

THE SECRETARIATE FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY AND THE PREPARATION OF VATICAN II

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In this brief paper I wish to bring together, to summarize, and on a few points to supplement materials treated at greater length in my chapter in the first volume of the *History of Vatican II*.¹ I will be principally concerned with the work of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU) in preparing texts to foster the ecumenical dimension which from the beginning Pope John XXIII had included among the purposes of the Second Vatican Council.²

The Establishment of the SPCU

Within two weeks of Pope John XXIII's announcement of the Council, calls began to be made for an institution which could promote its ecumenical finality. Yves Congar noted that while the Congregation for the Oriental Church dealt with the Orthodox and the Holy Office had a general supervisory role over the orthodoxy of ecumenical endeavors, the Roman Curia did not have "any complete organism capable of following the immense problem of the reunion of Christians." Private initiatives had been taken in full accordance with the Church's rules, but something more official was now necessary.³

At the same time, C.-J. Dumont, director of the ecumenical study-center "Istina," proposed the establishment of "institutions with sufficient authority and competence to engage in permanent conversations and negotiations with the other Christian communions even after the Council is officially closed." During the Council these institutions could maintain contacts with whatever communions agreed to take part; and even before the Council began, they could by such contacts help to address the sensitive question of possible invitations to other communions and to outline realistic goals for the Council itself.⁴

Dumont also prepared two memoranda on the question for the Oriental Congregation. He recommended that public contacts with the Orthodox Churches be pursued within the Oriental Congregation and that the Propaganda Congregation institute a similar section for public dialogue

¹ *History of Vatican II: Volume I: Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II, Toward a New Era in Catholicism*, ed. G. Alberigo and J.A. Komonchak (Maryknoll: Orbis / Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 167-356.

² For the SPCU's part in securing the participation of non-Catholic observers at the Council, see *History of Vatican II*, I, 318-26.

³ "Les Conciles dans la vie de l'Église," *ICI*, 90 (February 2, 1959), 17-26, at p. 25; reprinted in his *Sainte Église: Etudes et approches ecclésiologiques* (Paris: du Cerf, 1963) 303-25; late in 1959, Congar repeated the proposal in "Le Concile, l'Église et... 'les autres,'" *Lumière et Vie*, 45 (November-December 1959) 69-92, at 84-87.

⁴ C.-J. Dumont, "Le prochain Concile et l'unité chrétienne," *Vers l'Unité Chrétienne* 12 (1959) 1-5; reprinted as "Concile d'union ou Concile d'unité," in *Informations Catholiques Internationales* 93 (1 April 1959) 1-2, 29-31; an English translation was quickly published in *Unitas* 11 (1959) 37-45.

with Protestants and with the World Council of Churches. The two bodies should cooperate closely, however, and even constitute "a single organism--or mixed commission".⁵

In the spring of 1959, Dumont and O. Rousseau were approached by Patriarch Maximos IV for suggestions he might send to the Holy See on how "to address the questions being discussed with the Orthodox."⁶ On May 23, 1959, Maximos IV proposed the establishment of a Roman congregation or commission for promoting unity.⁷

The need for such a Vatican office became painfully evident in the "Rhodes incident" in the summer of 1959. A meeting to discuss conversations between Catholic and Greek Orthodox theologians, planned earlier, was postponed until the occasion of the meeting of the central committee of the World Council of Churches held in Rhodes, 19-28 August. Rumors soon spread that the Catholic participants were making use of the WCC meeting to attempt to isolate the Orthodox from the World Council. Attempts to explain the real nature of the encounter were undercut by a transmission on Vatican Radio which described it as promoting "a resumption, on a larger and more representative basis than in the past, of conversations between the separated Church of the East and Rome." The leadership of the WCC was incensed at what it saw as evidence of a "*divide et impera*" policy on the part of Rome, and it took several months before the air was cleared.

If the Rhodes incident soured relations between Catholic ecumenists and the WCC just as they were beginning to move to a new phase, it also threatened to provoke a backlash in Rome. From Dumont's correspondence it appears that all of the Curial Congregations, particularly the Oriental, were reminded "that it is not their role to establish the Holy See's policy and that anything that affected dissidents, even the Orientals, was the exclusive competence of the Holy Office." Dumont feared that Rome would now be tempted to return to the practical attitude displayed in Pius XI's "*Mortalium animos*," which would be quite contrary to the dispositions of John XXIII.

