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THE CATHOLIC CONCEPT OF REVELATION
SINCE VATICAN II AND ITS IMPACT ON THE
CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THE 'OTHER'

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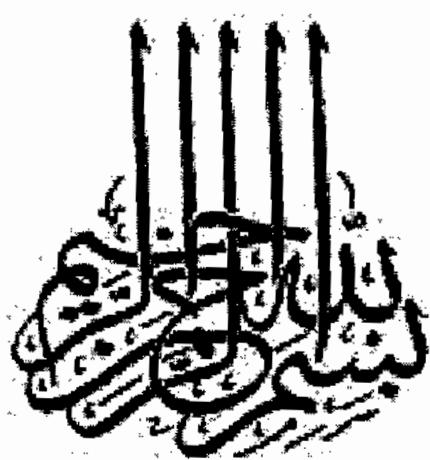
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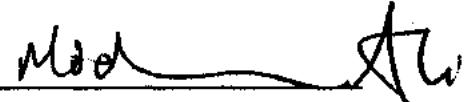
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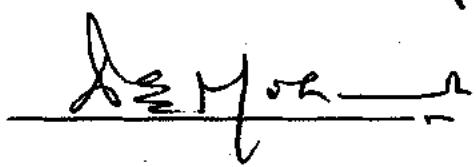
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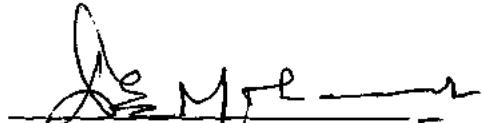
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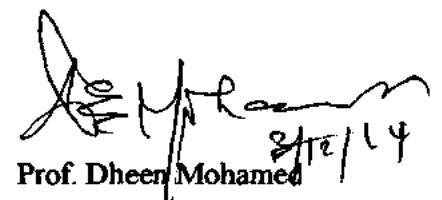
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خلاصة البحث

مفهوم الوحي عند الكاثوليك بعد مجمع فاتيكان الثاني وأثرها على نظرية المسبحين لغيرهم

إن الوحي في المسيحية وبالأخص لدى الكاثوليك منهم لمن المفاهيم الأساسية التي يبني عليها هيكلة الديانة عموماً. ومنذ القرون الأولى من تاريخ المسيحية كان الكاثوليك يعتقدون السيد المسيح هو أساس الوحي لكون الإله الأب قد عرف نفسه وكشف عن كنه من خلال المسيح فأصبح معرفة المسيح هو معرفة الرب وكأن الوحي عبارة عن تعاليم يكشف عن كنه الأب كما يكشف عن كنه الابن المسيح. أما معرفة المسيح فكان يتوقف على أمرين أساسين هما الكتاب المقدس وتقاليد الكنيسة. استمرت فكرة الوحي في هذا الإطار عبر القرون دون أن يبحث المسبحون - إلا نادراً - في الربط بين الكتاب المقدس والتقاليد الكنسية والدور الذي يلعبه الروح القدس في حلقي هذا الربط. تنبهت الكنيسة الكاثوليكية لأهمية شرح هذا الربط قبل بجمع فاتيكان الثاني كما تنبهت لأهمية صياغة فكرة الوحي في إطار المتطلبات الفلسفية والعقدية للعصر الحديث. وبناء عليه فإن تصور المسيحية للوحي لم يعد مجرد تعاليم غيرنا عن حقائق عن الإله أو المسيح وإنما أصبحت لها ثيولوجيا خاصة يلعب في صياغته وتحديد أبعاده الإنسان دوراً مهما. وبما أن المسيحية تدعى أنها مبنية على وحي المي وأنها تستند عقائدها من نوع وحيها فرأيت من المناسب أن أتعرف على هذا التصور الجديد للوحي ثم أرصد للتأثير الذي تركه على نظرية الكاثوليك لغيرهم.

يتكون هذا من مقدمة يحدد بيان المشكلة ومحصلة فصول وملحق وقائمة الكتب. يعرض الفصل الأول نظرة شاملة وموحدة عن الأوضاع الاجتماعية واللاهوتية والفكريّة في العالم الكاثوليكي قبل انعقاد الجمع، والأعمال التحضيرية له والقضايا التي نوقشت أثناء الجمع في فترات مختلفة. الفصل الثاني سرد تاريخي موجز لمفهوم الوحي كما يفهمها العالم الكاثوليكي قبل الجمع، وإعداد بيان (كلمة الله) وشرح موجز للبيان. يحاول الفصل الثالث مناقشة قضية الوحي ومكوناته المختلفة، ولعمل أهلهما العلاقة المتبادلة بين الكتاب المقدس والتقاليد ودور الروح القدس في تفسيرها. يحوم الفصل الرابع حول وجهة النظر الكاثوليكية من الأديان غير المسيحية في منظور تاريخي ثم يدرس بعض الوثائق الفاتيكانية والبعض التي صدرت من بعدها كما يستعين بعض البيانات البابوية لإيضاح موقف الكاثوليك تجاه الأديان الأخرى. ويستكشف الفصل الأخير عن أثر تصور الكاثوليك للوحي على موقفهم تجاه "الآخر".

يتهمي الباحث إلى أن نظرية الكاثوليك لغيرهم يتغير حسب تغير تصورهم للوحي فمن المسائل المهمة التي لم تعالج في مجمع

فاتيكان الثاني بل ظل الكاثوليك متذمدين فيها هو تحديد إلزامية ما يقرره الهيئة العليا في الكاثوليكية (Magisterium) وهل ما تقرره هذه الهيئة وهي من باب تقاليد كنسية أم لا. فحسب تراود الكاثوليك في هذه القضية يتراود فهمهم لأمور أخرى منها تصورهم لغير المسيحيين فأحياناً يُؤكّدون الخلاص لأصحاب الأديان الأخرى بينما في حين آخر يرجمون فهقراً ومحضرون الخلاص لأنفسهم دون غيرهم. يؤكد البحث أيضاً أن من الأمور التي سوف تساعد قضية العوار بين الكاثوليك والأديان الأخرى هو عدم التدخل في قضية الخلاص في الأديان الأخرى.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of revelation largely forms the backbone of almost all the major religions of the world. Many a religion would perhaps lose any meaning should this concept be tampered with or underrated. As far as the Semitic religions are concerned, their concept of revelation is quite elaborately and systematically discussed. The general notion regarding Hinduism, Buddhism and some other Far Eastern religions is that they are exceptions to the rule. This notion however, is born out of an arrogant Semitic attitude towards the non-Semitic religions. It would therefore, be unfair, even wrong, to restrict revelation to a certain mode or pattern known only to the Semitic religions. The Qur'ān for instance says:

"And it is not given to any human that Allah should speak to him unless (it be) by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or (that) He sends a messenger to reveal what He will by His leave." (42:51).

On a very similar note, al-Bīrūnī quotes the following extract in his *India* from a long discussion - on the mode of communication between God and man; a Hindu master is answering his disciple:

It is he who spoke to Brahman and to others of the first beings in different ways. On the one he bestowed a book; for the other he opened a door, a means of communication with him; a third one he inspired so that he obtained by cogitation what God bestowed upon him.¹

Revelation, literally is the 'the making known of something which was a secret or hidden'. In religious terms with slight possible variations, it is 'the disclosure of divine or sacred reality or purpose to man'. This is as far as world religions agree. Henceforth, each religion has established a whole set of disciplines to outline as clearly as it could the fundamentals of its concept of revelation.

Much the same is true for Christianity. Christianity is a religion steeped in history with the largest following among world religions. Perhaps, one of the secrets behind its success especially in the later part of its history is its adaptability to a kaleidoscope of cultures and norms added to the almost idealistic standards of morality, devotion and dedication and the disarming selflessness of its missionaries.

Revelation in Christianity was couched in three entities from the very beginning, namely, Christ, the Sacred Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church, the last two being

¹ See Edward C. Sachau, *Al-Beruni's India* being an English rendering of Bairūnī's *Tahqīq mā li al-Hind* (London: Kegan Paul, 1910), vol. 1, p. 28.

subordinate and explanatory of the first in whom revelation reached its culmination. This was the traditional and the Catholic view of revelation in the Christian world. However, it was not until the Council of Trent², between 1545-1563, that the Christians felt the need to review their concept of revelation. The reason was quite straightforward. For many centuries people were satisfied with the general principle of the divine authorship of the sacred books, with the human author as God's instrument, and the supposition that this was not incompatible with the personality of the human author. However, two issues worthy of mention did come under discussion and they were settled very early in the Christian history. One was the divine and human nature of Christ and the other was the canon of the Bible. As for the first, it was the Gnostics³ who first denied the full humanity of Jesus Christ and refused to acknowledge the validity of the entire Old and New Testaments. The reason for the rejection of Jesus' humanity was based upon the idea that 'matter' was necessarily filthy. They also rejected the authority of the Church and its tradition. Then in the fourth century A.D., the Christian world had to come to grips with the Alexandrian priest Arius who sent waves of shock in the Christian world of his time. He taught that the primary characteristic of God was to be unbegotten. He reasoned that if both Father and the Son are said to be unbegotten, then it must be said that two separate gods exist. Such a teaching was contrary to monotheism. Therefore only the Father is unbegotten and the son was created by the Father. But at the same time he recognized that the son of god possessed a dignity superior to human dignity. The Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., the first of its kind was primarily convened to counter this claim of Arius.

The second issue was the canon of the Bible. The New Testament as we see it today comprising of twenty-seven books was not accepted in this form until the fourth century. Towards the end of the second century, a man called Montanus claimed to be the promised Paraclete whom Jesus had promised would come. He also claimed to have a new revelation for men. The church was faced with a big problem indeed. It solved it by holding that revelation had come to an end. All the sacred books that had been

² The Council of Trent, the 19th ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church, was held at Trent in northern Italy between 1545 and 1563. It marked a major turning point in the efforts of the Catholic Church to respond to the challenge of the Protestant Reformation and formed a key part of the Counter-Reformation.

