

## THE PREPARATORY THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

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On Pentecost Sunday, June 5, 1960, Pope John XXIII issued the *motu proprio*, *Superno Dei nutu*, in which he closed the antepreparatory period and initiated the preparatory period of Vatican II.<sup>1</sup> The first of the ten preparatory commissions he established was a theological commission (PTC), "to examine questions concerning Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, faith and morals."<sup>2</sup> Two days later, it was learned that all these commissions would be chaired by the heads of the corresponding curial congregations and thus that the PTC would be headed by Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani, pro-prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office. Within the next month the secretaries of the new commissions were announced, all of them drawn also from the parallel curial offices, and among them Fr. Sebastian Tromp, S.J., consultant to the Holy Office and professor of theology at the Gregorian University, was named as secretary to the PTC.<sup>3</sup>

That the Pope assigned the direction of the preparatory work to leading figures in the Roman Curia surprised and disconcerted a good number of observers. As Cardinal Tardini himself had noted in a meeting of the Antepreparatory Commission devoted to establishing the organisms for the preparatory period, one of the criticisms of the Antepreparatory Commission was that it had been composed only of curial figures. While he thought the accusation unfair, it had to be taken into account in decisions about the composition of the preparatory commissions.<sup>4</sup> Although he decided to have Curial Cardinals chair the commissions, Pope John, in his Pentecost address, made it clear that the Council would be a distinct body from that of the Curia:

The Ecumenical Council has a structure and organization of its own which must not be confused with the ordinary and characteristic functions of the various dicasteries and congregations of the Roman Curia which even during the Council will continue its ordinary operations of general administration of holy Church. A clear distinction, then. The ordinary governance of the Church, which is the Roman Curia's concern, is one thing, and the Council another. This does not, however, exclude from time to time the enlightened and wise collaboration of churchmen invited in virtue of their acknowledged and respected personal

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<sup>1</sup> The text may be found in *ADA*, I, pp. ; for an English translation see *The Tablet*, 214 (June 18, 1960) 584-85. See also the Pope's address given on the same day, *The Pope Speaks*, pp. 231-39. The fullest available information on the preparation of the program and organisms for the preparatory period is found in V. Carbone, "Il Cardinale Domenico Tardini e la preparazione del Concilio Vaticano II," *Rivista della Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 45 (1991) 42-88.

<sup>2</sup> From the minutes of a meeting of the Antepreparatory Commission, 8 April 1960, it appears that a first list of possible preparatory commissions had spoken of three distinct commissions for doctrine, the Bible, and morality. Msgr. Philippe proposed that they be united in one doctrinal commission, while Msgr. Palazzini wanted to unite the biblical and doctrinal commissions "to prevent biblical scholars from taking dangerous and false roads;" *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, *Appendix* [henceforth: *ASApp*] (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1983) 21-22.

<sup>3</sup> According to Carbone, *art. cit.*, 79, Tardini told Felici on 6 June 1960 that the secretaries and assessors of the Curial congregations were not to serve on the preparatory commissions, but could be advisers to the Central Commission; he insisted once again on the distinction between the Curia and the Council.

<sup>4</sup> *ASApp*, 22. In the discussion that followed Tardini's remark, the role of the Curia in the preparatory commissions was a frequent theme.

competence.<sup>5</sup>

The Pope's words were not enough to prevent criticism of the structure of the preparatory labors,<sup>6</sup> and Fr. Tromp himself was to say that he had difficulty preserving the autonomy of the PTC.

Yves Congar's reaction was particularly strong. At the beginning of his Council Journal, he described how these announcements had depressed him:

I saw it all: the machine was pitiless. The system which Rome had patiently put together was taking into its iron arms the little infant of the Council which had just been born and wanted to live. In its steely arms the system would not allow it to stir, to speak, even to breathe except to the degree that it desired. Everything would remain under the control and at the discretion of the Curia. Barely born and before even having lived, the Council was being dominated, controlled, emasculated.<sup>7</sup>

Congar's response was to write two anonymous letters for the June 16th issue of *Témoignage chrétienne* with his own signed response to them.<sup>8</sup> The first of these, while recalling the Pope's remarks on the independence of the conciliar program, noted that the preparatory commissions were all dominated by Romans and went on to say:

It would seem that they would start differently if they wanted to give the future conciliar assembly the real guarantee of independence which throughout history it has always been acknowledged to have. It seems that something of its breadth has already been withdrawn from the future Council. If it is the Roman Curia that in fact is organizing the Council, that is in charge of its preparation, the suspicion is that we are witnessing the Council's being brought to heel by the Curia, which, in the general organization of the Church, answers to a quite different inspiration and whose existence,

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<sup>5</sup> Caprile, I/I, p. 189; *The Pope Speaks*, p. 189. According to Caprile, two days later, when the press was widely noting the discrepancy between his words and his appointments, the Pope remarked privately that while he wished to avoid the impression that "the Church is completely in the hands of 'the Romans,'" he was also convinced that he could not act "without the support of those who were at his side to help him govern the Church."

<sup>6</sup> Although stated only years after the Council had closed, Philippe Levillain's comment typifies some initial reactions: "The preparation of the Council by the Curia was equivalent to Estates General prepared by the nobility;" *La méch=anique politique de Vatican II: La majorité et l'unanimité dans un Concile* (Théologie historique, 36; Paris: Beauchesne, 1975), p. 66.

<sup>7</sup> Yves Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile*, ed. Eric Mahieu (Paris: du Cerf, 2002), I, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Congar was not entirely comfortable in doing this: "I could have written a single article, under a pseudonym. The idea was repugnant to me. I have never written under a pseudonym except twice, in *Sept*, on the situation of Catholics in Hitler's *Reich*. I wanted to tell the truth, but might return to Germany... On the other hand, I didn't think I had the right to mortgage or to waste whatever chance I had to be asked for and employed in some post in the preparations= of the Council. I knew that the Father General had given in my name. At the time I had no positive indication that it would be kept, but I thought myself obliged to take the possibility into account.

"That is why I chose the somewhat inglorious middle road of writing two letters which stated the question frankly and a reply which, while slightly moderating the criticism, did not eliminate it and, all in all, admitted its basis. It was quite necessary to alert public opinion a little, and above all to enlighten, orient it. Experience and history have taught me that one must *always* protest when motives of conscience or conviction call for it. Undoubtedly this incurs some unpleasantness, but something always remains from it"; Congar, *Mon Journal*, p. 14.

one could even say, is anti-conciliar. We were expecting a dialogue. Will this not be the continuation of the same monologue? I don't want to evoke an offensive precedent, but does not all this contrivance not unpleasantly recall the *Reichstag* of the Hitler era, which was convoked quite regularly but only to ratify decisions already made?

Congar's response to these brutally honest remarks, as he described his own words, was to insist on the ecclesiological difference between the Curia and an ecumenical council:

The Roman Curia, on the one hand, and the Council, on the other represent different organisms whose purposes, inspiration, demands are different. On the one hand, there is the center with its traditions, its distinct vocation to be the arbiter, stability, balance; on the other, there is the body, in contact with so many different movements in the world and with new situations. The history of ecclesiology...is intersected and punctuated by a sort of tension between these two realities, as if between two poles, both of them necessary, irreducible to one another and involved in mutual relationships of cooperation, of conformity and, at the same time, of difference, even sometimes and at the limit, of discord.