The Rhodes incident was in the minds of those who appear to have been chiefly responsible for the establishment of the SPCU, Archbishop Lorenz Jaeger of Paderborn and Fr. Augustin Bea. In November 1959 Jaeger used the incident to press home to Bea the need for creating "an office of experts with a press-office attached." Bea replied by agreeing that a commission "*pro motione oecumenica*" was needed and that he would speak about it with Pope John. Bea must have been encouraged by his conversation with the Pope, for on 1 January 1959, only two weeks after having received the red hat, Cardinal Bea wrote to a German theologian, Edward Stakemaier, asking that the Johann Adam Möhler Institut in Paderborn prepare a draft proposing the establishment of a Roman commission for the ecumenical movement.⁸ Bea reviewed the proposal, which eventually

⁵ The texts can be found in the typescript of Dumont's autobiography, a copy of which is at the Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, Bologna.

⁶ Dumont to Congar, 16 April 1959.

⁷ Schmidt, *Agostino Bea: Il cardinale dell'unità* (Rome: Città Nuova, 1987) 347.

⁸ See Heinrich Bacht, "Kardinal Bea, Wegbereiter der Einheit," *Catholica* 35 (1981) 173-88; Thomas F. Stransky, "The Foundation of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity," in *Vatican II Revisited by Those Who Were There*, ed. Alberic Stacpoole (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1986) 62-87; Stjepan Schmidt, "Giovanni XXIII e il Segretariato per l'unione dei cristiani," *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 8 (1987) 95-117.

was presented by Archbishop Jaeger, and forwarded it with his own support to Pope John XXIII on March 11, 1960.

Two days later, Bea was notified that the Pope had accepted the proposal in principle and wished Bea to begin drafting statutes for the new commission. Shortly after, the Pope decided to call the new office a "Secretariat" rather than a "Commission," in order to give it greater room to move in a rather new area.⁹ In the *motu proprio*, "*Superno Dei nutu*," 5 June 1960, with which Pope John established the preparatory bodies for Vatican II, he assigned the SPCU the role of helping other Christians "to follow the work of the council and to find more easily the path by which they may arrive at the unity for which Jesus prayed so ardently."

Membership

The personnel of the SPCU were drawn from a wide variety of geographical areas, including in particular regions where ecumenical relations were especially important (North America, England, Holland, Germany, and Switzerland), and represented all the major Catholic ecumenical organizations. The Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions supplied not only J. Willebrands, appointed to serve as the secretary, but several others also: J. Höfer, C.-J. Dumont, J. Hamer, F. Thijssen, F. Davis, and C. Boyer, the last of these being also the head of *Unitas*, the closest thing to a Vatican ecumenical office. L. Jaeger, H. Volk, E. Stakemaier, F. Charrière, and J. Feiner represented the German and Swiss areas. North America was represented by five men: G. Weigel, G. Tavard, G. Baum, J. Cunningham, and E. Hanahoe. P. Dumont represented the ecumenical monastery of Chevetogne.

Of curial representation, the most important figures were C. Boyer and M. Maccarone, both associated with the Congregation for Seminaries and Universities. Conspicuously absent from the SPCU was any representative of the Holy Office, although Maccarone, Boyer and Hanahoe, a close friend of Fenton, tended to defend the Roman idea that the purpose of ecumenical conversations was the return of the erring brethren to the one true Church.

Competence

The role of the SPCU in the preparation of Vatican II was a matter of some controversy down to the eve of the Council. The vague description given in *Superno Dei nutu* was not clarified in the "*Quaestiones*" approved by the Pope on 2 July, which did not include a section on the new organism. This imprecision enabled Fr. Sebastien Tromp, secretary of the Preparatory Theological Commission (PTC), later to maintain to Willebrands that the SPCU was only "an information-office,"¹⁰ a view apparently shared by Cardinal Ottaviani, president of the PTC.