³ The term Gnostics is derived from the ordinary Greek word for knowledge (*gnosis*). It is a generic term used primarily to refer to theosophical adaptations of Christianity propagated by a dozen or more rival sects which broke with the early church between 80-150 A.D. These sects claimed to possess a special 'knowledge' which transcended the faith of the Church.

written were complete and there would be no more revelations. This did not mean that the Holy Spirit did not have any revealing power any more but only that in the first days, the Holy Spirit had enabled men to write the sacred books of the Christian religion; in the later days the Holy Spirit enabled men to understand, interpret and apply what had been written. But what was the qualification for accepting one class of writing as revelation and not the other⁴. The church worked out an answer for this as well. *The Apostolic Criterion*. If an apostle had written it, it was worthy of being revelation otherwise not. To cut a long story short, it was in the year 367 A.D. that St. Athanasius' word was accepted and the New Testament got its present collection of works. The next many centuries for Christianity would be those of relative calm and quiet.

But events took a rude turn when, after the Protestant movement got underway with the 95 point thesis of Martin Luther, the Church (literally the Tradition) found itself facing the danger of being sidelined and revelation left to prop on two legs i.e. the Christ and the Scriptures. Although, the Catholics didn't leave a stone unturned to hinder the progress of this movement, it spread like a bush fire consuming the whole of Europe. The former Protestants championed the cause of the infallibility of the Bible and its absolute authority. They outrightly declared that every word of the Bible was inspired and thus the whole of it was infallible. Luther had categorically said:

there is no other testimony on earth to Christian truth than the Holy Scripture.⁵

In short, the Protestant movement made 'bibliolatry' its main theme from early 16th to the 18th century. Throughout this period 'apart from the Quakers, the doctrine of unerring literal inspiration was almost everywhere held in the strictest form'. This opened the doors to a detailed even critical study of the Bible – such that the Bible had never witnessed before. And none too soon, the study of the Bible turned from a devout faithful enterprise to its scathing sarcasm with the advent of the discipline of Biblical Criticism. The results were earth-shaking for Christendom. The Holy Book carried mistakes of all sorts. So it could not be revelation. John Wesley rightly laid down the principle:

... if there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of truth.⁶

⁴ See William Barclay, *Introducing the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p.60.

⁵ See H.D. McDonald, *Theories of Revelation: A Historical Study 1860-1960* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., n.d.), p.345.

⁶ See *Ibid*, p.197.

But surely, Christianity had a revelation. Hadn't that been the Christian lore for the past seventeen or eighteen centuries! The time was ripe for another shift and the shift came none too soon. The 19th century saw revelation dawn squarely upon the person of Jesus Christ alone as far as the Protestants were concerned, and the Scriptures became a book of history.

It had been clear from the very beginning they contented, that God's scheme had been to reveal Himself in His 'only begotten Son' to salvage humanity from the curse of the Original Sin. The Epistles to the Hebrews attributed to Paul thus began:

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (Hebrews: 1-2)

If circumstances had proved the Bible to be fallacious, it did not mean that revelation had been done away with. The whole bible revolved around the person of Christ. The words of the bible were of divine origin but in human language. The writers had been inspired by the Holy Spirit in their writings. But that does not mean that they were infallible. Anyway, the important thing was that they were all serving the same purpose and that was to inform of Christ. Hardly any time had passed when the issue of the historical existence of Christ came into question. It is all too well known that the Renaissance, Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution had thrown the western religious community as well as the common man into a very new paradigm. Religious beliefs and the retinue of things that go with it were not only questioned but also scoffed at with sneering sarcasm.

As the quest for the Historical Jesus picked momentum, Christian scholars, both Protestants and Catholics, braced themselves for a very new situation. What if Christ himself was found to be of questionable identity? Then Christianity would have no revelation to speak of let alone base itself upon. That would also make Christianity a heathen religion. No religion could possibly think of a worse nightmare.

Although Christianity had gained some breathing space in reasserting Christ to be the real revelation thus denying any external authority given to the bible by the Church, more trouble was to come. And that was the question of the seat of authority in Christianity.

R.F. Horton gave a lucid presentation of the whole problem during an Oxford Conference in which Congregationalists dealt with the subject. He asked:

What are we Congregationalists to present as our authority? Certainly, neither an infallible Church nor an infallible Bible... Yet to rest on the idea of the self-authenticating significance of truth is not satisfactory, since this involves further question, What is truth and how are we to distinguish it from error? It is not enough, either, to state that our authority is Christ *qua* Christ. The answer must be Christ is the authority because He is the Truth. Christ must be; but why? And how? To these inquiries no answer is given.⁷

In the same conference, Nathaniel Micklem wrote along the same lines:

In religion as a whole, there is no infallible authority except Christ Himself.⁸

Here Christianity was faced with the doubly difficult task of expounding how Christ could possibly be the seat of authority when some Christians themselves ascertain that no verifiable information of the existence of Christ was possible except through the Bible itself which had already lost its significance. The search for the Historical Christ was very much on and making little headway in clearing the debris of evidence mounting against those who believed in the existence of Christ. On the other hand, scientific discoveries and archeological findings continued to drive home the message that religion was becoming redundant.

Prior to the mentioned changes, authority had vested with the church and the bible, with all Christians rallying around them through their periods of happiness and consternation alike. Things had changed and were changing fast. In a state of understandable panic, the Church had thrown its trump card which was mercilessly trampled upon. Christians were left to make one last ditch effort to save Christianity. It was left to Schleiermacher to come up with a solution to this predicament. And he came with one which, if not now, shall certainly prove to be the last nail in the coffin. Revelation was officially pronounced to be subjective. It was supposed to be understood as the "collective religious consciousness" of the whole Christian era.

The foundation of faith was changed from that of dogmatic inspiration to that of current experience. Theology was placed at the mercy of psychology...⁹

All this while the Catholic Church had played the role of the silent yet uneasy spectator extremely perturbed at the sorry state of affairs Christianity was getting itself to. A few years later, the First Vatican Council – the 20th ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church which started in December 1869 and was attended by 800 church leaders – was summoned by Pope Pius IX to obtain confirmation of the position he had

⁷ See *Ibid.*, p.298.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.78.

taken in his *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) condemning a wide range of positions associated with rationalism, liberalism and materialism.

One of the most challenging issues for the Church was how the Church viewed the 'other' namely the non-Catholics and the non-Christians. The *Syllabus of Errors* said it all; under the heading Indifferentism, Latitudinarianism, the Pope clearly pronounced the following beliefs to be wrong and heretical:

15. Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which, guided by the light of reason, he shall consider true.—Allocution "Maxima quidem," June 9, 1862; Damnatio "Multiplices inter," June 10, 1851.
16. Man may, in the observance of any religion whatever, find the way of eternal salvation, and arrive at eternal salvation.—Encyclical "Qui pluribus," Nov. 9, 1846.
17. Good hope at least is to be entertained of the eternal salvation of all those who are not at all in the true Church of Christ.—Encyclical "Quanto conficiamur," Aug. 10, 1863, etc.
18. Protestantism is nothing more than another form of the same true Christian religion, in which form it is given to please God equally as in the Catholic Church.—Encyclical "Noscitis," Dec. 8, 1849.¹⁰

Naturally enough, encyclicals of this tone and tenor gave birth to liberal tendencies and reactions from within the Catholic Church. Among the leading men were people like Yves Congar and Karl Rahner who looked to integrate modern human experience with Christian truth, as well as others such as Joseph Ratzinger and Henri de Lubac who looked to what they saw as a more "accurate" understanding of scripture and the early Church Fathers as a source of "renewal".

At the same time the world's bishops faced tremendous challenges driven by political, social, economic and technical change. Many of these bishops sought changes in church structure and practice to "better" address those challenges, changes they thought were long overdue. The First Vatican Council had only deliberated on the role of the Papacy while examination of pastoral and dogmatic issues remained to be solved.

Pope John XXIII gave notice of his intention to convene a Council less than three months after his election in 1959 to discuss these very issues. When asked why the Council was needed, he opened a window and reportedly said "I want to throw open the windows of the Church so that we can see out and the people can see in."

¹⁰ See Papal Encyclicals Online, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9syll.htm>, accessed January 21, 2014.

THE PROBLEM

Very high in the priority list of Vatican II was the issue of revelation. The reason being that the liberal tendencies of the past one century or so had given birth to modernist attitudes which out-rightly challenged the authority of the Bible and the Church. By the 1940's this attitude was evident even in the writings of the Pope. To quote just an example, Pope Pius XII published an encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*¹¹ (By the Divine Inspiration of the Spirit) in 1943 sanctioning freedom for an open study of the Bible thus ostensibly endorsing the discipline of Biblical Criticism, an idea which was most vehemently suppressed during the suzerainty of Popes Pius IX (1846-1878), Leo XIII (1878-1903) and Pius X (1903-1914).

Vatican II is more often than not termed a watershed in the doctrinal history of Christianity. Traditionally held doctrines regarding the Church, the Liturgy, the Catholic executive hierarchy and to a lesser extent Divine Revelation were either changed or reinterpreted to give way to 'fresher and newer ones'. As mentioned earlier the doctrine of Divine Revelation was one of the most important issues which came under discussion during the Vatican II. It was named *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution On Divine Revelation) and promulgated by Pope Paul VI on November 18, 1965. In this Constitution, the Council reiterated its traditional stance on revelation:

7. In His gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what He had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations. Therefore Christ the Lord in whom the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion (see Cor. 1:20; 3:13; 4:6), commissioned the Apostles... The commission was fulfilled, too, by those Apostles and apostolic men who under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit committed the message of salvation to writing.