History verifies this. This tension is normal. It is likely that the celebration of the Council will provide more than one occasion to rediscover it, right down to the details, clearly important, such as, for example, the rules for the Council's work: this was seen, in any case, at the First Vatican Council. A vague awareness of the existence of this tension probably explains, at least in what is basically sound in them, the reactions of the two letters to which *Témoignage chrétienne* has asked me to reply.<sup>9</sup>

Later, during the intersession between the second and third sessions of the Council, Congar recalled Pope John's "original sin" and remarked that in his contribution to *Témoignage chrétienne* it was the question and not the answer which was most important.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Membership and Structure of the PTC*

In mid-July the names of the members and consultants of the PTC were announced.<sup>11</sup> Further appointments were made to the Commission over the next year; I have added the time of their appointment to those named later.

#### *Members*

Francesco Carpino, Archbishop of Monreale (Sicily)  
 Marcel Dubois, Archbishop of Besançon  
 Alfred Scherer, Archbishop of Porto Alegre (Brazil)  
 Albert Stohr, Archbishop of Mainz  
 Lionel Audet, Auxiliary Bishop of Quebec  
 Franjo Franic, Apostolic Administrator of Split

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<sup>9</sup> The carbon-copy of the two letters and of Congar's reply are found in the Congar Archives.

<sup>10</sup> Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile*, I, p. 585.

<sup>11</sup> According to Carbone, *art. cit.* 73-74, Tardini had written on 2 April 1960 to papal representatives asking them to recommend people to serve on the preparatory commissions, among whom the Pope would choose the members. Little information is now available on the recommendations received or on their influence on the choice of members.

James Griffiths, Auxiliary Bishop of New York  
 Giovanni Peruzzo, Archbishop of Peruzzo (late 1961)  
 Maurice Roy, Archbishop of Québec (early 1961)  
 Joseph Schröffer, Bishop of Eichstatt  
 John Wright, Bishop of Pittsburgh  
 Maxim Hermaniuk, Ruthenian Archbishop of Winnipeg  
 Plato Kornyljak, Ruthenian Bishop of Munich

Lucien Cerfaux, Biblical Scholar, Louvain  
 Carolo Colombo, Theologian, Milan (8/60)  
 Joseph Fenton, Theologian, Catholic University  
 Agostino Ferrari Toniolo, Social Weeks (12/60-1/61)  
 Salvatore Garofalo, Rector, Urbaniana  
 Pietro Pavan, Social Weeks, Rome (12/60-1/61)  
 Gérard Philips, Theologian, Louvain  
 Antonio Piolanti, Theologian, Lateran

Michael Schmaus, Theologian, Munich  
 Charles Journet, Theologian, Fribourg  
 Albert Michel, Theologian, Editor of *DTC*

Carlo Balic, OFM, Mariologist, Antonianum  
 Luigi Ciappi, OP, Magister Sacri Palatii  
 Edward Dhanis, SJ, Theologian, Gregorian  
 Rosaire Gagnebet, O.P., Theologian, Angelicum  
 Louis Gillon, O.P., Rector, Angelicum  
 Francis Hürth, SJ, Moral Theologian, Gregorian  
 Jaime Ramirez, O.P., Theologian, Salamanca  
 Augustin Trapé, OSA, Theologian, Collegio di S. Monica  
 Damien van den Eynde, OFM, Theologian, Antonianum (9/60)

#### *Consultors*

André Bride, Canonist, Lyons  
 Ioannes Brinktrine, Theologian, Paderborn  
 Arthur Janssen, Theologian, Louvain  
 George Jouassard, Theologian, Lyons  
 Ugo Lattanzi, Theologian, Lateran (11 or 12/60)  
 Heribert Schauf, Theologian, Aachen and Rome

Ignatius Backes, Theologian, Trier  
 Philippe Delhayé, Theologian, Lille  
 René Laurentin, Theologian, Angers

Anastasio del SS. Rosario, General of Carmelites  
 Marcel Belanger, OMI, Theologian, Ottawa  
 Domenico Bertetto, Sal., Theologian, Salesianum  
 Umberto Betti, OFM, Antonianum (late 61)  
 Giorgio Castellino, Sal., Theologian, Salesianum

Yves Congar, OP, Theologian, Strasbourg  
 Francis Dander, SJ, Theologian, Innsbruck  
 Henri de Lubac, SJ, Theologian, Lyons  
 Lorenzo di Fonzo, OFMConv, Theologian, St. Bonaventura  
 Emanuel Doronzo, OMI, Theologian, Catholic University  
 Narcisio Garcia, Claretian, Spain (1961)  
 Gustav Gundlach, SJ, Gregorian (12/60-1/61)  
 Bernard Häring, CSsR., Theologian, Alphonsianum  
 Alexander Kerrigan, OFM, Scripture, Antonianum  
 Bonaventura Kloppenburg, OFM, Theologian, Petropolis  
 Michele Labourdette, OP, Theologian, Toulouse  
 Joseph Lécuyer, HSp, Theologian, French Seminary, Rome  
 Ermenegildo Lio, OFM, Theologian, Antonianum  
 Leo Ondrak, OSB, Abbot, Lisle, IL, USA  
 Philippe de la Trinité, Carmelite, Theol. (early 1961)  
 Amedeo Rossi, Mission, Theologian, Alberoni  
 Gioacchino Salaverri, SJ, Theologian, Comillas  
 Raimondo Sigmund, Angelicum (12/60-1/61)  
 Dominic Unger, OFMCap, Theologian, Capuchin College, Washington  
 Ernest Vogt, SJ, Rector, Biblicum (early 1961)  
 Ioannes Witte, SJ, Theologian, Gregorian  
 Bartolomeo Xiberta, OCarm, Theologian, St. Albert, Rome.<sup>12</sup>

Since the composition of the PTC was to remain controversial, it is worth noting briefly a few characteristics. Among the members there were seven archbishops and six bishops; the secular clergy were represented by eleven members and nine consultors, the religious clergy by nine members and twenty-seven consultors. Nine of the members were from various Roman institutions: two each from the Gregorian, the Angelicum, and the Antonianum, and one each from the Lateran, the Urbaniana, and the Augustinian college. The other Roman figure was Ciappi, theologian of the papal household. With the exception of the two men who were on the Italian Committee for the Social Weeks, the other non-episcopal members came from universities or other institutions, two each from Belgium and Germany, one each from Italy, Spain, Switzerland, the U.S.A., and France.

Of the consultors nineteen were working in Rome, seven in France, two each in Germany, the U.S., and Spain, and one each in Austria, Canada, and Brazil.

One may note the absence of some important theologians (Hans Urs von Balthasar, M.-D. Chenu, Jean Daniélou, John Courtney Murray, Karl Rahner) and that there were no biblical

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<sup>12</sup> Caprile, I/I, pp. 210-11. Over the next eighteen months the following additions to this list were made: *members*: Carlo Colombo (theologian, Milan), Damien van den Eynde, O.F.M. (theologian, Antonianum), Pietro Pavan (vice-president of the Comitato permanente per le Settimane Sociali dei cattolici italiani), Agostino Ferrari Toniolo (secretary of the same committee), Maurice Roy, Archbishop of Quebec, Giovanni B. Peruzzo, Archbishop of Agrigento; *consultors*: Ugo Lattanzi (theologian, Lateran), Raimondo Sigmund (rector, Angelicum), Gustav Gundlach (theologian, Gregorian), Philippe de la Trinité (theologian, president of the theological faculty of the Discalced Carmelites, Rome), Narcisio Garcia (president of the Spanish Mariological Society), Umberto Betti, O.F.M. (theologian, Antonianum). Abbot Ondrak died in December 1961.

scholars from either the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome or the École biblique in Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup>

The inclusion of two men on the list of consultors aroused considerable comment: Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac. Both of them, it was well known, had been in disfavor for most of the preceding decade. De Lubac had been removed from his teaching post in Lyons just before the publication of *Humani generis*, leading to the assumption that he was one of those at whom the Encyclical had been aimed.<sup>14</sup> In 1954 Congar had been removed from Le Saulchoir and sent into various exiles in the meantime.<sup>15</sup> In 1960 both of them were still required to submit all their writings for review by Roman censors within their orders.