Cardinal Bea and the members of the SPCU had grander ideas, however. In Bea's recommendation of the establishment of the SPCU, he included among its conciliar roles the study of the hopes and fears others were expressing about the Council and the preparation of appropriate

⁹Schmidt, *Agostino Bea*, 348; Stransky, "The Foundation," 66; see Giovanni XXIII, *Lettere 1958-1963*, ed. L. Capovilla (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1978) 495-96.

¹⁰ Schmidt, *Agostino Bea*, 362n

responses.¹¹ From the men who would soon be appointed members and consultors of the SPCU, Bea also received recommendations that its activities not be limited to providing information to non-Catholics but include also bringing their views to the attention of the preparatory commissions.¹²

It is not known whether the statutes of the SPCU, prepared by Bea himself and still unpublished today, contained a broader agenda than that outlined publicly by the Pope. But by July the SPCU had prepared a first draft of a program of work that included the study of doctrinal, liturgical, and spiritual questions as well as concrete actions to be taken to promote Christian unity.¹³ In mid-September Bea and Willebrands took advantage of the meeting of the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions at Gazzada to discuss problems and procedures with several of the members and consultors. At the beginning of October a program of work was sent out to the members and consultors for comments. Many of the responses listed theological and practical questions the SPCU should address, preparing, if not schemata, then *vota* that would keep the CPp informed about the ecumenical dimensions of their work.¹⁴

At the first plenary session of the SPCU, a work-agenda was distributed and discussed. It outlined six major topics:

- I. The Secretariate itself, its purpose, the roles of participants, relations with the Oriental Commission;
- II. Catholic Ecumenism: principles and spirit, relation to conversion-work, contemporary tasks;
- III. Ecclesiology: hierarchical structure: episcopacy, papacy, and diaconate; the laity; the position of heretics and schismatics in the Church;
- IV. Theology:
 - 1) the Word of God, its sovereignty, Bible and Tradition, its vital power;
 - 2) liturgical applications: eucharistic celebration, communion under both kinds, use of vernacular, preaching;
 - 3) religious freedom and tolerance;
 - 3) mixed marriages;
- V. Practical questions: non-catholic observers, information, prayers for unity, the formula of abjuration, a proposed "Catholic-Evangelical Church", Protestant missions in Catholic lands, an ecumenical directory;
- VI. The Jewish question: relation between the two Testaments, reform of Christian education with regard to Jews, liturgical texts, a feast of "the just of the Old Testament."¹⁵

¹¹ See Schmidt, *Agostino Bea*, 345.

¹² See, for example, C.-J. Dumont, "Le 'motu proprio' du 5 juin 1960," *Vers l'unité chrétienne* (mai-juin 1960) 25, and Dumont's "Note sur le 'Conseil' ou 'Secrétariat' pour les rapports avec les non-catholiques institué par le Motu Proprio du 5 juin 1960," sent to Bea on 8 July 1960; Dumont Papers.

¹³ Schmidt, *Agostino Bea*, 363, who suggests that the program relied heavily on the report submitted by the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions."

¹⁴ Many of the responses received can be found in the Stransky papers, St. Paul's College, Washington.

¹⁵ A copy of the program is found in the Stransky papers.

Cardinal Bea's opening address at the first meeting began with the purposes of the SPCU. Equating the Secretariat to the preparatory commissions, he appealed to the general papal norms to argue that the SPCU also was "to study and investigate the matters selected by Us, taking into account the proposals of the bishops and the advice and proposals of the dicasteries of the Roman Curia. The Secretariat, therefore," he concluded, "is not a mere 'information-office,' but also is to prepare materials that concern the unity of Christians and that should therefore be proposed to the Council."¹⁶

