members of the Doctrinal Commission and twelve members of the Secretariate for Christian Unity. Each of these groups also invited experts to take part in the work. The Commission divided itself into five subcommissions, one for each chapter of the original draft.

On the same day, however, a group of nineteen Cardinals wrote a letter to Pope John, thanking him for establishing the Mixed Commission but also urging the need "for the Council to affirm at least some doctrinal principles to guarantee the Catholic faith against the errors and deviations of our day." Special attention should be given to the following:

- 1) That the divine Revelation (*locutio Dei ad homines*) is an external and public fact, historically discernible;
- 2) that divine-Catholic Tradition is, in addition to Holy Scripture, a means of divine Revelation;
- 3) that divine-Catholic Tradition is necessary to guarantee the very value of Sacred Scripture and to interpret clearly the obscure biblical texts in matters of faith and morals;
- 4) that both Sacred Scripture and divine-Catholic Tradition are the remote rule of divine Revelation; the proximate rule is the living and indefectible magisterium--ordinary and extraordinary--of Holy Church, which proposes for belief as divinely revealed truth what is contained in the "Deposit of Faith;"
- 5) that Sacred Scripture must be interpreted by means of rational and therefore also literary criteria, but especially by means of the criteria of Catholic hermeneutics, which are chiefly: a) the sense

⁴⁸Umberto Betti, *La rivelazione divina nella Chiesa: La trasmissione della rivelazione nel capitolo III della costituzione dogmatica Dei Verbum* (Rome: Città nuova, 1970), p. 60, n. 196.

⁴⁹Caprile, II, p. 181n.

of the Church, that is, "the meaning which Holy Mother Church held and holds;" b) the morally unanimous interpretation of the holy Fathers; c) the analogy of faith.

6) that scientific, philological, and historical studies are to be encouraged for a fuller and more exact understanding of the Word of God, favoring and promoting especially real progress of studies concerning Semitic languages, archeology, and ancient Near Eastern history, according to the norm of the papal Encyclicals, *Providentissimus Deus*, *Divino afflante Spiritu*, and *Humani generis*.

We are particularly grieved and very concerned--especially for priests and seminarians--to note that in authoritative publications, carrying the ecclesiastical *Imprimatur*, people are daring to place in doubt or ever to deny the historical and objective truth of important narratives in the Old and New Testaments, always considered true and real, to the wonder and almost scandal of Jews themselves and of various separated brethren, as we know for a fact.

As proof of the claims, passages were cited from articles by Dubarle, De Fraine, Heiryneck, Robert-Feuillet, and De Mari.⁵⁰

As Betti notes, this letter contributed further to the stormy atmosphere in which the Mixed Commission began, not least of all because three of the signers were members (Santos, Ruffini, and Quiroga y Palacios).⁵¹

⁵⁰Caprile, II, p. 182. Caprile gives the following as the signatories: Goncalves Cerejeira, Santos, Godfrey, Heard, Copello, Concha, McIntyre, Siri, Bacci, Agagianian, de Barros Camara, de Arriba y Castro, Caggiano, Ruffini, Wyszynski, Urbani, Traglia, Quiroga y Palacios, and Antoniutti. Wenger (p. 89), following the KIPA press agency, lists fourteen signatories and not the same ones; but Caprile claims to know this list is incorrect. Betti (p. 62) gives the same list as Caprile.

⁵¹Betti, p. 62.