Not a great deal is publicly known about their appointments. Shortly after the Council was announced Congar was told that his Father General was considering proposing his name,<sup>16</sup> but he himself was of the view that he owed his appointment to the personal intervention of Pope John XXIII.<sup>17</sup> Congar's encounters with Cardinal Ottaviani during the preparatory period and at the first session of the Council leave little doubt that the initiative did not come from the Holy Office!<sup>18</sup>

Both men recognized that their appointments had symbolic significance. De Lubac saw in them Pope John's signal that "the difficulties that had arisen under the previous pontificate between Rome and the two Jesuit and Dominican orders in France were to be forgotten,"<sup>19</sup> but he told Congar at the time that someone had noted that "there are 27 members on the Commission,

<sup>13</sup> Karl Rahner was eventually to be named to the preparatory Commission for the Discipline of the Sacraments, where this major theologian, as one observer put it, stuck out among the canonists (Edouard Beauvain, "Perspectives sur le Concile," *La Revue Nouvelle*, 34 [1961], 50-65, at p. 59). Congar encountered Rahner in April 1961, who explained that despite Ottaviani's objections, "Cardinal König and two or three other bishops had insisted that he be named to a commission of the Council. He has just been named consultor to the commission on the Sacraments... He sees this as a mockery"; Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile*, I, p. 53-54.

<sup>14</sup> See Henri de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits* (Namur: Culture et vérité, 1989), pp. 61-80, 249-309.

<sup>15</sup> The occasion of this purge of the French Dominicans has been described and documented in François Leprieux, *Quand Rome condamne: Dominicains et prêtres-ouvriers* (Paris: Plon/Cerf, 1989). See also Congar's autobiographical accounts in *Christians in Dialogue*.

<sup>16</sup> On February 17, 1959, Jérôme Hamer wrote to Congar that the Father General, Michael Browne, was considering proposing Congar for a preparatory commission. On March 5, 1959, C.-J. Dumont reported the same information. Both letters are found in the Congar Archives.

<sup>17</sup> Congar reports that someone in the Vatican Secretariate of State had asked Fr. Gerlaud what people in France were thinking about the appointments of de Lubac and Congar. "Fr. Gerlaud replied: 'They think that it came personally from the Pope.' To which the Monsignor replied: 'They think rightly.'" (Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile*, I, p. 25. Congar told me the same thing in a personal interview on November 4, 1989.

<sup>18</sup> Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile*, I, pp. 37, 268, 313. Congar reported also the opinion of him maintained by Msgr. Piolanti: "He is the most scholarly theologian, but there are three heresies a page"; *ibid.*, I, p. 27). The suspicions continued long afterwards. On February 24, 1964, Msgr. Pietro Parente wrote to Don Giovanni Rossi, editor of *Rocca*: "His Eminence, the Cardinal Secretary of this Supreme Congregation, has charged me to communicate to you that it is at least imprudent to publish in *Rocca* panegyrics in favor of theologians like Fr. Congar, who, notwithstanding their genius and erudition, have, by their publications, given occasion for misunderstandings and for reservations;" the text is found in Bernhard Häring, *Fede Storia Morale: Intervista di Gianni Licheri* (Rome: Borla, 1989), p. 281.

<sup>19</sup> de Lubac, *Mémoire*, p. 118.

but 27 + 2 consultants ...", as if their appointment was a last-minute thing.<sup>20</sup> De Lubac was also concerned about the power of the Roman professors: "They always tend to want to make dogmas out of their personal theses, if not even to secure a victory over a confrère or over objections from their students by seeing that their ideas appear in an official text."<sup>21</sup> Congar had similar hesitations, both about the composition of the commission and the possibility of his having any effect:

Lubac and I are on the Commission. Undoubtedly this has cleared us in Catholic opinion, at least in official circles, for the really living and active strata have never followed Rome's repeated indications of disregard. Official circles have followed them more. This is a real point, and I don't want to diminish its importance. But after? We are a *hapax* in a text whose context seems to me to be so oriented in a conservative sense! Our being named consultants is also a way of keeping us from the effective work which will be done by the members of the Commission. I see myself placed practically *hors du coup*... I see things developing in a clearly Roman direction. Rome is making the nominations, and if it gains a good conscience or a good reputation for having opened the fan wide, the precautions have been taken, effectively taken, to make sure that it will pose no danger. Haven't Lubac and I been put there *in order to demonstrate it*?

In the Church, there's always the attractive window display, and there's the shop. The display advertises Lubac, but the shop contains Gagnebet.<sup>22</sup>

Technically, only the members of the PTC had a right to speak and to vote at meetings, while consultants could speak only when asked. (This was symbolized in the arrangement of the room where the meetings were held: the members sat around a table in the center, while the consultants sat at desks lining the wall.) But consultants could be asked to prepare *vota* on particular topics or even to draw up drafts of documents, and they were regularly invited to send in comments on draft-texts.

More important was the fact that most of the work in the PTC was to be accomplished in sub-commissions composed of members appointed by Cardinal Ottaviani and of consultants *living in Rome*. While this made good economic and organizational sense, it also meant that consultants who did not live in Rome were unable to take effective part in these crucial sub-commissions except when in Rome for plenary meetings and without any guarantee that their views would be taken very seriously when they left.<sup>23</sup>

### *The Commencement of the Work*

To begin their work, the preparatory commissions were sent on July 9, 1960, a text outlining the topics which, on the basis of the recommendations of the bishops and of the offices of the Roman Curia, the Pope wanted them to study.<sup>24</sup> The topics were distributed according to

<sup>20</sup> Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile*, I, p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile*, I, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile*, I, p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> See Levillain, *La mécanique politique*, pp. 80-85.

<sup>24</sup> *Quaestiones commissionibus praeparatoriis Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II Positae* (TPV, 1960), available now, along with Felici's letter, in *ADP*, II/I (TVP 1965), pp. 407-15.

the competencies of the various Commissions, but the Pope did not exclude the establishment of mixed subcommissions to deal with matters of concern to more than one Commission. The Commissions were also told that they were free to study other topics they believed to be of special interest for the Church. The persons and the procedures by which these questions were drawn up remain unknown today.

The topics proposed for the PTC's study occupied a single page:

1. *On the Sources of Revelation.* Following recent statements of Supreme Pontiffs, the Catholic doctrine on Sacred Scripture should be presented (i.e., the historicity of the sacred books, the submission which exegetes must give to sacred Tradition and to the ecclesiastical Magisterium); new errors on this matter should be condemned; and at the same time appropriate norms should be issued for the guidance of exegetes in interpreting Sacred Scripture in accordance with the mind of the Church.

2. *On the Catholic Church.* The Constitution on the Catholic Church issued by the First Vatican Council should be completed and perfected, especially with regard to (a) the Mystical Body of Christ, (b) the Episcopate, and (c) the Laity.

3. *The Supernatural Order, particularly in Moral Matters.* Catholic teaching should be integrally presented and the principal errors of today rejected, namely, naturalism, materialism, communism, and laicism.

4. *On Marriage.* Taking account of the most recent documents of the Supreme Pontiffs, the Catholic teaching on marriage should be explained and the pervasive errors of naturalism rejected.

5. *On Social Teaching.* A concise exposition of Catholic teaching on social matters should be issued.<sup>25</sup>

These five topics represent an astonishing concentration of the enormous number of doctrinal proposals which had been received from the worldwide consultation. Here, too, it is unknown how and by whom this list was drawn up.