As for areas of competence, Bea told the SPCU that, in response to many requests, Pope John had assigned questions concerning the Jews to the SPCU.¹⁷ Relations with the Orthodox churches, on the other hand, would remain the competency of the commission for Oriental Churches, with the expectation, however, of close collaboration. This division of ecumenical labors was significant during most of the preparatory period with the SPCU initially concentrating on relations with Protestants and only becoming concerned with the Orthodox when the commission for the Oriental Churches proved to be rather lethargic. Bea also noted that many of the questions the SPCU would discuss were concerns also of other preparatory commissions, particularly the PTC and the commissions on Bishops and on the Liturgy. "With all these Commissions the matters will be treated in such a way that, after we have discussed them in our meetings, we will transmit our proposals to them to be discussed by them or even, if need be, by a mixed Commission." At this early point, then, it does not seem that the SPCU intended to prepare schemata of its own to be proposed to the Council, but rather to prepare texts that would ensure that ecumenical concerns were taken into consideration by the other preparatory commissions. It would only be when this effort seemed to be fruitless that the SPCU began to prepare texts on its own authority.

As a result of the ensuing discussion it was decided to distribute the work among ten subcommissions which would study:

1. The relation of baptized non-Catholics to the Church (membership);
2. The Church's hierarchical structure;
3. The conversion of individuals and of communities; the restoration of the diaconate;
4. The priesthood of all believers and the condition of lay people in the Church; religious liberty and toleration.
5. The "Word of God" in the Church;
6. Liturgical questions: the vernacular; communion under both kinds;

¹⁶ Bea, "Sermo introductorius Em.mi Cardinalis Praesidis," 14 November 1960; Stransky papers. Schmidt, Willebrands, and Carbone all agree that this judgment of Bea must have been authorized by Pope John himself; see Schmidt, *Agostino Bea*, 364-65; Johannes Willebrands, "Il Cardinal Agostino Bea: Il suo contributo al movimento ecumenico, alla libertà religiosa e all'instaurazione di nuove relazioni con il popolo ebraico," in *Atti del Simposio Card. Agostino Bea (Roma. 16-19 dicembre 1981)* (Rome: Pontificia Università Laterana, 1983) 7; V. Carbone, "Gli schemi preparati del Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano Secondo," *Monitor Ecclesiasticus* 96 (1971) 84.

¹⁷ For the background of this decision, see Schmidt, *Agostino Bea*, 351-56; J.M. Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions: Introduction and Commentary," *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (New York, 1969) III, 1-17.

7. Mixed marriages;
8. Octave of Prayers for Christian Unity: a new formula;
9. The central ecumenical problem according to today's orientation of the World Council at Geneva and especially according to that Council's concept of unity;
10. Questions concerning the Jews.¹⁸

Method

The SPCU eventually established fifteen subcommissions,¹⁹ composed of four or five men and headed by a bishop who served as *relator* [reporter]. Within each subcommission a text was prepared by the bishop or by a theologian and then sent to the other members for comments. These subcommissions do not seem to have met often, communicating instead mostly by letter. These texts were then discussed, revised and approved at plenary sessions.

The method the subcommissions generally followed was the one the SPCU recommended to the Council itself in an epilogue to its document, *De structura hierarchica Ecclesiae* [On the Church's hierarchical structure]. Evoking a Pauline phrase frequently on the lips of Pope John, it inquired *Quomodo veritas in Concilio futuro facienda sit in caritate* [At the future Council, how is the truth to be done in charity?]. It found its model in the procedures of the Council of Trent, at which Catholic scholars first gathered accurate information about the views of the Reformers, examined and evaluated these in the light of Scripture and tradition, and finally offered a presentation of Catholic doctrine that would respond to the questions raised by the separated brethren. This method the SPCU recommended to the Fathers of Vatican II: they would not present the truth abstractly or independently of contemporary questions but from the beginning would study the questions and views of others in order to be able to respond to them from the fullness of Catholic faith.²⁰ The studies undertaken by the SPCU's subcommissions and the *vota* they prepared would represent an introduction to ecumenical conversation necessary for the majority of the members of the preparatory commissions, and not just the Romans, who had had very little experience of such encounters before.

The Texts of the SPCU

The principal means by which the SPCU sought to have an effect upon the preparatory work was the communication to other commissions of various texts that outlined the ecumenical implications of themes being considered. In this section we will review several of these texts, leaving

¹⁸ Stransky, "The Foundation of the SPCU," 82.

¹⁹ This number was reached by the differentiation of subcommissions for the consideration of the questions of religious freedom and of Scripture and Tradition and by the addition of subcommissions to discuss the permanence of the Secretariat, the preparation of an ecumenical directory, and the invitation of non-Catholics to the Council.