But in order to keep the Gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the Apostles left bishops as their successors, "handing over" to them "the authority to teach in their own place." This sacred tradition, therefore, and Sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testaments are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything, until she is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face (see 1 John 3:2).¹²

¹¹ Ibid., <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius12/PIUS12DIVIN.HTM>, accessed on January 21, 2014.

¹² See Dogmatic Constitution On Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, accessed in April 2006.

Thus Christ was the culmination of revelation which manifests itself in two forms: the Sacred Scripture and the Sacred Tradition. The relation between the Sacred Scripture and the Sacred Tradition was also defined:

9. Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.¹³

Having thus far explained the connection that exists between the two, i.e. the sacred scripture and the sacred tradition, the Church further elaborated upon its role in being the sole interpreter of both:

But, since Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted in the sacred spirit in which it was written, no less serious attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture if the meaning of the sacred texts is to be correctly worked out. The living tradition of the whole Church must be taken into account along with the harmony which exists between elements of the faith...For all of what has been said about the way of interpreting Scripture is subject finally to the judgment of the Church, which carries out the divine commission and ministry of guarding and interpreting the word of God.¹⁴

If this is taken to be the standpoint of Catholicism from Vatican II onwards, what was celebrated as new and refreshing in the whole idea of revelation in Vatican II? How smooth is the relation between Scripture and Tradition or are there problems in their correlation? How has this new understanding of revelation influenced upon the way the Catholic Church views the 'others'? Why did the Vatican which was censuring all religions, including many non-Catholic sects for so many centuries decide to open its 'windows' to the outside world? How instrumental was revelation in bringing about this change or attitude? And on what grounds did the Vatican open the doors of salvation to other religions by declaring in the Dogmatic Constitution On The Church *Lumen Gentium* that:

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

16. Finally, those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the people of God. In the first place we must recall the people to whom the testament and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh. On account of their fathers this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues; But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place amongst these there are the Mohamedans, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind. Nor is God far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and all things, and as Saviour wills that all men be saved. Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life.¹⁵

How have Christians, Catholics in particular, reacted to this change of attitude to the 'other'? These and many such questions form the basis for this work.

¹⁵ See Dogmatic Constitution On Divine Revelation, *Lumen Gentium*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, accessed in April 2006.

CHAPTER ONE

VATICAN II: BACKGROUND, PROCLAMATION, PREPARATION AND ISSUES

BACKGROUND

As word spread that Pope Pius XII had breathed his last on October 09, 1958, the Catholics, though emotionally shattered and heart-broken, could take solace in the fact that the Pope had departed leaving the catholic world impossibly entrenched on the impregnable rock of Peter. This Pope who is rightly termed as one of the stronger popes of the twentieth century had seen the catholic world through the terribly trying times of World War II as under his guidance, the Church had braced itself to get even with Communism which was spreading like wild fire.¹

Catholicism had started flourishing. Seminaries and monasteries were brimming with people. Most of the deviant movements had been delivered a scathing blow thanks to the papal encyclical *Humani Generis*. It was a time, as Thomas Rausch would put it, when:

Catholic theology, if not creative, was very orthodox; there was almost no dissent, no public disagreement. Catholics knew who they were; they were proud of their Church and had a clear sense of their own identity.²

However, this is how a casual observer would see things. One would not have to dig too deep to get the other side of the picture, which unfortunately was not as bright as our 'casual observer' would have liked to portray. And this is where we would like to start i.e., delving a little deeper than the 'casual observer' to understand the conditions preceding the convocation of the Second Vatican Council, the main theological issues being raised and the social and political atmosphere prevalent in the western Christian world so that we may put Vatican II in perspective.

¹ The Pope saw in Communism one of the greatest threat to the Church, more particularly so, because in the post war era, it had swept into Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary where Roman Catholics had been in majority. On July 01, 1949, he issued a sweeping excommunication of all Roman Catholics who were participating in communist activities like participation in communist parties or circulating and reading publications supporting Communism. For a good treatment of Pope Pius' XII life and pontificate see Oscar Halecki in collaboration with James F. Murray, Jr., *Eugenio Pacelli: Pope of Peace* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Young, 1951). For a Protestant appraisal of the Pope see John R. McKnight, *The Papacy: A New Appraisal* (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1952).

² See Thomas P. Rausch, *Catholicism at the Dawn of the Third Millennium* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), p.1.

THE THEOLOGICAL SCENARIO

The immediate problem that one is faced with however, when trying to put a certain event in perspective is 'where to start?'. In our case, it would seem plausible to start where the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) left off for two reasons:

Vatican I was never closed. It had to be abandoned because of the Franco-Prussian war which broke out on July 19, 1870, just one day after the decree of the infallibility of the Pope was passed under controversial circumstances.

It depicted a mind-set, loosely, that of ultramontanism³, which would dictate Catholic responses to various theological, social and political changes and which would carry well into the 20th century, ultimately resulting in the summoning of the Second Vatican Council.

This mind-set was not an overnight creation. It had set in, as a result of events prior to the 19th century in the form of movements like Deism, Rationalism, *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment) and finally the French Revolution which left the Catholic Church with much soul-searching to do. Most of these movements were directly or indirectly doing great damage to traditional perspectives of Christianity which unfortunately, was beginning to be portrayed as superstitious and intolerant. Relics and indulgences, miracles and 'superstitious devotions' and to top it all the well known axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* (No Salvation outside the Church)⁴ were just too much for that age. If one could do away with the ignorance and superstition (not to mention the moral laxity which had infiltrated some Christian personalities and institutions and which the witty and vitriolic Voltaire so candidly and graphically ridicules in his *Candide* and other works) so entrenched in the church and be more rational and tolerant, how much the better for the church. Last but not the least, the French Revolution had virtually left the Catholic church gaping for breath and space. The great estates that the church had owned for several centuries and the power and supremacy it had enjoyed over the

³ Literally the term means "beyond the mountains" depicting the countries to the south of Northern Europe—England, France and Germany. It was used in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries to emphasize almost absolute papal authority and strong centralization tendencies in the Church in matters related to doctrine and ecclesiastical government. The term was also applied to those persons and trends that were against the undue interference of 'liberal' movements and tendencies such as Gallicanism, Jansenism and later on secularism. See M. O'Callaghan, "Ultramontanism", in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Rev. William J. McDonald (et al.) (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), vol.14, p.380.

⁴ This axiom is supposed to have been posited for the first time by St. Cyprian and by the Council of Florence in 1442. See Jacques Dupuis *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), chapter 3.

western world were wrenched away from it. Philip Hughes has captured the whole scene in a few lines. He writes:

...by 1790, outside the States of the Church and the new United States of America, there was not a single country in the world where the Catholic religion was free to live fully its own life, and not a single Catholic country where there seemed any prospect but of further enslavement and gradual emasculation.⁵

In the face of these grave dangers, it was almost natural for the Catholic Church to cocoon itself within the confines of its Medieval doctrines and lash out at all deviances, whether theological or political. A clear depiction of this state of the church can be seen in the encyclical letter *Quanta Cura*, promulgated on December 08, 1864 in which Pope Pius IX reviewed some of the errors of his time on the relationship between the Church and the State, stressed on the divine origin of its authority and its total independence of the temporal powers of the state.

Others have revived the evil and often condemned errors of the Reformers. Acting with extraordinary boldness they dare to submit to the judgment of civil authority the supreme authority of the Church and of this apostolic See—an authority which was received from Christ our Lord. And they deny the Church and this See any rights in matters belonging to the external world...Nor can we be silent about the arrogant claim of those who [...] maintain: 'It is possible, without sinning and without at all departing from the profession of the Catholic faith, to refuse assent and obedience to those decisions and decrees of the apostolic See whose declared object is the general good of the Church and its rights and discipline, provided only that such decisions do not touch upon dogmas of faith or morals.' ...⁶

As if that was not enough for one day, he issued on the same day the *Syllabus of Condemned Errors* which was even more severe and though welcomed by 'hardliners', left many 'soft' Catholics biting their nails. The full title of the document was *A Syllabus Containing the Most Important Errors of our Time Which Have Been Condemned by our Holy Father Pius IX in Allocutions, at Consistories, in Encyclicals and Other Apostolic Letters*. The complete list of 80 errors was divided into ten sections and mainly drawn from previous statements of the Pope. What is noteworthy however, is that the Pope did not sign the *Syllabus*.⁷ It was simply attached to the Encyclical *Quanta Cura* along with a letter from Secretary of State. It would give any reader an

⁵ See Philip Hughes, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947 [The Image Books Edition, 1954]), p.219.

⁶ J. Neuner, S.J. and J. Dupuis, S.J., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, edited by Jacques Dupuis (New York: Alba House, 1998), pp.288-289.

⁷ Although Pius IX (popularly known as Pio Nono), whose original name was Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti (reigned 1846-78) is known to be the author of these two 'harsh' documents, his biographical sketch shows him to be a great reformer and a 'liberal' pope. For an excellent study see G. Martina, *Pio Nono* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1974-91) in 3 volumes.

idea of the hostility raging between the Catholic and non-Catholic camps and the 'hardline' stance that was taken by both the sides on issues which in the modern world would hardly be worthy of consideration. What is quite baffling about the whole affair is the fact that within a year of passing this encyclical, the Pope summoned the 20th general council of the Catholic Church, once again to remedy the problems of his times, which undoubtedly would centre upon a rejection of 'liberal' tendencies lock, stock and barrel. Genial though the Pope was, Ultramontanists made him look like a puppet in their hands, something that became evident during the course of the First Vatican Council.

FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL⁸

The First Vatican Council was the 20th general council of the Catholic Church. It was opened on Dec. 08, 1869 and stood suspended on Sept 01, 1870. About 800 cardinals, patriarchs, bishops and religious officials participated in it. It witnessed 4 solemn public sessions and 89 general congregations. Two doctrinal constitutions were promulgated; *Dei Filius* (April 24, 1870) which dealt with faith, reason and their mutual relationship and *Pastor Aeternus* (July 18, 1870) defining the infallibility and jurisdictional primacy of the Pope.

The commissions that were set up to determine the issues to be discussed in the Council were overwhelmingly lead by Italians, most of whom, to the utter dismay of non-Italian German, French, English and Austrian bishops, were 'hardliner' Ultramontanists. The initial sessions were related to the formulation of the decree *Dei Filius*; an 'assertion of the rationality of faith and the uniqueness of the Christian revelation' but soon the debate shifted to the document on Church. Cardinal Manning⁹ and others persuaded the Pope to schedule the debate on papal infallibility earlier which he did. From the start of the debate, the Council was torn between the infallibilist majority who were said to be 'setting up their idol in the Vatican' and the inopportunist minority. Although the Pope had maintained a neutral stance in the beginning, his own intent and leanings became

...the Dominican theologian Cardinal Guidi, Archbishop of Bologna, criticised the heading of the draft decree on infallibility, which ran 'On the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff'. This was erroneous, Guidi insisted; the Pope was not infallible, though his teaching might be. Infallible teaching is irrefutable, the teacher is not...He proposed that the wording should state that the Pope is assisted by 'the counsel of the bishops manifesting the tradition of the churches'...[meaning] that bishops are witness to the tradition. 'Witnesses of tradition?' the Pope replied, 'I am the tradition'.¹⁰

The Ultramontanists had won even before the voting took place. 57 bishops left one day before the final voting took place on July 18, 1870. An overwhelming majority of 533 bishops voted for the decree (once again a clear indication that the Church wanted to continue with its non-conformist stance) while two bishops voted against it. The result was a papacy which bordered upon dictatorship with unlimited powers, although in its own limited domain.

LIBERALISM AND MODERNISM

The same stance was exhibited by the next pope, Leo XIII (1878-1903), albeit behind a faint veneer of liberalism. But this façade of liberalism was enough to give some Catholic theologians and philosophers the courage to move away from the absolutism and formalism of the Church and seek newer ways to adapt the Church to the society.

In the last years of the nineteenth century Catholic biblical scholars and historians began to explore the early origins of Christianity with a new freedom, Catholic philosophers to engage creatively instead of defensively with the currents of thought which stemmed from Kant and Hegel, and Catholic systematic theologians to explore the nature of the Church not as a timeless and rigidly disciplined military structure centring on the Pope, but as a complex living organism subject to growth and change.¹¹

What were the main issues with which these 'liberals' (generally all liberals whether Catholics or Protestants were bundled together) were concerned? Without going into the details one can discern the following:

biblical and historical criticism in its bearing on the truth of the Christian revelation;

natural science (especially the doctrine of evolution) in its bearing on the doctrines of creation and providence;

social problems created by the industrial revolution in their bearing on the application of Christian ethics and the hope of the Kingdom of God.¹²

¹⁰ See Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1997), p.231.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.249.

¹² See W.M. Horton, 'The Development of Theological Thought' in *Twentieth Century Christianity*, Bishop Stephen Neill (ed.) (New York: Dolphin Books, 1963), p.255.

To these liberals (in our case Catholic liberal thinkers), the Pope's message went loud and clear:

Liberal Catholics are wolves in sheep's clothing: and therefore the true priest is bound to unmask them...Men will accuse you of clericalism, and you will be called papists, retrogrades, intransigents...Be proud of it!¹³

Pope Pius X, who was sick and tired of popes meddling with politics, had made his motto clear in the very first allocution which he made after assuming the papal office. It would be *Instaurare omnia in Christo*—set all things right in Christ, which in the simplest of terms meant that the restoration of the Christian society demanded the active defense of the rights of Christ.¹⁴ This naturally entailed keeping a vigilant eye for any deviance from traditional Church teachings whether flagrant or minor.

Trouble came when the vigilant eye of the Pope fell upon a French priest and biblical scholar, Alfred Loisy of the Institut of Catholique in Paris who had published his *The Gospel and the Church*. This book was originally written as a rebuttal to Adolf Harnack's *What is Christianity?* Harnack virtually reduced Christianity to a religion devoid of theological dogmas, ornate rituals and what the Catholics had known for centuries as 'the Tradition'. This idea was in line with some of the results that scholars of biblical criticism had arrived at and also what many lay Protestants had started believing in their zeal to denounce Catholicism. Loisy, a Catholic and a liberal, saw things otherwise. He collected ample evidence to term the Protestant claim of *Sola Scriptura* mere fancy and Harnack's efforts an artificial oversimplification and illicit modernization of the original Gospel by 'eliminating much of its Jewish heritage—regarded as authoritative by Jesus Himself—and by suppressing the apocalyptic element in the idea of the Kingdom' as a mere husk from which Harnack tries to separate the kernel of eternal truth—but not without doing violence to the message of the whole New Testament.¹⁵ Thus, the picture of Christ as we have it in the New Testament was not as he actually was, rather, as understood by churchmen themselves which meant that there was no way one could get around the 'Tradition' and then get the hang of what Christianity was all about. Loisy's book was an immediate sensation as it seemed to

¹³ Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, p.249.

¹⁴ See Roger Aubert, 'The Church of Rome' in *Twentieth Century Christianity*, Bishop Stephen Neill (ed.) (New York: Dolphin Books, 1963), p.25.

¹⁵ W.M. Horton, 'The Development of Theological Thought' in *Twentieth Century Christianity*, p.257 quoting from Alfred Loisy's *The Gospel and the Church*.

prove beyond doubt that modernism¹⁶ was, contrary to the general notion, actually serving the cause of the Catholic church. Unfortunately, when Loisy further explained his ideas in *Autour d'un Petit Livre*, emphasizing the symbolic meaning of many church dogmas, he was excommunicated. Pope Pius X issued a decree *Lamentabili*¹⁷ (against the 'modernist heresy') and two months later, i.e. on September 08, 1907, came the encyclical letter *Pascendi*.¹⁸ But 'modernism' might rise yet again. Its seeds had been sown in France and England and it would not be long before it overtakes the whole of Europe. The need of the hour was to nip it in the bud. Pope Pius X formulated and enacted (on September 01, 1910) an oath to be taken by all clerics, preachers, seminary professors and officials of the Roman congregation against modernism.¹⁹

With this sort of a check by the Roman Curia and the papacy upon its followers, lay and academics alike, coupled with a consistent stance of resolute indifference towards the non-Catholic world, one would be tempted to think that theologically speaking, there were not too many issues which needed to be handled. This might be true at the level of the Roman Curia and the pope but the Catholic community had a different story to tell which is why we shall cast a quick glance at some of the important events that were unfolding in the society at that time.

¹⁶ 'Modernism has become the generic name for the most varied attempts to reconcile the Christian religion with the findings of agnostic philosophy, rationalistic science of history, and...practically covers all the abortive attempts of the nineteenth century to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of revelation and its rational foundations in the face of modern science and philosophy. [Technically, it comprises of] those systems which yielded to the attacks made against the foundations of the Christian faith and, therefore, sought a new basis for religion. This basis would no longer consist in absolute philosophical certitudes about God, creation, etc., and in the historical certitudes concerning the event of Jesus Christ and his work, but solely in human interiority, in religious experience, and in the power with which this experience asserts itself in the Church and throughout the world in all cultures and ages.' See J. Neuner, S.J. and J. Dupuis, S.J., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, p.51.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp.102-103, 230-232, 299-300, 525-526, 549, 641-642 and 678-679.

¹⁸ Its primary aim was to condemn agnosticism (both in natural theology and in the symbolic, non-objective approach to dogmatic content), vital immanence (an exclusive immanence of the divine and a consequent natural, vital evolution of revelation) and the total emancipation of exegesis from dogma and of political-religious movements from ecclesiastical authority. See J.J. Heaney, "Pascendi" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol.10, p.1048.

¹⁹ The oath was divided into two parts; Part I contained five main propositions: (1) God can be known and proved to exist by natural reason; (2) the external signs of revelation, especially miracles and prophecies, are signs giving certainty and are adapted to all men and times, including the present; (3) the Church was founded by Christ on earth; (4) there is a deposit of faith and the assertion that dogmas change from one sense to another one different from that held by the Church is heretical; (5) faith is not a blind sense welling up from the depths of the subconscious under the impulse of the heart and of a will trained to morality, but a real assent of the intellect to truth by hearing from an external source. Part II promises submission to *Lamentabili* and *Pascendi*. Ibid., vol.9, pp.995-996. The oath remained enforced until 1967.

THE SOCIAL SCENARIO

In a society, no one aspect of human life can be studied objectively without involving its other aspects to a degree which would be objectively conducive to that study. Similarly, many theological and dogmatic propositions which seem to be presented by religious authorities as 'infallible' or 'from above' would have little meaning if taken out of the context in which they were 'revealed' or transplanted in a milieu where they are not understood. It would therefore perhaps be right, in the case of religions as well, to say that many such theological and dogmatic propositions are in fact a reflection of a great deal of academic and intellectual exercise on the part of religious authorities based upon not only the exigencies of a revelational idea or act, rather, also upon social needs and communal aspirations of a given society. If the above is correct, and I would presume that it is, then it follows that the theology being derived from a certain revelational idea or act would have to be based to a great degree upon the philosophical thought patterns prevalent in a certain age and clime. When these philosophical thought patterns change, theology, whether it accepts it or not, would have to change to make itself understandable and acceptable to that society.