What we do know is that a copy of this page was made and, under the date of July 22, 1960, mailed out to the members of the PTC.<sup>26</sup> In a letter written a day later, barely a week after the announcement of the appointments to the Commission, Ottaviani was already able to say that the PTC's topics would be dealt with in "three or four constitutions."<sup>27</sup> Five days later, in a form-letter sent to members and consultors, the Cardinal said that it was "not indeed certain but quite probable that *four schemas* are to be drawn up: 1) on Sacred Scripture and Tradition; 2) on the Church; 3) on preserving the purity of the deposit of faith especially against the fundamental errors of today; 4) on the moral order, individual and social."<sup>28</sup> Clearly, then, the organization of the work of the PTC must have already been underway, probably even before the official appointment of its members.

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<sup>25</sup> *ADP*, II/I, pp. 408-409.

<sup>26</sup> The document, with protocol number 4/60, is found in AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L 3, Folder 8.

<sup>27</sup> Ottaviani to Griffiths, July 23, 1960 (AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L3, Folder 8).

<sup>28</sup> Ottaviani to Congar, July 28, 1960.



In fact, in a letter to members written on Sept. 24, 1960, Ottaviani explained that "a prior commission was established, consisting of seven members of the Theological Commission along with two consultors to the Central Commission, to help me in addressing the preliminary work."<sup>29</sup> Seven members of this subcommission were members of the PTC: S. Tromp, A. Piolanti, S. Garofalo, L. Ciappi, M.-R. Gagnebet, F. Hürth, C. Balic; the two others were consultors to the Central Preparatory Commission, D. Staffa and P. Philippe. All of them had some relationship with the Holy Office.<sup>30</sup> When precisely this subcommission began its work is not known, but Ottaviani's July letters make it clear that they were already at work, and Betti speaks of "a general outline" of four schemas being already under preparation by July 21st.<sup>31</sup>

The only other information now available about this small committee is found in Tromp's remarks at the first meeting of the PTC in October, 1960. He explained that:

In the beginning two schemas were composed: one on the Church, the other on preserving the purity of the faith. But because the Supreme Pontiff had so insisted on the question of the Sources, which had previously been inserted in the schema on the Church, it seemed better to separate the question of the Sources from the question of the Church, because otherwise it would occupy a disproportionate space in the Schema on the Church. It also seemed better to divide the second Schema on preserving the purity of the Deposit of faith and first to deal--to use the classical distinction--with matters of faith and then with matters of morals.<sup>32</sup>

By Sept. 24th, the small subcommission had drawn up and the Vatican press had printed in a brochure four "*Schemata compendiosa*," which Ottaviani sent out to the members of the PTC in anticipation of their October meeting.<sup>33</sup> In an accompanying letter, he briefly explained why these schemas had been decided upon:

For almost all the bishops in one way or another desire that *the nature and character of the Church* be treated, along with various related problems. Second, it is suggested, indeed considered necessary, that *Sacred Scripture and Tradition* cannot be passed over in silence because of the recent controversies and errors which are also seriously troubling many bishops. Third, with regard to *dogmatic errors*, from

<sup>29</sup> Ottaviani and Tromp to members of PTC, 24 sept. 1960 (#4/60; AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, Box L3, Folder 8).

<sup>30</sup> The names of the members are given in Umberto Betti, *La dottrina del Concilio Vaticano II sulla trasmissione della rivelazione: Il capitolo II della Costituzione dommatica Dei verbum*; Spicilegium Pontificii Athenaei Antoniani, 26 (Rome, 1985), p. 22. According to the *Annuario Pontificio* for 1960, Gagnebet and Garofalo were "*qualificatori*" and the others "*consultori*" of the Holy Office.

<sup>31</sup> Betti, *La dottrina*, p. 22. In a letter to me, 11 dec. 1989, Betti speaks of this outline's being "revised in accord with remarks made at the meeting of the little commission on July 21st."

<sup>32</sup> Sessio Plenaria Commissionis: 27 X 1960, "Relatio Rev.mi Patris Tromp, S.I., Secretarii, de Quattuor Schematibus" (AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L 1, Folder 15b). The initial thought of having only two schemas must have been set aside fairly early, because by July 24th, Ottaviani's letter to Congar already spoke of the probability that there would be *four* drafts. From the fact that at the October meeting Tromp proposed that the PTC return to the idea of only two schemas, it may perhaps be concluded that he had been one of those who had earlier defended the idea.

<sup>33</sup> Ottaviani to Griffiths, September 24, 1960 (AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L 3, Folder 8). The brochure is a nine-page document, under the title "Pontificia Commissio Theologica pro Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II," with protocol number 4/60.

information reported to the Holy See from everyone everywhere, we learn especially that quite fundamental truths are being called into question and that errors are being spread everywhere with serious danger to the purity of the faith. Finally, more than a few bishops lament *false ideologies in the moral field*, both individual and social, and therefore it is hoped that the chief errors of today will be rejected and that a concise exposition of Catholic teaching on social matters will be presented.<sup>34</sup>

Having decided upon four texts, the subcommission had then drawn up their summary outlines of topics for each. In a November letter to the consultants, Tromp explained that these outline texts had been drawn up "so that the Theological Commission would have something to discuss and judge" at this first meeting. He also claimed that in them "are contained all the topics on faith and morals which, according to the proposals of the Bishops and Prelates, according to the proposals of the Catholic Universities and Roman Dicasteries, and especially according to the express desires of the Roman Pontiff, need to be treated in the upcoming Ecumenical Council."<sup>35</sup> Before the PTC ever met in plenary session, it thus seems, some basic decisions had already been made which were to guide the work of the Commission over the next year and a half.

When Ottaviani sent the information on the proposed agenda for the PTC to the members in September, he announced that they should come to the first plenary session prepared, after listening to reports on the *schemata compendiosa*, to discuss three questions: (1) whether four schemas should be prepared to deal with the material proposed, (2) whether the four titles proposed are appropriate, and (3) whether the individual points enumerated are the proper ones or some should be removed or corrected and others added, and in what order they should be arranged. If they already had important observations to make, they might submit them in writing by October 10th. To help them in their work, Ottaviani also sent them the Holy Office's *votum* prepared for the Antepreparatory Commission and a "Brief Synopsis" of the materials on faith and morals found in the bishops' *vota*.<sup>36</sup>

This brief synopsis of episcopal proposals had the following structure:

A. Basic questions

1. On God
2. On the origin of things and of man

B. On the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ

1. On the Nature of the Church
2. On the Head of the Church, i.e., on Christ
3. On the Mother of the Church, i.e., the B.V.M.
4. On the Members of the Mystical Body
5. On the Notes of the Church
6. On the Freedom the Church needs to fulfil its

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<sup>34</sup> Ottaviani to Griffiths, September 24, 1960.

<sup>35</sup> Tromp to consultants, 28 nov. 1960 (#20/60; Congar Papers, Dossier "1960").

<sup>36</sup> Ottaviani to Members, September 24, 1960. The *Votum Supremae S. Congregationis Sacti Officii* was printed as a separate brochure, while the "Synopsis eorum quae circa materiam fidei et morum in Episcoporum votis inveniuntur" was a typed five-page manuscript. Both may be found in AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L 3, Folder 8.

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C. On the Hierarchy in the Church of Christ

1. On the Church's social constitution in general
2. On the Supreme Pontiff
3. On Bishops and Presbyters
4. On Deacons
5. On Religious
6. On the Laity

D. On the Church's Apostolate

1. On preaching the Word of God and on the Magisterium
2. On the Sacraments and the Sacred Liturgy
3. On the Sacraments in general
4. On particular Sacraments

E. On Moral Topics

1. On the natural and supernatural moral Order
2. On Individual Morality
3. On Family Morality
4. On Social Morality
5. On International Morality

Conclusion: On the Profession of Faith

For each of the subsections, the summary gives the number of bishops who subscribed to the various topics. No indications of date or author are given for this text, so that it is impossible to know whether this was drawn up from a direct consultation of the materials received from the bishops or represents an oriented analysis of predetermined topics.<sup>37</sup> It represents, of course, a much fuller agenda than that supplied in the "Questions presented to the Preparatory Commissions."