²⁰ UC, "De structura hierarchica Ecclesiae" (May 1961) 47 (A-Stransky).

to the next section a consideration of the major points at which it found itself in direct confrontation with the orientations of the PTC.²¹

The subcommission on the laity produced a text *De sacerdotio fidelium* [On the priesthood of believers].²² It was intended to respond to the Protestant criticism that the Catholic Church regarded the laity simply as passive subjects and neglected the doctrine of the common priesthood. The text studied the NT doctrine of the priesthood of the faithful and then offered eighteen *vota* about how this doctrine should be taught, particularly by showing that it is an authentic and not merely metaphorical priesthood, complementary to the ordained priesthood, and to be exercised by every Christian in the everyday course of his life. Although this text was sent to the PTC and to the Commission on the Laity, it does not appear to have had great influence on the texts they prepared.

The subcommission on liturgical questions offered a response to Protestant criticisms of the reduced role of Scripture in Catholic worship and of the passive role of the laity. This text asked the bishops to recognize the centrality of the eucharist over private devotions, to approve the restoration of communion under both kinds, concelebration, and *communicatio in sacris* [shared worship], and to halt the practice of rebaptizing Christian converts to Catholicism. But the text also included a response to the exaltation of Latin that had recently resulted in the issuance of *Veterum sapientia*; the SPCU's *votum* asked "that the Council, when it presents the principles of liturgical renewal, carefully refrain from any expressions which might suggest that the Catholic liturgy is identified with the Latin Roman liturgy and that the Latin language is a necessary bond of Catholic unity." In May this text was sent to the Liturgical Commission, with which this subcommission had already been collaborating and a majority of whose members were grateful for this proposal.²³

The subcommission *De matrimoniis mixtis* [On mixed marriages] at first proposed a text that would have asked for major changes in the Church's legislation with regard to marriages of Catholics to non-Catholic Christians: the restoration of the more lenient pre-Code attitude so that mixed marriages without proper form would not be considered invalid; the removal of the requirement that the Catholic party seek the conversion of the non-Catholic party; and the permission of some kind of religious ceremony. Opposition to these proposals was strong, however, both in the subcommission and in the plenary sessions, and the text was softened before it was approved in November 1961 and sent to the Commission on Sacraments.²⁴ The latter's text on the subject recommended certain changes in the Code for the sake of ecumenical sensitivity, but not enough for Bea, who at a meeting of the Central Commission again urged the SPCU's position.

Another subcommission in which major disagreements appeared was the one appointed to reconsider a new orientation and formula for the Octave of Prayers for Christian Unity. E. Hanahoe, an American member of the Atonement Friars, the community founded by Paul Wattson, the

²¹ See also M. Velati, "La proposta ecumenica del Segretariato per l'unità dei cristiani," in *Verso il Concilio Vaticano II (1960-1962): Passaggi e problemi della preparazione conciliare*, ed. G. Alberigo and A. Melloni (Genoa: Marietti, 1993) 273-350.

²² See Velati, "La proposta ecumenica," 293-96.

²³ See Velati, "La proposta ecumenica," 296-300.

²⁴ See Velati, "La proposta ecumenica," 309-14.

originator of the Octave, resisted efforts to alter its orientation away from prayers for the return of other Christians to the Catholic Church.²⁵ When the effort stalled, the subcommission was reoriented so that it would prepare a text simply on the general question of prayer for Christian unity. Here too objections were posed, particularly by Hanahoe and Boyer, whose model remained that of the return of the separated brethren and who found the proposed text in conflict with the chapter on ecumenism that was being prepared in the PTC's schema *De Ecclesia*. A text was eventually completed and approved in April 1962. This was sent directly to the Central Commission, where it was discussed in June.²⁶