Such a change was also in the offing in the early half of the twentieth century in the Christian world. Scholars and historians who have endeavoured to identify these changes (we shall deal with them in the course of this section), usually enumerate the following factors as being instrumental in bringing about such a change:

1. Catholic Spiritual Outlook
2. The Blessed Virgin Mary
3. The Liturgical Movement
4. The Modern Biblical Movement
5. *Nouvelle Théologie* (The New Theology)

We shall leave out the first two factors for the time being, as they are not directly concerned with the point that we would like to make here, and go on to explain the last three factors which have a more direct bearing on the issue at hand.

THE LITURGICAL MOVEMENT

Liturgy was defined by Pope Pius XII as

the public worship which our Redeemer, the Head of the Church, offers to the heavenly Father, and which the community of Christ's faithful pays to its

Founder, and through Him to the eternal Father; briefly, it is the whole public worship of the mystical Body of Jesus Christ, Head and members.²⁰

The fact that a full-blown movement got underway in the late nineteenth century to reform the liturgy is itself an indicator that something was obviously not very right as far as the liturgical practices of the Catholics were concerned. L.C. Sheppard tells us what liturgy meant to late nineteenth century Catholics:

The liturgy had remained a dead letter in the lives of Catholics for so long, that neither its central importance in the Christian life nor the meaning of its rites was understood. Sacraments were dutifully received, but the full implications, social as well as personal, were not seen. The Mass itself was no longer appreciated as the communal festive banquet of God's children, the source and center of Christian brotherhood; rather it was regarded as a backdrop for individual Communion. Indeed because of the purely rubricist, legalistic approach to the sacred rites, so powerful in the last centuries, that sought only rubrical correctness and paid little or no attention to the spiritual profit of the faithful, people sought their spiritual nourishment not at the center of Christian living but in devotions of secondary value and sometimes dubious authenticity.²¹

Latourette adds

although the laity were under obligation to attend mass and, in theory, to "assist" at it, in actual fact most of them paid little attention to what the priest was doing at the altar, or, in high mass, to the priest and the responses of the choir. The majority were too unintelligent on the liturgy...to follow it with comprehension. Much of it was inaudible to them. They spent the time, therefore, in their private devotions, telling their rosaries, physically present but often with their thoughts elsewhere.²²

The Liturgical Movement owes its inception to two people; one a pope and the other a lay monk. The monk was none other than Prosper Louis Pasqual Guéranger (1805-1875) who initiated a scholarly study of the liturgy, its historical development and aroused the interest of people in the liturgical prayer and its appreciation.²³ Moreover, he also inaugurated an in-depth study of the Gregorian music. It was Pope Pius X however, who through his *motu proprio* in 1903 emphasized upon the singing of the

²⁰ See J. Neuner, S.J. and J. Dupuis, S.J., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, p.484.

²¹ See L.C. Sheppard, "Catholic Liturgical Movement" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol.8, p.901.

²² See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age: A History of Christianity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1961) in 5 volumes. In this case see volume 4 entitled *The Twentieth Century in Europe: The Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Churches*, p.92. For a detailed and sympathetic account of the Liturgical Movement by a Lutheran see Ernest Benjamin Koenker, *The Liturgical Renaissance in the Roman Catholic Church* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

²³ For an excellent exposition of the rise of the Liturgical Movement see Alfred R. Shands, *The Liturgical Movement and the Local Church* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1959).

Gregorian chant by the congregation thus involving the laity in the liturgy.²⁴ In the twentieth century, the Liturgical Movement gained pace and had as its major objective 'the intelligent assistance of the laity at the Mass'. The main features of this movement thus became what later would be known as 'dialogue mass' in which 'the congregation said the responses, the wider use of missals by the laity, and the putting of much of the liturgy into the vernacular' featured prominently. The movement sought 'a renewal and deepening of the whole range of life of the Christian community through making more intelligent and vivid a sacramental conception of the faith and of the Church'.²⁵

For those accustomed to Latin mass, this was no mean change. With the Catholic impression that change in Rome takes place over centuries, it would have been exceedingly difficult for many religiously devoted Catholics to accept Mass or any form of devotional prayer in a language other than Latin. Latin had virtually acquired the status of a holy language in which the Holy Spirit communicated with Christ's bride. Most probably, many Catholics who would have relished in the 'mystery' of Christian belief would have done so more because what they heard in the liturgy was in fact in an ineffably mysterious language. Doing away with Latin would have been considered tantamount to rendering Christianity rational and understood and thus devoid of its mystery dimension.²⁶

These ideas and perceptions would have haunted many in the Roman Curia and among the lay alike. So, although in the contemporary Christian world this hardly seems to be an issue worth discussing, for the Roman Church then, it would have been a matter of faith or no faith. It remains to be said however, that not the whole Roman Curia was against the movement nor was this a novel demand for the Church. Right from the sixteenth century, Jansenists and then Febronianism had been clamouring for the introduction of the vernacular in the Eucharist, simplicity, even austerity in the service and distribution of missal among the laity. Rome had then suppressed these movements. In the twentieth century however, it was the Pope himself who had initiated such a move, albeit tentatively, strengthened by the great mass of scholarly writings on the ancient practices of the Catholic church where the laity was seen to take active part in

²⁴ See J. Neuner, S.J. and J. Dupuis, S.J., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, pp.477-478.

²⁵ See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Twentieth Century in Europe: The Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Churches*, p.91-92.

²⁶ For a light and very readable account of this situation read Bill Huebsch's three volume, *Vatican II in Plain English: The Council* (Texas: Thomas More, 1997), vol.1, pp.21-47.

the liturgy. It is here that the Liturgical Movement acquires an important status because it is seen as a threshold in the history of a church unaccustomed, even hostile to change and here change was being invoked from within the church itself.

THE MODERN BIBLICAL MOVEMENT

As a result of the Liturgical Movement, another important trend started unfolding in the lives of the Catholics. That was a return to the Bible. From the time of Counter-Reformation, the Catholic world had virtually made the Bible unreachable for the layman. At times, in their enthusiasm against Protestantism, Catholic pastors repudiated direct contact with the scripture terming it a typically Protestant behaviour. The Bible was only read by the priest during service while the layman had to do with missals. The word of God could only be grasped through interpretations and unless one was trained in speculative theology (which was the general trend then), there was no point in trying to grasp the meaning of the word of God all by oneself.

On the academic plane however, scholars of various secular German universities were experimenting with new methods of looking into a historical text. The same methods had since long been introduced to study the Bible scientifically, applying the historical, critical and literary methods to its text. Some of the more popular methods were textual criticism, source criticism, form criticism, historical criticism and redaction criticism. To the Catholic church, this whole enterprise smacked of Modernism and had to be repudiated. The Pontifical Biblical Commission²⁷ was quick to react and 'issued a number of decisions between 1905 and 1915 that required Catholic biblical scholars to hold positions critical scholarship was beginning to call into question, among them the substantial Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the historical nature of the first chapters of Genesis, the view that the Book of Isaiah was the work of a single author, that Matthew was the first gospel to be written'.²⁸

²⁷ "The [Pontifical] Biblical Commission is a permanent body of biblical scholars founded in 1902 by Leo XIII for the purpose of promoting the Catholic study of the Scripture...[T]he moderate tone of its early directives...indicates that the original purpose of the Commission was progressive rather than defensive, that its aim was to encourage Catholic biblical studies and bring them abreast of scholarly work outside the Church...The Modernist crisis which overwhelmed the Church at the beginning of this century forced the Commission to entrench itself in an almost entirely negative position. Most of its directives have consequently been couched in the form of an artificial question expecting the answer no, and have sounded a note of extreme caution." See Hubert J. Richards, "Biblical Commission" in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, Karl Rahner SJ (et al.) (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), vol.1, pp.190-191. For the Encyclical letter *Providentissimus Deus* issued by Leo XIII in 1893 and which was a precursor to the formation of this commission, see J. Neuner, S.J. and J. Dupuis, S.J., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, pp.99-102.

²⁸ See Thomas P. Rausch, *Catholicism at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*, p.6, quoting Raymond E. Brown, *Biblical Reflections on Crises Facing the Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), pp.6-10.

The findings of these scholars led to liberal tendencies in the earlier stages. However, it was these same scholars with more refined forms of earlier methodologies which eventually emancipated the Christian world (particularly the Protestants who were leading biblical critical studies) from the clutches of liberalism. Factually stated, the Catholics ought to be beholden to the Protestants for their pioneering efforts in this regard. Thankfully they are only too aware of it. Ingo Hermann states three sources for the Biblical Movement: preaching, awakening of the sense for the historical and discussions with Protestants.²⁹ This is of course not to say that Catholics made no headway in this regard. One only need remember Marie Joseph Lagrange, more popularly known as Albert Lagrange (1855-1938), the outstanding Dominican scholar who founded a centre of Biblical studies in Jerusalem (l'École Pratique d'Études Biblique) in 1890. From 1892, he started issuing the *Revue Biblique Internationale* which became the primary Catholic periodical on biblical studies. Lagrange was an extremely prolific writer whose breadth of knowledge of the sources, expertise of biblical languages and academic profundity even had many hardliner Protestants view him with awe and respect especially his commentaries on the New Testament. His written works go well over 1700.³⁰

As Latourette puts it:

He was aware of the theories advanced by the Protestant scholars and was not afraid to employ the critical methods of the historians of the revolutionary age. Believing firmly in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, he differentiated inspiration from revelation and accepted some of the findings of contemporary specialists. For example, while maintaining that Moses was the author of the legislation which bore his name, Lagrange conceded that in the form in which it appeared in the Pentateuch that legislation bore the marks of redaction by other hands. He did not accept literally the creation stories of Genesis and took account of archeological discoveries which shed light on them.³¹

Other scholars included Lucien Cerf (1883-1968), the Jesuits Jules Lebreton (1873-1956), Joseph Bonsirven (1880-1958), René Marlé and Leopold Malevez (1900-1973).