By October 22nd, a summary of the responses of eleven members had been prepared.<sup>38</sup> No major criticisms of the program outlined were articulated, the members apparently restricting themselves to particular proposals, such as the expansion of the material on the Church (Hermaniuk, Scherer, Cerfaux, Fenton, Philips, Journet) and a fuller treatment of Tradition (Scherer, Cerfaux, Journet), or to the addition of a number of other items. There also were a few proposals for a different order and for different titles for the schemas.

The First Plenary Session, October 27, 1960

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<sup>37</sup> In his inventory of materials supplied for November plenary session of the PTC, Congar wrote next to his note about this Brief Synopsis: "*très insuffisant!!!*" [very insufficient]"

<sup>38</sup> "Animadversiones membrorum in Schemata," Prot. # 4/60, 22-X-1960; AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L 3, Folder 8. At the present time, it is not possible to consult the original texts of the members' observations, except, it seems, in the case of Msgr. Philips whose eleven pages of comments, "DE SCHEMATE QUATUOR CONSTITUTIONUM DOCTRINALIUM praeparato pro Concilio Vaticano II" is found in the Congar Archives, Dossier "1960".

The PTC met for its first plenary session on the morning and afternoon of October 27, 1960.<sup>39</sup> Apparently only the members were invited, and all of them were present except for Hermaniuk, Audet, Kornyljak, Schmaus, Journet and Michel. It is not known why the consultors were not invited nor even, it seems, informed about the meeting, nor why the PTC anticipated by two weeks the official opening of the Preparatory Period by Pope John XXIII on November 14.<sup>40</sup>

Since the members had already sworn the oath of secrecy before Cardinal Ottaviani the day before,<sup>41</sup> the meeting began with his inaugural address in which he described the purpose of the PTC, the role of the members, and the freedom they had to speak, but with prudence. Tromp then gave a report on the four *schemata compendiosa*. He explained that their purpose was not to give a theological synthesis or treatise, but to prepare "dogmatic Constitutions dealing with matters of faith and morals according to the demands and needs of the time." Because no one was calling them into question, some quite essential things were dealt with rather briefly, while other less essential things, which were being challenged, were dealt with at greater length. He noted also that not everything in the schemas would be treated to the same degree: "Sometimes it is enough to recall and to insist on things already firmly decided, sometimes a new presentation will be necessary."

As for the order of the materials, Tromp indicated his own view that the four schemas could be usefully reduced to two in number while retaining their basic structure and content.<sup>42</sup> The question of order then engaged the members, but such differences of opinion were expressed that Ottaviani decided to entrust the question to a special subcommission chaired by Archbishop Carpino. The nature and outcome of this discussion will be reviewed below.

The rest of the plenary meeting was devoted to reports on the four outline schemas, giving brief explanations why the schemas had been conceived as they were, with justifications drawn particularly from the proposals submitted by bishops and from the *votum* of the Holy Office.<sup>43</sup> After each of the reports Ottaviani announced the appointment of a special subcommission to prepare the final texts on the basis of the outlines.

After the reports were finished, Tromp suggested that the document on morality be divided into two texts, respectively on individual and social morality. It was then decided that since many members of the subcommissions could not reside in Rome, consultors who lived there could be made members of the subcommissions.

Several members of the Commission then offered their views on the work envisaged, but, unfortunately, the official report of the meeting does not give much information on what they

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<sup>39</sup> The primary source of information on this meeting is Tromp's "RELATIO SECRETARII," given at the opening of the second plenary session on Feb. 13, 1961; see AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L 1, Folder 26).

<sup>40</sup> Caprile observes (I/I, pp. 272-73) "that this quasi-autonomous start, before the anticipated pontifical ceremony, did not make a favorable impression on everyone." Although other preparatory commissions had held preliminary meetings to prepare their agendas, only the PTC, it seems, held so solemn a session.

<sup>41</sup> Tromp to Members, Oct. 22, 1960, (AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L 3, Folder 8); Caprile, I/I, p. 272.

<sup>42</sup> Tromp's report is found under "SESSIO PLENARIA COMMISSIONIS: 27 X 1960;" AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L 1, Folder 15b.

<sup>43</sup> These reports are found under "SESSIO PLENARIA COMMISSIONIS: 27 X 1960," in AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L 1, Folder 15b).

said.<sup>44</sup> Then Ottaviani noted that "the Commission should abstain from matters hitherto freely disputed and that obsolete, unimportant, or not widely disputed matters should not be treated, but only matters which are of faith or *fidei proxima* and opposed or questioned today."

Tromp then summarized the decisions made, which included, besides what is noted above, that on more difficult matters, the subcommissions could consult several consultors including people outside the number of official consultors; that they could elect a prefect who would consult with the Secretary; that the Secretary would have regular meetings with the prefects of the subcommissions and would also offer his personal assistance; and that, if possible, the subcommissions would have a more elaborate schema ready by the end of January.

Finally, Tromp noted that a brief discussion about preparing a new profession of faith had led to no final decision.

Fenton's Council Diary reports some tensions among members of the Commission. Piolanti and Carpino complained to him that the schemas did not cover all the topics mentioned in the Holy Office's *votum*. Fenton urged a reluctant Piolanti to become a member of the subcommission on the Church, and he was added to it in the afternoon. When Tromp announced that this subcommission should gather the next day at the Gregorian, Piolanti moved and received unanimous support for a resolution that all meetings of subcommissions be held at the Holy Office. When Tromp later persisted in a meeting at his University, Piolanti infuriated him by appealing to Ottaviani. Fenton's own judgement was that "The Pontifical Theological Commission does not belong in a university run by a religious order." Behind this quarrel probably lay the tensions between the Gregorian, where Tromp was a professor, and the Lateran, of which Piolanti was the rector.<sup>45</sup>

#### The Official Opening: November 14-15, 1960

The official opening of the Preparatory Period took place in a solemn ceremony in St. Peter's Basilica on November 14th. Pope John XXIII gave a speech in which he recalled the role of ecumenical councils in the history of the Church and briefly stated his own hopes for the Council whose preparations were now beginning.<sup>46</sup>

On the following morning, twenty consultors of the PTC met for the first time at the Holy

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<sup>44</sup> According to Tromp's report, the following made remarks: Stohr, Dubois, Griffiths, Schröffer, Carpino, Philips, Piolanti, Balic, Dhanis, and Franič. Only of Franič does he report that he spoke, "not without emotion," about Communism. In his Diary, Fenton reported: "The Archbishop of Mainz [Stohr] made a speech which was not very good. The Bishop of Eichstatt [Schröffer] read a commentary by Schmaus. The old boy agrees with me that this should not be simply a treatment of the Church as the Mystical Body. Schmaus thinks that we should start with the notion of the *populus Dei* [People of God]" (I, pp. 97-98).

<sup>45</sup> Fenton Council Diary, I, pp. 94-99. The next day Tromp made another effort to hold the subcommission meeting at the Gregorian, but was again frustrated by Piolanti and Fenton, thus, in Fenton's view, poisoning the atmosphere of the subcommission and delaying its work.

<sup>46</sup> For the speech, see Caprile, I/I, pp. 283-89. To Congar, who confesses some difficulty in understanding the address, which the Pope delivered in Italian, it seemed "*très banal*." He also remarked on the great contrast between the pompous character of the ceremony and the lives of the poor people he encountered on the back streets of Rome as he walked back to his residence; Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile*, I, pp. 29-31.