In the subcommission *De conversionibus individualibus et de conversione communitatum* [On individual conversions and on the conversion of communities], similar disagreements appeared. The main problem was the relationship between ecumenism and conversion, with Hanahoe tending to reduce the first to a search for the second. An effort was undertaken to elaborate a theology of ecumenism that would be sent to the PTC, but this was abandoned and work began instead on a more pastoral text that could be submitted directly to the Central Commission at its last meeting. This text, *De oecumenismo catholico* [On Catholic ecumenism], was subtitled a "pastoral decree" in order to appear as a complement to the dogmatic approach followed in the PTC's chapter on the subject in its schema *De Ecclesia* and perhaps also to avoid appearing to infringe upon the PTC's competency. But besides giving practical guidance on how to engage in ecumenical activity, the SPCU's text also contained important doctrinal sections on the unity and uniqueness of the Church, on the salvific value of elements of the Church found outside the Catholic Church, and on ecumenism as an exercise of the Church's catholicity.

These views contrasted rather markedly with the positions adopted in the PTC's *De Ecclesia*, whose chapter on ecumenism, while acknowledging the existence of links between the Catholic Church and other Christian individuals and communities, emphasized their return as the goal of ecumenical activity, stressed the legitimacy of working for individual conversions, and devoted its longest section to a set of restrictive norms on *communicatio in sacris*. The two texts were brought together to the Central Commission in June 1962, where the majority of members urged that they be joined together, along with the text *De unitate Ecclesiae* [On the unity of the Church] of the commission on the Oriental Churches, into a single schema.²⁷ The PTC refused to undertake the collaboration needed, however, and of the three texts, the SPCU's was the only one not printed for submission to the Council.²⁸

Finally, a subcommission of the SPCU took up the question of the Church's relationship with the Jewish people.²⁹ In the elaboration of the text the chief roles were played by G. Baum and J. Oesterreicher, both converts from Judaism. The latter prepared a rather lengthy draft which repeated

²⁵ See *One Fold: Essays and documents to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Chair of Unity Octave 1908-1958*, ed. E. F. Hanahoe and T. F. Cranny (Garrison, NY 1959).

²⁶ *ADP* II/4 813-16, 822-34.

²⁷ *ADP* II/4 785-812.

²⁸ See Velati, "La proposta ecumenica," 320-26.

²⁹ See Velati, "La proposta ecumenica," 331-38; Oesterreicher, "The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, 17-46.

themes contained in an earlier text by Baum but placed them in a biblical and theological context and ended with several concrete proposals urging the Council to acknowledge the Church's roots in Judaism, to oppose the idea that the Jewish people are the object of a divine curse, to proclaim that the reconciliation of Jews and Christians is part of the Church's eschatological hope, and to condemn anti-semitism. To this first draft, prepared and discussed at the April 1961 meeting, it was later proposed to add a *votum* that Catholics show a more friendly and humble attitude towards the new state of Israel.

But the discussion of the text at the August meeting already revealed the difficulties that would await a text on the Jews. Besides the objections that could be foreseen from Arab countries, there was also, as Oesterreicher notes, the fact that many Catholic bishops and theologians were simply not prepared for it, the question of the mystery of Israel in the economy of salvation being still "the Cinderella of theology."³⁰ By the November 1961 meeting, fears began to be expressed that the text might represent an intervention in the complex political problems of the Middle East and that it rested on disputable interpretations of the Scriptures. It was decided to prepare a much briefer statement for presentation to the Council, perhaps in the schema *De libertate religiosa* [On religious freedom], with another text on the links between Israel and Church to be prepared for the PTC's text *De Ecclesia*. A single-page text was then prepared and approved. On 2 February 1962 Pope John told Bea that the text on the Jews could be submitted directly to the Central Commission, "without the intervention of any other Commission."³¹

This brief *Decretum de Judaeis* [Decree on the Jews] was scheduled to be discussed at the last meeting of the Central Commission in June 1962. But on the last day of that session, Cicognani announced that after consultation with Bea, the Secretariat of State had decided to withdraw the text from the Central's agenda and not to submit it to the Council. After implying that the decree did not fit the purposes of the Council and asking why this particular decree was being offered--"If we speak about the Jews, why not also about Muslims?"--Cicognani alluded to the real reasons for the decision:

Everyone knows the bitter disputes today between Jews and Arabs; suspicion of politics easily arise: that we are favoring one side or the other; false rumors about this are already spreading.³²

The rumors to which Cicognani referred were aroused by the announcement that Dr. Chaim Wardi, an official in the state of Israel's Ministry of Religious Affairs, would attend the Council as a representative of the World Jewish Congress. This action, which appears to have surprised the Vatican, led Arab governments to protest at the special treatment that seemed to be accorded to Jews

³⁰ Oesterreicher, *art. cit.* 39, and, for illustrations, see 32-36.