What needs to be reiterated here is that the Biblical Movement did not get underway at the initiative of the church. It came 'from below' i.e. the masses themselves. As it

²⁹ See Ingo Hermann, "Biblical Movement" in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, vol.1, p. 214.

³⁰ For a comprehensive account of Lagrange see R.T.A. Murphy, "Lagrange, Marie Joseph" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol.8, p.322.

³¹ See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Twentieth Century in Europe: The Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Churches*, p.120.

caught on, its hidden contours started surfacing, displaying its outreach and significance. Some of its main features were:

the astonishing sale of bibles and portions of Scripture, helped forward by new translations which are markedly superior to the old...; the increase in study groups, in which a number of the faithful meet to read and study the Scriptures together; the success of "Bible-evenings," in which readings from the Bible alternate with the singing of the Psalms—a practice which, apart from the singing of the Latin offices by the clergy, had for centuries been regarded as typically Protestant; biblical dramas, biblical periodicals, intended not for scholars but for ordinary parish priests and worshipers...³²

All this took on an institutional form much later, first at the national level and then at the level of the whole Catholic church. Perhaps, the greatest push forward came with the 'liberating' encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* of Pope Pius XII in 1943, also termed as the *Magna Carta* of Catholic biblical scholarship.

The immediate reason for this encyclical was the circulation of a booklet by an Italian priest among the cardinals and bishops of Italy in 1941 in which he cautioned against the scholarly study of Scripture in the original languages. According to him, instead of philology and critical history, it was more befitting to study meditative and spiritual interpretation based on the Latin Vulgate. The Pope responded with the encyclical strongly urging Catholics towards biblical studies, mastering biblical and oriental languages and making use of textual criticism and literary analysis of the sacred books, according to literary genres and form criticism.

It is absolutely necessary for the interpreter to go back in spirit to those remote centuries of the East, and to make proper use of the help given by history, archaeology, ethnology and other sciences, in order to discover what literary forms the writers of those early ages intended to use and did in fact use.³³

As a result

Catholic biblical scholarship, which had previously lagged behind that of Protestants, began to flourish as Catholic scholars instructed in new methods began teaching in seminaries and universities. Subsequent decrees from the Pontifical Biblical commission confirmed this new direction, even reversing previous directives when in 1955 the secretary of the commission gave Catholic scholars complete freedom in regard to those earlier restrictive decisions of 1905-1915 except where faith and morals were involved.³⁴

³² See Roger Aubert, 'The Church of Rome' in *Twentieth Century Christianity*, Bishop Stephen Neill (ed.), p.45.

³³ See J. Neuner, S.J. and J. Dupuis, S.J., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, edited by Jacques Dupuis, pp.106-109.

³⁴ See Thomas P. Rausch, *Catholicism at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*, p.6. For an excellent exposition of the problems and prospects of biblical studies in the fifties by a Catholic scholar, see Luis

NOUVELLE THÉOLOGIE (THE NEW THEOLOGY)

The expression “nouvelle théologie” appeared apparently for the first time in an article by Mgr. Parente in the *Osservatore Romano*, February 1942, apropos of two Dominican writers. It was taken up again in 1946 by P. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., apropos of certain Jesuit theologians. The expression had a definitely unfavourable sense, and was used to denounce new methods, or tendencies judged to be departures from what was considered true orthodoxy...In the same year, Pope Pius XII, addressing a General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, also spoke of the “new theology” (17 September 1946).³⁵

Catholicism had been steeped in Scholastic philosophy and theology from the beginning of the Medieval Ages up until the modern times. The most distinctive feature of this type of theology was the influence of the works of the Dominican Thomas Aquinas—the master theologian, philosopher who tried to reconcile Aristotelian philosophy with Christian theology. There was nothing particularly wrong with Aquinas’ deliberations over ‘impractical and trivial issues’ as he was later to be accused of, but it seemed to have gone out of tune with the disposition and tastes of the modern European Catholic and certainly the non-Catholic Christian. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius X had attempted to impose Thomism—a pejorative usage, one comes across in non-Catholic writings—on the Catholic world. Pope Leo XIII believed that the renewal of Catholic theology could be guaranteed by a return to St. Thomas’ works and he translated his belief into action through his encyclical *Aeterni Patris* in 1879.

In 1892 he sent a letter to all professors of theology, directing all that ‘certain’ statements of St. Thomas were to be accepted as definitive. Where Aquinas had not spoken on a given topic, any conclusions reached had to be in harmony with his known opinions.³⁶

Unfortunately or perhaps fortunately, there was no vast recognition, neither of the encyclical nor of the Pope’s letter, in the Catholic world. A great many institutes approved of an eclectic approach to theology. Pope Pius X seemed to sense this evasion of papal instructions and went about correcting the situation through his encyclical *Doctoris Angelici* in June 29, 1914 stating in the plainest of terms:

“that those who in their interpretations misrepresent or affect to despise the principles and major theses of his philosophy are not only not following St.

Alonso Schokel, *Understanding Biblical Research*, translated by Peter J. McCord, S.J. (London: Burns & Oates Ltd., 1968).

³⁵ See Henri Rondet, “Nouvelle Théologie” in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, vol.4, p.234.

³⁶ See Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, p.241.

Thomas, but are even far astray from the saintly Doctor." Acknowledging commendations of other saints and doctors by the Holy See, Pius X maintained that their doctrine was commended "to the extent it agreed with the principles of Aquinas or was in no way opposed to them."³⁷

It was in resentment to this ossified form of Thomism, that a new trend among the Catholics themselves started unfolding. A new breed of theologians who thought that Thomism was outmoded, raised disturbing points of debate centred around the immutability of dogma, evolution, creation, original sin, grace and the Eucharist. They wanted to return to the biblical, patristic and liturgical sources that had helped create the enriching self-understanding of the Church in the first millennium. Even if recourse was sought to Aquinas, it should not 'act as a barrier restricting further thought, but as a light-house, a beacon illuminating and guiding in the voyage to untried seas'.³⁸

Among them were people like the Jesuit, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), a paleontologist and geologist of distinction who provided a metaphysical interpretation of the theory of evolution in which the Darwinian theory of "survival of the fittest" was modified to "survival of the more complex". Humanity, after having reached the pinnacle of physical evolution was now evolving socially and was slowly converging to an "omega point" which from the Christian point of view was the Parousia or the second coming of Christ.³⁹

His metaphysical interpretation was not happily received by Rome and eventually he was forbidden from teaching or bringing his controversial works into print.

To take another example, we have the Dominican Yves M.-J. Congar. He, among others, reacted against the customary function of the laity which seemed nothing more than kneeling in the pews or the altar, remaining seated before the pulpit and contributing from their purses. Congar perceived this role of the laity as having risen as a result of 'heretical movements in the Middle Ages led by laymen and with the Protestant Reformation with its emphasis on the priesthood of all believers'. He redefined on the basis of the Scripture the function of the laity as sharing in the priesthood of the faithful while clearly outlining the respective functions of the

³⁷ See J.A. Weisheipl, "Contemporary Scholasticism" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol.12, p.1168.

³⁸ See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Twentieth Century in Europe: The Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Churches*, p.109.

³⁹ See Joseph Hugh Crehan, "Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Warren E. Preece (et al.) (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., William Benton Publisher, 1970), vol.21, pp.762-763. For a simple yet excellent introduction to the life and thought of Teilhard de Chardin, see Henri de Lubac, *Teilhard de Chardin: The Man and His Meaning* (New York: The New American Library, Inc., a Mentor-Omega Book, 1965).

hierarchy and the laity. The popular line which seemed to be on the tongues of quite a few Catholics was "neither are the clergy at the service of the laity nor the laity at the service of the clergy. Both together are to serve the Church."⁴⁰

One can cite numerous examples of Catholics sincerely trying to come to grips with the newer modes of thought and in many cases evolving their own stance in reaction to such modes. Perhaps, one of the greatest 'threats' perceived by the Church during these years was the issue of the development of dogma.⁴¹ As mentioned earlier, the Biblical Movement had initiated tremendous interest in the writings of the fathers and there was a general sense of the need to return to the original Christian sources. The study of patristic thought was taken afresh and with new vigour.

Half a century ago the writings of the fathers were conned with a view to finding proofs of the antiquity of Catholic doctrines or practices. Today the center of interest is in the original features of patristic thought—its exceptional gift for synthesis, its understanding of the interrelation of the mysteries of the Faith in the totality of the divine plan—that is to say, the perception that divine revelation introduces us not to a theory about God but to a sacred history...The chief occupation is not with questions of pure scholarship—authenticity, dates, and so on; the aim is to make the message of the Fathers live again in the fullness of its doctrinal and spiritual riches, and if possible to recover the experience of the Christian community which found its expression in these personal testimonies.⁴²

The very question about the development of dogma accorded to it a sense of history whereas dogmas were not supposed to have a history, because they were directly linked to propositions which were revealed. Moreover, the history of something meant, there was a beginning to it. The historical method which had been used in biblical studies earlier in the century by Catholics and as a result of which many had started suspecting some 'established' facts pertaining to the Bible and Christian history (we have already explained how a person no less than Father Lagrange had started doubting literal

⁴⁰ See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Twentieth Century in Europe: The Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Churches*, p.111.