Office. The session began with each consultor's solemn swearing of the oath of secrecy which they took on their knees between two candles before Cardinal Ottaviani.<sup>47</sup> The Cardinal then explained the role of the consultors, that they could be asked to contribute *vota*, could meet privately among themselves, and could make common proposals. At meetings they could ask questions, but only for the sake of explanations. (Later, it would be explained that at plenary sessions they would not have a right to vote or to speak unless asked by name.)<sup>48</sup> Tromp then outlined the work already done and gave them the list of the members of the subcommissions who would work on preparing the schemas.

By November 30, 1960, "General Norms for the Subcommissions" had been prepared.<sup>49</sup> The first of these gave the basic goal:

The texts should not be scientific treatises, but must take into account the needs of the Church today. Obsolete matters or things in quiet possession should be omitted. Action should not be taken against individual errors which pose no threat to the faith of the Church; if things already defined need to be insisted upon, this should be done briefly. Disputable and not yet mature questions are not to be introduced.

Other more particular norms follow: If the subcommissions wish to add, remove, or rearrange materials, they should give the reasons to the whole Commission. They should take account of the materials assembled in the Antepreparatory Period and of the proposals of members and consultors. "On the more difficult questions, what has been said in more recent decisions of the Holy See should be gathered before all else." The subcommissions should be aware of what is found in the Acts of the First Vatican Council. They should make a list of the more difficult issues on which they may consult experts who are not members of the Commission, but only

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<sup>47</sup> See de Lubac, *Mémoire*, p. 118, where he speaks of his "perhaps excessive respect for the secrecy," which led him not to take detailed notes of the sessions of the PTC; see also Philippe Levillain, *La mécanique politique*, pp. 77-78. Congar describes the session in *Mon Journal du Concile*, I, pp. 33-42, including his own taking of the oath: "I did not pronounce the word '*juro*' in the formula, but I signed it on the printed sheet which was prepared and distributed for each of us. God forgive me!" "They explained the law of secrecy to us: towards everyone, including the members of other commissions unless there is a common *official* meeting. We can propose that there be such meetings. Freedom with the members and consultors of our commission. We can use secretaries and typists provided we impose the secret on them."

Earlier he had written about his own view of the secret: "There is also another thing that leaves me uneasy: all these Roman affairs demand the secret. The secret is required of me except with the members of the Commission. Now this secret seems good to me, in certain respects, useful, since the indiscretion of the press or of public opinion is catastrophic. But it is also a way to atomize and neutralize all opposition. It reduces us practically to the status of people who have relationships directly only with Rome but not among themselves: it is the practical destruction of horizontal catholicity in favor of vertical catholicity alone. And thus, on the supposition that we are consulted and have reacted: our reactions, remaining secret, are received at Rome, which can with impunity pass over them in silence and take no account of them.

"In contrast, the members of the Commission who will be working together in Rome, at least at times, will be able to talk about it among themselves. So that they're establishing a dispersed, atomized, secrecy-vowed non-Roman world and an organized Roman organ, free to express themselves;" *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>48</sup> For the role of the Consultors, see Tromp's "Relatio Secretarii" at the Feb. 13, 1961 meeting, p. 5; the "Communicandum" which Tromp sent out on Feb. 7, 1961 (AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L 1, Folder 15b).

<sup>49</sup> "Normae generales pro subcommissionibus" (AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L 1, Folder 15b).

after consulting Cardinal Ottaviani. They should be careful to distinguish between doctrinal and disciplinary matters so that they do not enter upon the competencies of other Commissions. They should proceed in two steps: first beginning special studies of the more difficult and controversial points and then beginning the composition of the text which will be gradually perfected in the course of their work. All their work should be done in Latin.

Two of the final norms returned to the question of the basic purpose:

10. Although the Theological Commission strongly urges that the mode of presentation should consist more in elucidating the truth than in condemning errors, the advice given to the members of the Preparatory Theological Commission for the First Vatican Council remains: Before all else, take care to assemble the errors of the day.

11. Generally speaking, in condemning errors it is better to condemn the falsehood itself (e.g., "idealism" or "existentialism") without mentioning the name which characterizes the false system or false ideology lest an occasion be given for disputes that would diminish or destroy the respective part of a dogmatic Constitution.

On January 28, 1961, Ottaviani and Tromp sent out to the PTC a list of the members of the five subcommissions.<sup>50</sup>

In his report to the second plenary session in February 1961, Tromp made an important comment on the relations between the PTC and the other preparatory commissions. The basic principle is that the PTC is "the only one competent in matters of faith and morals dogmatically considered, but not in disciplinary matters." As it would refrain from dealing with disciplinary questions, it expected that the other commissions would "from settling disputed dogmatic questions." Some conversations had already taken place. The Commission for the Discipline of the Clergy was told that the restoration of the diaconate was "a merely disciplinary question." With regard to concelebration, Tromp told the Liturgical Commission, the only question the PTC reserved to itself was "whether there is true concelebration if the concelebrants do not utter the words of consecration except in their own hearts." Similarly, the Commission on the Apostolate of the Laity could "presuppose any common doctrine," but disputed matters belong to the PTC.

More serious were two questions raised by the Commission for the Oriental Churches": the status of eastern patriarchates and shared worship. Both questions belonged to the PTC, but the first one was easily settled since that commission agrees with the PTC "that all supra-episcopal power is a participation in the power of the Supreme Pontiff, and so the issues are only juridical, historical, and disciplinary." Of three of the issues that the Secretariate for Christian Unity was studying—the members of the Church, bishops, and the laity—the first two "abound in theological difficulties" and so belong to the PTC.

It is appropriate that joint subcommissions be established when the same disciplinary question affects more than one commission, but they are not appropriate when the question is "merely dogmatic."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> See AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L 3, Folder 8.

<sup>51</sup> Tromp, "Relatio Secretarii," pp. 5-6 (AANY, Bishop Griffiths Papers, L 1, Folder 26). Congar reports on a conversation on this question with Tromp in November 1960: "I suggest to Fr. Tromp that for the different chapters which we have to compose we should have relationships with the Bea Secretariate. He finds this useless. For him, the Secretariate will have to be consulted only for the paragraph concerning relations with the separated Christians and, something more delicate, with the

## Work

The Commission divided itself into six sub-commissions which were each to elaborate a draft on the Church, on the Sources of Revelation, on the Deposit of Faith, on Individual Morality, on Social Morality, and on Marriage. It eventually produced nine documents

- A New Formula for the Profession of Faith
- Constitution on the Sources of Revelation (5 chapters)
- Constitution on the Moral Order (6 chapters)
- Constitution on the Defence of the Deposit of Faith (11 chapters)
- Constitution on Chastity, Virginity, Marriage, Family (6 chapters)
- Constitution on the Church (11 chapters)
- Constitution on the Blessed Virgin Mary (1 chapter)
- Constitution on the Community of Nations (5 chapters)
- Constitution on the Social Order (7 chapters).

The last two of these were not finished in time to be discussed by the Central Preparatory Commission, but they were, nevertheless, included in the documents to be presented to the Council.