³¹ "Prolusio Em.mi Card. Bea," *Sessio generalis VI* (6-10 martii 1962), 1 (A-Stransky).

³² *ADP II/4* 22-23.

and, it seemed, to Israel. In these circumstances, Cicognani decided to follow the ways of political prudence and ordered the text withdrawn.³³

Relations with the Preparatory Theological Commission

During the whole of the preparatory period, the PTC insisted on its supreme and exclusive competence in any matters that concerned doctrine. For this reason it consistently refused invitations to form mixed commissions with other preparatory bodies while demanding that the latter submit any material other than the merely practical for its review. It was particularly inclined to this policy with regard to the SPCU which the PTC's leaders did not believe was authorized to prepare schemata for the Council's consideration. Since the Secretariat did not share this reductive view of its own competency, the ground was prepared for some major controversy.³⁴

Two areas where clashes occurred concerned issues of primary significance for Pope John's Council and with great ecumenical consequence: the Scriptures and the Church. The question of the Bible arose in two distinct ways: the interpretation of the Scriptures and the relation between Scripture and Tradition. On the first, the PTC's schema *De fontibus revelationis* [On the sources of revelation] adopted a position which reflected apprehensions widespread in the Church over recent Catholic biblical scholarship. These had recently been given fierce and unnuanced expression in the very aggressive article in which A. Romeo criticized even the Pontifical Biblical Institute for its endorsement of methods he believed were threatening the faith. The PTC's text was largely devoted to warnings against contemporary biblical hermeneutics and to insistence on the prerogatives of magisterial authority. When this text reached the Central Commission, Cardinal Bea made a vigorous defence of Catholic biblical scholars; but subsequent revisions of the PTC's text did not greatly alter its tone or content.

In the view of the SPCU, the PTC's text also ignored the vital role of the Scriptures in the Church. To compensate, the SPCU prepared its own "Pastoral Schema on the Word of God" in which it outlined a theology of the Word of God not simply as a set of doctrines found in Scripture and Tradition but as a living source of life for the Church through the reading of the Bible, in the liturgy, and in preaching and catechesis. This material, without notable effect during the preparatory period, would later be used in the final chapter of *Dei verbum*.

On the question of relations between Scripture and Tradition, the PTC's text stated that these represent two sources, both of which are necessary since the Scriptures do not contain all the truths revealed by God. This position had become the common interpretation of the Council of Trent and as such was taken to represent the necessary response of Catholics to the Protestant *sola scriptura* principle. Recent work by Catholic scholars, however, had argued that Trent did not intend to settle the issue; and a considerable controversy was in full course during the preparatory period. Within

³³ See Oesterreicher, *art. cit.*, 41-42; Schmidt, *Agostino Bea*, 400-401; J. Willebrands, "Cardinal Bea's Attitude to Relations with the Jews: Unpublished Details," *Simposio Card. Agostino Bea*, 79-83, who reports that the same circumstances led the Secretariat of State to ask Bea to suppress an article about to appear in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, "Are the Jews a deicide people and 'cursed by God?'" Bea agreed but then allowed the article to appear, over the name of L. Hertling, in *Stimmen der Zeit* 88 (1961-62) 16-25.

³⁴ On what follows, see the detailed discussion in *History of Vatican II*, I, 272-300.

the SPCU a subcommission was formed which prepared a text that asked that the question of the material sufficiency of the Scriptures not be settled by the Council on the grounds that legitimate differences existed among Catholic theologians on the matter. Surprisingly, Cardinal Bea did not raise this issue when the PTC's text came before the Central Commission, perhaps because the controversy over biblical interpretation occupied his interest. But the SPCU's *votum* on the question was ready for use when this question erupted at the first session of the Council. And in the end *Dei verbum* left the question open.