⁴¹ The idea of the development of dogma is usually thought to be a modern one whereas this is not really true. 4th century Christian Fathers were aware of this idea while expounding dogmas of the Christian faith. "In a letter concerning the admission into the Church of those who denied the divinity of the Holy Ghost, St. Basil declared that, according to Athanasius and the practice of many bishops, they were to be admitted if they held the true Nicene faith...And Gregory of Nazianzus asked that the divinity of the Holy Ghost not be affirmed in the presence of the weak because that point of doctrine was still beyond their power...He justifies this attitude by a theory of development; in His manifestation of truth, God does not proceed by violence but by conviction, gradually integrating truth up to its fullness. Mankind first had to realize the divinity of the Father, next that of the Son, and now that of the Spirit. Such attitudes and utterings are unthinkable if the Fathers had in their minds that an explicit statement of the Trinity did belong to the deposit of faith." See J.H. Walgrave "Doctrine, Development of" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol.4, p.940.

⁴² See Roger Aubert, 'The Church of Rome' in *Twentieth Century Christianity*, p.64.

interpretations of the Genesis story) was not a welcome idea in Rome. It had been used by Modernists earlier to do grave harm to the Catholic church and this time round it could not be expected to serve the Catholic cause much either.

Father Marin-Sola, a Spanish Dominican tried to develop the concept of 'the homogeneity of theology with dogma and of dogma with revealed data', applying it systematically to the thorny problem of the development of dogma.

He thought it possible...to show that development of dogma or 'new dogmas' were metaphysically included in the original datum and could be deduced from it by rigorous syllogistic reasoning.⁴³

The debate was finally settled as a result of developments taking place in the Church regarding Mariology⁴⁴ and perhaps the role of Father G. Filograssi, S.J., served as a watershed.

Father Filograssi was working upon the following lines: an issue can only be made a matter of faith if it has been made part of the deposit of faith after being entrusted to the Apostles who then transmitted it to the Church. But this transmission may not be explicit. On many an occasion, a certain dogma is hidden in more explicit teachings and would only see the light of day after several years, even centuries, of collective or individual Christian contemplation. That dogma might weigh upon the consciousness of the Church for a long time until the infallible *magisterium* decides, when the time is ripe, to sanction and guarantee the homogeneity of that dogma with the datum of revelation.⁴⁵ Undoubtedly the exigencies of the society in which such a dogma strikes roots has a role to play.

So far we have merely highlighted a few issues and events which we thought had a direct bearing on the creation of theological mood in the decades prior to the summoning of the Second Vatican Council. This whole theological scenario can be said

⁴³ See Roger Aubert with P.E. Crunican, John Tracy Ellis, F.B. Pike, J. Bruls and J. Hajjar, *The Christian Centuries: A New History of the Catholic Church* in five volumes (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). In this case see volume five entitled *The Church in a Secularised Society*, pp.617-618.

⁴⁴ Early nineteenth century had witnessed a strange blossoming in the cult of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. This cult was associated with the absolute sinlessness of Mary, or more popularly her Immaculate Conception. A prayer which went with this cult was 'O Mary Conceived without Original Sin, Pray for us who have recourse to thee'. Within years, there was an epidemic increase in stories in which Mary was said to have been witnessed. Gregory XVI encouraged devotion to the Immaculate Conception and Pio Nono took the decisive step forward by defining it as part of the Catholic faith. Pio Nono would recount that he had recovered from epilepsy due to Mary's intercession as well. "The Pope's chamberlain, Monsignor Talbot, remarked that 'the most important thing is not the new dogma itself, but the way in which it is proclaimed'". See Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, pp.226-227. For a detailed discussion on the topic see, E.D. O'Connor, "Immaculate Conception" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol.7, pp.378-382.

⁴⁵ See Roger Aubert (et al.), *The Church in a Secularised Society*, pp.618-619.

to have culminated in the papal encyclical *Humani Generis* with which we would like to end this section.

HUMANI GENERIS

This was an encyclical issued by Pope Pius XII on August 12, 1950 to check (much to the glee of the Roman Curia) the forward march of 'the new theology'. It has been called a new Syllabus of Errors to be rejected.⁴⁶ It starts by cautioning Catholics about the ideologies such as historicism, evolutionism and existentialism which are contributing in spreading error.

A glance at the world outside the Christian Fold will familiarize us, easily enough, with the false directions which the thought of the learned often takes. Some will contend that the theory of evolution, as it is called—a theory which has not yet been proved beyond contradiction even in the sphere of natural science—applies to the origin of all things whatsoever. Accepting it without caution, without reservation, they boldly give rein to monistic or pantheistic speculations which represent the whole universe as left at the mercy of a continual process of evolution...

These false evolutionary notions, with their denial of all that is absolute or fixed or abiding in human experience, have paved the way for a new philosophy of error. Idealism, immanentism, pragmatism, have now a rival in what is called "existentialism."...

There is, too, a false use of the historical method, which confines its observations to the actual happenings of human life, and in doing so contrives to undermine all absolute truth, all absolute laws, whether it is dealing with the problems of philosophy or with the doctrines of the Christian religion.⁴⁷

However, on a very different note, the encyclical also notes that there is a need to study these erroneous ideas further to enable the church to combat them.

All this, evidently, concerns our own Catholic theologians and philosophers. They have a grave responsibility for defending truth, both divine and human, and for instilling it into men's minds; they must needs acquaint themselves with all these speculations, to a more or a less extent erroneous; they must needs take them into account. Nay, it is their duty to have a thorough understanding of them. There is no curing a disease unless you have made a study of its symptoms. Moreover, there is some truth underlying even these wrong-headed ideas; yes, and they spur the mind on to study and with certain truths, philosophical and theological, more carefully than we otherwise should.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ J. Neuner, S.J. and J. Dupuis, S.J., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, p.54.

⁴⁷ See Anne Fremantle (ed.), *The Papal Encyclicals in their Historical Context* (New York: New American Library of World Literature, Inc. for Mentor Books, 1956), pp.284-285. Translation by Msgr. Ronald A. Knox published in *The London Tablet*, Sept. 2, 1950.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.285.

The encyclical makes mention of errors which need to be condemned in the field of theology such as relativistic conceptions of Catholic dogma and in the field of biblical studies, the exegesis of Scripture that is opposed to the analogy of faith and the tradition of the Church or shows contempt towards the literal meaning of the text in favour of a purely spiritual interpretation. The encyclical then goes on to reiterate the traditional Catholic teachings regarding a number of issues such as the existence of God, original sin, Mystical Body of Christ, existence of angels and finally stamps its approval of Thomism according to the norms of Popes Leo XIII and Pius X.⁴⁹

While most Catholic scholars take this encyclical to be far lighter in its tone and praise it for not identifying specific people for condemnation of their wrong views, others like Eamon Duffy think otherwise. He writes thus:

No one was named, but that made the impact of these condemnation all the worse, widening the net of suspicion to anyone whose views were considered unconventional.⁵⁰

However that may be, unfortunately, the result turned out to be the same. A new spate of attack was launched against many distinguished theologians, many of them French like Yves Congar and Marie-Dominique Chenu who were forbidden from publishing their works or teach.

After faint glimpses of the church showing a more moderate stance towards the theological strands of the 40s and 50s, it suddenly seemed to have taken a U-turn and decided to pursue its traditional policy of rounding off unruly theologians and excommunicating them. There were fears of Ultramontanism being revived. In fact the November of the same year (1950) witnessed another showdown. The Pope in his own right exercised the infallible *magisterium* and defined the doctrine of Mary's Assumption into heaven⁵¹ all by himself much to the embarrassment of a number of Catholics. Even the Orthodox who actually held the same belief were exasperated by the popes right to single-handedly define articles of faith. The icing on the cake was the Pope Pius XII canonizing Pope Pius X, an anti-Modernist in 1954 thereby confirming his own anti-Modernist leanings and providing the Roman Curia with another feather in its cap.

⁴⁹ See J.M. Connolly, "Humani Generis" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol.7, p.215.

⁵⁰ See his *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, p.266.

⁵¹ See J. Neuner, S.J. and J. Dupuis, S.J., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, pp.262-264. For more details see J.W. Langlinais, "Assumption of Mary" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol.1, pp.971-975.

Giovanni Battista Montini—later to be Pope Paul VI (1963-1978)—who had been one of the closest aides of the Pope and had shown unwavering support for him on almost all occasions and was also looked upon as the next pope was branded a liberalist and packed off to Milan.⁵² The Pope was now surrounded by ultra-conservatives, most of them members of the Roman Curia, who would not have any of the ‘modern’ rubbish. As for the untiring academic Pope, he had started believing

that he had something valuable to contribute on every subject, no matter how specialised. He lived surrounded by encyclopaedias and monographs, swotting up for the next utterance. Midwives would get an update on the latest gynaecological techniques, astronomers were lectured on sun-spots. One of his staff recalled finding him surrounded by a new mountain of books in the summer of 1958. ‘All those books are about gas,’ Pius told him – he was due to address a congress of the gas industry in September.⁵³

Pope Pius XII died on October 09, 1958 leaving a Catholic world very sure about itself, priding in its ability to have thwarted all anti-Catholic mischief and resting assuredly on the impregnable rock of Peter once again.⁵⁴ But one man was not too sure and that was Cardinal Angello Roncalli, the next ‘unexpected yet prophesized’ pope in line, who would also summon the Second Vatican Council and who sat on the throne of Peter as John XXIII.

JOHN XXIII-THE TRANSITIONAL POPE?

Every movement, trend, school of thought, philosophy and novel idea is imbued with the spirit and vision of its pioneer(s) or founder(s). For some reason this is all the more true and evident when these movements and schools have something to do with religion. The Second Vatican Council was indeed a novel idea; an idea that struck the head of

⁵² For interesting details regarding this incident, see Peter Hebblethwaite's *John XXIII: Pope of the Council* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984), pp.253-255. Also see the same author's *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope* (London: HarperCollins, 1993).

⁵³ See Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, p.268.