## Criticisms of the PTC

At the Council itself, several criticisms were leveled at the PTC for its failure to collaborate with the other preparatory commissions. But the issue had already been raised at a meeting of the Central Preparatory Commission at which two contrasting documents on roughly the same issue were presented for review. The first came from the PTC and was entitled "On Religious Tolerance;" the second, from the Secretariat for Christian Unity, was entitled, "On Religious Freedom." After Cardinal Ottaviani had rather severely criticized the latter text, Cardinal Bea began his introduction of the text in these words:

No one should be surprised that our Secretariat has dealt with the question of religious freedom. Our Secretariate, in dealing with this question, does not at all believe that it has gone beyond the competence assigned to it by the Supreme Pontiff. It is unfortunate that the Theological Commission, as it has done with other Commissions, has also refused to collaborate with the Secretariate. A joint commission, such as the ones established by the Secretariate with other Commissions, could easily have produced a single Draft. But, since this didn't happen, both texts should be discussed.<sup>52</sup>

Cardinal Ottaviani responded very vigorously:

First of all, I have to say clearly that I do not admit that the Theological Commission must act with the other Commissions in matters pertaining to doctrine. On

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"separated communities." Still the same atomizing and separating structure. They distribute everything in *separate* chapters and they do not see that the pastoral, on the one hand, and the ecumenical, on the other, must be present as questions and preoccupations, and then as information, at every moment of the study and exposition of doctrine"; Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile*, I, p. 41.

<sup>52</sup> AD-P, II/IV, p. 688.



these matters the Theological Commission is completely independent, because they are matters of doctrine and not, as in other Commissions, mixed questions, as, for example, the Commission for Bishops must act together with the Commission for religious on questions that involves their relationships, or the Commission on priests and the Christian people with the Commission for Bishops. There may be matters in other Commissions which touch the doctrinal Commission, but they must be referred to the doctrinal Commission; and the Commission of the Secretariate for Christian Unity should have sent its draft (since it is a doctrinal question, not just a sociological one; it was said, "It is not a doctrinal question, but sociological," but it's a sociological question with a basis in doctrine); it should have sent the Draft to the Doctrinal Commission to see if it is in agreement with the Doctrinal Commission.<sup>53</sup>

This conception of its role was also stated in the PTC's response to amendments proposed by the Central Commission for the PTC's draft on the Church:

By mandate of the Supreme Pontiff, the Constitution on the Church was prepared by the Theological Commission which, in accord with the desires of the same Pontiff, alone is competent in doctrinal matters. Therefore, if other commissions have to touch upon doctrinal theological questions, they are subject to review by the Theological Commission. For the same reason, the Theological Commission did not establish so-called mixed commissions with the other commissions. For a mixed commission presupposes that both parties have competence over the same material, something which happens more easily in disciplinary matters. But if the Theological Commission cannot allow mixed commissions with the other Commissions, which were established for purposes of study, much less can it have them with secretariats whose purpose is not study. But the Theological Commission will not take it at all poorly if proposals or suggestions are offered to it by the other commissions or secretariats. Thus, for example, the chapter on the evangelical counsels was considerably changed because of advice offered by the Commission for Religious. But it is one thing to take some advice into account, and another thing to approve it. The Theological Commission has its own responsibility and must act according to St. Paul's precept, "Test all things, and keep what is good" (1 Th 5:21). Others may rightly be offended if we do not take their desires or advice seriously, but not if we do not agree on all points.<sup>54</sup>

In the same response, the PTC also defended itself against the criticism that its texts favored particular theological orientations:

The Theological Commission is composed of sixty people from different regions, rites, and theological schools, with different tendencies, not only conservative but also progressive. While some emphasize the positive aspect, others give more attention to speculative, moral, juridical, mystical, or ecumenical aspects. That is why it is difficult for the Central Commission to mention anything having to do with doctrine that was not discussed at much greater length in the Theological Commission<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 691.

<sup>54</sup> Pontificia Subcommissio Centralis de Schematibus Emendandis Praeparatoria Concilii Vaticani II, *De Emendatione Schematis Constitutionis De Ecclesia* [Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1962], p. 5).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

These texts give a very good idea of the spirit in which the PTC undertook and carried out its work.

### *Two Kinds of Theology*

The discussions within the PTC were quickly to reveal a major division between two styles of theology: the one embodied in the decisions and proposed agenda of the Holy Office and the one espoused by theologians, exegetes and canonists whose work the same Congregation had for decades been suspecting or even condemning. Here are several places in which Henri de Lubac gave, on the spot, very severe descriptions of the kind of theology espoused by the men who were determining the purpose, orientation, and style of the PTC's work.

All the essential work in the Theological Commission is done by a small group of Roman theologians. They sometimes argue among themselves, but on the basis of a common mind-set, common reflexes. They know their trade [*metier*], but not much else. You sense among them a certain indifference towards Scripture, the Fathers, the Eastern Church; a lack of interest in and of disquiet over teachings or spiritual currents today that are contrary to Christian faith. They're ignorant of them. They seem too sure of their own superiority; their habit of acting as judges does not incline them to work. It's the milieu of the Holy Office. Observations, works, suggestions from theologians coming from elsewhere (except those of some friends and spokesmen) hardly get their attention, even if they are bishops.

The result is a safe little system, ultra-intellectualistic, but without great intellectual merit. The Gospel is folded into this system, which is the constant *a priori*. Father [Edouard] Dhanis, who plays an important role, seems to want to minimize the person of Jesus Christ: he is no more than one of the *legatores divini* [divine legates]; this is how he is designated, anonymously, in the chapter on revelation. Christ the Teacher does not possess "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (this Pauline text had to be suppressed from the same chapter). All of revelation is reduced to the proclamation of some formal propositions, added to those found in the Old Testament, analogous in nature to those of the prophets and apostles. From these propositions, the Church (=the group of Roman theologians) draws new propositions in order to impose them on all. On several occasions, formulations were proposed which would make equivalent the development of Revelation down to Christ and the development of dogma within Christian revelation.

It is this little system, carried to a mad extreme [*à la manie*], that some have for twelve years wished to impose upon us as alone orthodox. Because I do not yield to it, everything I write is distorted....

Among most of the theologians assembled here, you don't feel any concern for what would be needed in order to nourish and guide the Christian people or to call the world to the Gospel. All this, they say, belongs to the "pastoral"; it's not part of "dogmatics"; it's not our business. "Pastoral" for them means practical applications and popularization... In this way they are hardening a very dangerous dichotomy, and they are subordinating the bishops to themselves. Their "dogmatics" itself seems not to be interested in the central dogmas; it refuses to recognize the Christian mystery in its profound unity; it is becoming an ideology of pulverized assertions. To watch them among themselves, in their contemptuous unconsciousness, in the agreement underlying

their disagreements, you sometimes have the impression of old children who have imprudently been entrusted with powerful means of destruction.<sup>56</sup>

One could say that, from a certain point of view, there are two kinds of theologians. The ones say, "Let's reread Scripture, St. Paul, etc.; let's examine the Tradition; let's listen to the great classical theologians; let's not forget to pay attention to the Greeks; let's not neglect history; let's place ourselves in this vast context and within it let us understand the ecclesiastical texts. And let's not forget to inform ourselves about the problems, needs and difficulties of today. Etc." The others say: "Let's reread the ecclesiastical texts of these last hundred years: encyclicals, letters, occasional discourses, //decisions taken against so-and-so, *monita* [warnings] of the Holy Office, etc.. Out of all this, without letting anything be lost and without correcting the slightest word, let's make a patch-work; let's push the thought a little further; let us give each assertion a greater value. Above all, let us not be looking at anything outside; let us not lose ourselves in new research on Scripture or the Tradition, nor *a fortiori* on recent thought, which would only make us risk relativizing the absolute we have." Only the theologian of the second sort is considered "safe" in a certain milieu.

"This has no basis in the documents," I've heard more than once. The conclusion drawn is that it's not a safe doctrine, it's a doctrine that we may set aside even if it has Scripture and Tradition behind it. Only ecclesiastical documents, especially the most recent ones, count. Of these documents, the slightest words are received as absolutes. In reply to any objection against this idea or that formulation or that one-sided phrase: *Ipsa verba desumpta sunt ex documentis; sunt in talibus litteris encyclicis; in tali oratione pontificia* [These very words were taken from the documents; they're in such-or-such an encyclical, in such-or-such a papal speech]' At that point no one has any rights except to bow down.