Differences between the SPCU and the PTC were also acute with regard to ecclesiological issues. The PTC's schema *De Ecclesia* and various *vota* of the SPCU were in open disagreement (a) on the basic image of the Church to be presented by the Council, with the PTC concentrating on visible and institutional elements and the SPCU on the Church's relationship to Christ and on dimensions of mystery; (b) on membership in the Church, on which the SPCU followed Cardinal Bea's proposal of a distinction between being a member of the Mystical Body in virtue of baptism and being a Roman Catholic, while the PTC insisted on Pius XII's identification of the Mystical Body with the Catholic Church; (c) on episcopacy and primacy, where the PTC's text stressed that bishops derive their jurisdictional authority from papal delegation while the SPCU argued that this question too should be left open; and (d) on the question of religious freedom on which the PTC urged a restatement of the classical modern view that in principle states have an obligation to favor the one true religion and may at most simply tolerate other religions, while the SPCU wished to go beyond the notion of mere toleration and to urge the right to religious freedom for all.

On all these ecclesiological matters some informal communications took place between the two bodies, but without much effect. Frustrated by this lack of cooperation, Bea obtained from Pope John permission to send his Secretariat's statement on religious freedom directly to the Central Commission without prior reference to the PTC. This may explain the dramatic confrontation which took place at the Central's last meeting when Ottaviani openly stated that the SPCU had no authority to prepare such a text, all such questions, because they imply doctrinal issues, being subject to the PTC. Bea vigorously repudiated this position, and the Central Commission itself ordered that a mixed commission be appointed to reconcile the two texts on religious freedom and tolerance. Once again, however, and largely because of the intransigence of the PTC, this mixed commission never met and the PTC undertook on its own a revision of its chapter on the question. At the first session of the Council, this latter text was included in the schema *De Ecclesia*; the SPCU's views would only enter the Council's deliberations at the second session.

Conclusion

During the preparatory period, the SPCU represented an institutional counterweight to the other preparatory commissions and in particular to the PTC. In establishing it, Pope John left its organization and purpose deliberately vague in order to give it room to operate and find its own way. With the Pope's apparent support at every point, it went far beyond the modest role he had assigned to it in *Superno Dei nutu*. To it he entrusted particularly sensitive issues, such as that of the Jews. He supported it in its determination to be more than an "information bureau." At a certain point he authorized it to prepare schemata which would go directly to the Central Commission without having to be reviewed by the PTC. When the commission for the Oriental Churches proved incapable of

advancing discussions with the Orthodox, Pope John also assigned this task to the SPCU. Finally, the Pope's own stated ecumenical interests, reflected in his meetings with the heads of other Christian bodies, was well known and served as a brake upon criticisms of the SPCU, not least of all from the PTC.

It cannot be said that during the preparatory period the SPCU greatly influenced the texts elaborated for the Council's consideration. Its position on mixed marriages was not reflected in the text on the question prepared by the Commission on the Sacraments. It was unable to cooperate with the Commission on the Oriental Churches whose text on ecumenism totally ignored questions raised by Protestants. Above all, it had little effect on the texts of the PTC on revelation and on the Church. All these relations with other preparatory bodies illustrate what was called the "original sin" of the preparation of Vatican II: nearly air-tight divisions of labor and the lack of effective general coordination.

On the other hand, in the *vota* it prepared, the SPCU had available, for use both in the conciliar discussions and in the eventual revision of the official prepared texts, a series of arguments that would ensure that the ecumenical dimension would be an integral part of the Council. One may think here of the questions of liturgical languages, the relation between Scripture and Tradition, the role of the Word of God in the life of the Church, the historicity of the Scriptures, a theology of the Church as mystery and as People of God, membership in the Church, the laity, the relation between episcopacy and primacy, religious freedom, the Jews. Because the SPCU had done its work well, the Council Fathers were to have resources available with which to effect, particularly during the Council's first period, the revolution in perspective and purpose that defined the Council's great drama and historical accomplishment. In the end the Second Vatican Council, both as an event and in its texts, far more closely represented the vision of the SPCU than that of any of the other preparatory bodies.