This is an extreme positivism in method and fundamentalism of mind..., and it risks provoking among some a reaction of scorn for the literature of the magisterium.<sup>57</sup>

Here and there, as in other chapters, certain texts of Scripture are raised up over the objections of our two chief experts in exegesis, Msgr. Cerfaux (Louvain) and Msgr. Garofalo. With their *principium proximum* [proximate principle], which consists only in papal documents of around the last hundred years, the majority of the members of the commission don't have to look to Scripture or Tradition or to instruct themselves about any science at all. I have to say also that our exegetes, in the commission and outside it, confine themselves to philological and critical work; they're pure specialists, and they don't know how to validate doctrines that come from the Bible nor how to clarify their spirit. As for our theologians, if you propose a more or less scientific consideration, they reply as Tromp did: "*Debemus procedere theologice*" [We have to proceed theologically], which does not prevent them, for example, when dealing with human origins, to want to decide the degree of certainty or probability of scientific transformism.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Carnets du Concile*, ed. Loïc Figoureux (Paris: du Cerf, 2007) I, 34-35.

<sup>57</sup> De Lubac, *Carnets du Concile*, I, 53-54.

<sup>58</sup> De Lubac, *Carnets du Concile*, I, 74-75.

[After an intervention of Fr. Hürth, moral theologian at the Gregorian} A good example of this terribly decadent theology of a certain number of Roman theologians, especially from the Gregorian, who were all-powerful under Pius XII and whose influence still weighs upon the preparatory commission. A court-theology. You feel with them a nostalgia for the time when they could have the pope pronounce so many speeches in which they had put their little ideas.<sup>59</sup>

A certain “theology” makes a dangerous opposition between safe truths and dangerous truths. This is something other than the necessary pedagogy for the intellectual life as for the spiritual life. In the end it amounts to opposing truth and safety.

As one sees it functioning in Rome, theology is more and more a speciality that grows ever more complex until it coagulates. It does not need renewing; it does not transform the old concept of the “queen of the sciences”; it abandons it—without letting go having lost any of its claim to lord it over the sciences, that is, to set them aside in proud and systematic ignorance.

In this sort of theology, the questions that concern the government of the Church are hypertrophic. They’re of primary interest; they absorb the energies of a battalion of canonists whose main occupation seems to be to urge further the juridical formulations secreted by their predecessors. Some of them, considered skilled theologians, do not seem to have reflected for a single instant of their existence on the mystery of faith; such a reflection would be incompatible with their work as they understand it.

As for those who devote themselves to other parts of theology, their preoccupations all concern the needs (or claimed needs) of school instruction at a primary level. Their “rationalism” is sometimes criticized; it’s a great word, a noble word, to designate their verbalism. But it’s only too true that their elucubrations are as void of spiritual meaning as they are of reference to the realities of history.

When they are asked to give some attention to such or such a point in the human sciences, they proudly reply that they are proceeding doctrinally, theologically, that they are making absolute pronouncements, that they don’t need to think historically, or sociologically, or psychologically; they are unwilling to descend into the realm of the relative.— All well and good. That would have some value if they were trying to deepen the mystery of faith. But in fact, ever concerned to increase the field of “truths” to be imposed on the faithful, they are dealing with problems that would demand serious scientific knowledge and more human methods. Without realizing it, in place of Dogma they are laying down a theology that usurps its place and that cannot satisfy either the scholar or the believer.

“Natural theology” often interests them more than the revealed mystery. To them it seems to offer a terrain more favorable to their rationalizing method as also to provide a “safer” basis for the governing of minds. In that respect, they’re like their brother canonists. It is quite characteristic of their manner that in the chapter on God of a draft on the deposit of faith, they haven’t made the slightest allusion to God’s revelation in Christ,

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<sup>59</sup> De Lubac, *Carnets du Concile*, I, 82.

and that, deciding finally to make a slight concession to the complaints addressed to them, they mention only, as the end of this supernatural revelation, the “service” of God. Thus do they think to facilitate submission to the heads of the Church, which they think they control by their doctrinal consultations.

On the other hand, they are, each in his own way, good people, and they may be virtuous. Even in Rome their number is not great, but they prevail. Without even meaning to (at least not always) they frighten. A whole system of habits, of rites, of language, makes a frank discussion impossible. They’re at home; they understand one another even when they disagree. They are unaware of what they are lacking. Their self-sufficiency is extreme, and their good faith is not at issue. This is a very disturbing situation. What will the Council be?<sup>60</sup>

The Romans often contented themselves with vague or elliptical phrases, such as *"Periculose errant qui..."*, the precise references of which were often unknown to others. Caprile reports that Pope John noted the sometimes too harsh and negative tone of some of its texts, particularly one in which for a page and a half only errors are listed: *"Sunt qui..., sunt qui..., sunt qui..."*<sup>61</sup> (Caprile, I/II, p. 279n). Caprile takes this to refer to the first chapter of the PTC's draft "On the Moral Order." And indeed in this text, the sixth paragraph contains in a single long Latin sentence the condemnation of no fewer than eight errors. The paragraph reads:

This holy Synod rejoices in the great number of the Church's children who observe the moral order and the law of the Gospel, with all their heart adhering to God and to his only-begotten Son. It mourns over the many who, more out of weakness than depravity, although often not without grave fault, transgress against God's law. But especially does it tremble when it thinks about the errors being spread all over the world, errors by which the way to perdition is being broadened and the gate of salvation being closed. There are those who by their denial of a personal God deprive the natural law of its foundation. There are those who by their denial of the mission of Christ reject the law of the Gospel. There are those who explain the moral only by reference to human principles, thus despoiling it of its genuine and final obligation and sanction. There are those who deny that the intellect can really reach certainty in moral matters. There are those who claim that even in fundamental matters the moral law is subject to alterations and development. There are those who teach that the human person is of such loftiness that it is not subject to any law imposed from without. There are those who maintain that the moral law cannot be imposed except by some convention or by the collectivity or by "the whole," whether this is considered to be the majority of the citizens, the State, the people, the race, the nation, a faction, or a social class. And there are those who consider the moral law to arise out of bare, crude, and brute power and actively carry out this ideology of theirs. All of these contradict one another except for the fact that they close the door of the Kingdom of heaven and do not allow others to enter (see Mt. 23:13). But while sneaking error is multi-colored and many-headed, the truth which will set us free (see Jn 8:32), is one as Christ is one. But as once the Church's Founder said of himself, so also today the Church must proclaim before the world: "I have come in the name of my Father, and you have not accepted me; if someone else comes in his own name, him you

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<sup>60</sup> De Lubac, *Carnets du Concile*, I, 85-87 [March 12, 1962].

<sup>61</sup> Caprile, I/II, p. 279n.

will accept" (Jn 5:43). (ADP, II/II [Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1967], p. 30)

The disagreements in the PTC anticipated many of the most important battles of the Council itself:

- (1) In *Mariology*: whether to have a separate document; the title "Mediatix."
- (2) On *Church-State relationships*: the religious duties of states, and their right to limit non-Catholic religions.
- (3) On the *Magisterium*: the relationship between the magisterium and the Holy Spirit and also the rest of the Church; the role of the pope vis-a-vis the bishops.
- (4) On *the role of the Curia*: its relationship to the Pope and the Holy Office's authority.
- (5) On *marriage and the family*: on whether over-population could possibly be a serious question, which became a debate on the relationship between sociology and theology: "Theological truth owes nothing to sociology."
- (6) On *procedures*: a text was passed with only ten members voting for it, because no other text was offered in its place!<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> For all this, see Levillain, pp. 85-98.)