⁵⁴ For critical analysis of Pope Pius XII's influence on the Catholic world see Giacomo Martina, S.J., “The Historical Context in which the Idea of a New Ecumenical Council was Born” in *Vatican II: Assessments and Perspectives Twenty-five Years After*, Rene Lotouelle (ed.) (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), vol.1, pp.13-17. In this article, Martina has made a careful study of the Church and society and their relationship from 1945-1959. It would be to the benefit of the reader to quickly peruse over his findings regarding the general situation of the society and Church. According to him two elements defined this relationship; firstly the rapid evolution taking place in various academic fields and secondly a clash between liberals and conservatives in the Church which often spilled over outside the Vatican. While discussing the society, he further points out that from 1945 onwards three factors were instrumental in shaping the contemporary society and harking it towards a global structure: One, freedom of third world countries from the clutches of colonial powers; Two, industrialization directly linked to market economy which was giving birth to economic reasoning, i.e. emphasis being laid upon the economic factor in all walks of life; Three, television.

Angelo Roncalli, within months of his assuming the leadership of the Catholic world. Preparations for the Council and the holding of the First General Session which set the pace for later sessions of the Council were personally supervised by the Pope and heavily indebted to his spirit and aspirations. It was inevitable that the Council should be coloured by the colours, tastes, dispositions and ecumenical and pastoral mind-set of the Pope. It naturally follows then, that the Council, its objectives and decrees can be ill understood without at least being aware of a brief life sketch of the Pope and then only would we be able to understand how it prompted an unassuming, jovial, stout and deceptively unassuming-looking pope to trigger a landslide change in the Christian and more particularly Catholic Church.

A POPE IN THE MAKING

Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli⁵⁵, the first two names to be reversed later on, was born on November 25, 1881 in the small village of Sotto il Monte in Bergamo in Italy to the pious peasants, Giovanni Battista and Marianna Giulia. After attending school for three years in the nearby town of Carvico (a mile away from Sotto il Monte which the six year old covered walking barefooted), his parents decided to send him to the Catholic College of Celano (Celana) about three miles away from their village, on the other side of a mountain. At 12, he passed the entrance examination to a seminary in Bergamo. Here for the first time, he started taking interest in his studies and enjoyed history, philosophy, theology, poetry and classical music.⁵⁶ It was also the first time that his parents, who had so far thought that their first boy would be a farmer, started dreaming of seeing their playful child becoming a priest. His father had then expressed his desire: "I hope I will live to see the day when you will wear the hat of a bishop".

In 1901, he caught the fancy of the bishop of Bergamo for his good grades and intelligence and was given a scholarship to study in Rome at Seminario Romano, then known as the Apollinare. Barely a year had passed, when he was ordered to join the Seventy-third Infantry Regiment. Having spent a rugged village life, the one year that he spent in the army was more like a holiday to him after which he continued his study

⁵⁵ For a critical and brilliant biography of the Pope's life in English, see Peter Hebblethwaite's *John XXIII: Pope of the Council* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984). For a light, readable account of the Pope's life see Norman Richards, *People of Destiny: Pope John XXIII* (Chicago: Children's Press, 1968). For a collection of excerpts and brief analysis of the Pope's writings and speeches, see Ernesto Balducci, *John "The Transitional Pope"*, translated by Dorothy White (London: Burns & Oates Ltd., 1965). See also R. Trisco "John XXIII, Pope" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol.7, pp.1015-1020.

⁵⁶ See Norman Richards, *People of Destiny: Pope John XXIII*, pp.20-21. Hebblethwaite seems to suggest otherwise. See his *John XXIII: Pope of the Council*, p.11.

at the Apollinare, obtained a doctorate in theology and was ordained priest on August 10, 1904.

He soon returned to the Apollinare to study Canon Law while taking on the job of an assistant instructor. However this was not to last long. He was summoned by the new bishop of Bergamo, Count Giacomo Maria Radini-Tedeschi—a nobleman who had left his high position to enter the church and who was known for his far-sightedness, organizational brilliance and the ability to take a tough stance where the need arises—to act as his secretary. For the next 10 years, Roncalli served him faithfully and learnt a great deal from him particularly, in understanding 'the problems of the working class'. He would later write *In Memoria di Monsignore Giacomo Radini-Tedeschi, vescovo di Bergamo* (1916) in memory of his benefactor.

In 1915, Roncalli was recalled to the army and assigned to military hospitals in Bergamo where he got to see the dark and ugly side of life. In 1918, he opened a hostel and clubhouse for the youth who had been disoriented by the recent wars, at his own expense.

In 1920, he was asked by Pope Benedict XV to join the Society for the Propagation of Faith in Italy as director. From here onwards, until he assumed the papal office, Roncalli was given various portfolios ranging from apostolic visitator to Bulgaria, apostolic delegate to Turkey and Greece to papal nuncio in France and finally to the Patriarch of Venice. In each of his duties, Roncalli lived up to the expectations of his seniors and the pope. He was unsophisticated yet diplomatic, simple yet intelligent, ineloquent yet effective, sincere, friendly, witty, jovial and most of all enmeshed in Catholic religious values and spirituality. Several instances can be mentioned which highlight these qualities of the Pope, but I would particularly like to mention one incident which truly depicts his true spiritual nature; Hebblethwaite quotes:

We were poor, but happy with our lot and confident in the help of Providence. There was never any bread on our table, only *polenta* [a dish of maize flour—this addition is mine]; no wine for the children and young people; only at Christmas and Easter did we have a slice of home-made cake. Clothes, and shoes for going to church, had to last for years and years...And when a beggar appeared at the door of our kitchen, when the children – twenty of them – were waiting impatiently for their bowl of *minestra* [vegetable soup], there was always room for him, and my mother would hasten to seat this stranger alongside us.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ See Peter Hebblethwaite's *John XXIII: Pope of the Council*, p.6. Quoting Loris Capovilla (ed.), *Giovanni XXIII, Lettere ai familiari* in two volumes (Rome: Storia e Letteratura 1968). (Collection of 727 letters from the Pope to his family at Sotto il Monte).

The Pope was thoroughly abhorrent to all forms of pomp, cumbersome conventions and deceptions. His greatest virtue, however, lay in his being a great lover of the common lot of people and the need to 'unite the divided'. A few events from his life would suffice to elaborate the point that we are trying to make:

When he was crowned Pope and the cardinals, true to the convention, came to kiss his hand and foot in show of obedience and respect, he stopped the first cardinal from kissing his foot simply hugged him thus doing away with this 'convention'.

Popes always dined alone. After having dined alone for some days, Roncalli announced, "I can't find anything in the Scripture that says the pope must eat by himself. From now on I'm going to have company when I eat my meals."

His travels and visits were known to be security nightmares as is evident from the following incident. The Pope once decided to visit the prison in Rome. Careful security measures were taken and he was asked to follow the route marked by a red carpet. To the utter horror of security and church officials present, the Pope suddenly veered off to other corridors to talk to grateful prisoners and bless them.⁵⁸

One could go on mentioning a long list of events from the Pope's pre-pontifical as well as post-pontifical life, to illustrate his pastoral and ecumenical nature and the direction that his pontificate would thus be taking. However, we only mean to emphasize that this Pope was the odd one out.

In fact, he was only meant to be a 'transitional pope'. There is sound reason to believe that when the conclave⁵⁹ to choose a new pope was being held, quite a few cardinals thought that choosing a man of Cardinal Roncalli's age and nature, 77 then, who might die in a few years, would give the church the time to think of someone more suitable for the job. A French abbot, close to Cardinal Achille Liénart, archbishop of Lille said it all in the clearest of terms:

What we need is an old man, a transitional pope. He won't introduce any great innovations, and will give us time to pause and recognise, in that way the real choices that cannot be made now will be postponed.⁶⁰

The eve of the conclave was Friday, October 24. By four o'clock p.m. Saturday, October 25, 1958, the conclave was sealed off to choose the new pope. Just two hours prior to that Cardinal Antonio Bacci had executed the last public act before the veil of

⁵⁸ See Norman Richards, *People of Destiny: Pope John XXIII*, pp.72-86.

⁵⁹ From the Latin *conclave*, 'with a key'. Since 1271, the closed place into which the assembly of cardinals is locked to elect a new pope and, by extension, the assembly of cardinals themselves.

⁶⁰ See Peter Hebblethwaite's *John XXIII: Pope of the Council*, p.274.

secrecy would ascend upon the conclave. He was supposed to render in clear Latin exactly what kind of a pope was the conclave looking forward to elect and what would be his 'job-description'. Prophetically, Bacci's description of the pope fit Roncalli, which has led quite a few church historians to suggest that Roncalli knew all along that he would be elected. Bacci's portrayal of the would-be pope is worth quoting.

We need a pope gifted with great spiritual strength and ardent charity...He will need to embrace the Eastern and the Western Church. He will belong to all peoples, and his heart must beat especially for those oppressed by totalitarian persecution and those in great poverty...May the new Vicar of Christ form a bridge between all levels of society, between all nations – even those that reject and persecute the Christian religion. Rather than someone who has explored and experienced the subtle principles belonging to the art and discipline of diplomacy, we need a pope who is above all holy, so that he may obtain from God what lies beyond natural gifts...He will freely receive and welcome the bishops 'whom the Holy Spirit has chosen to rule over the Church of God' (Acts 20:28). He will be prepared to give them counsel in their doubts, to listen and comfort them in their anxieties, and to encourage their plans.⁶¹

One does not need to be exceptionally intelligent to apprehend that this was a clear censure of Pius XII's abilities and pontificate, the gifted and scholarly pope whose aristocratic and diplomatic ways were a continuous veil between him and the lay.

On a very similar note, Pope John XXIII after assuming his pontificate would himself contrast his pontificate and that of his predecessor (although he reiterates that he does not mean to deride his predecessor) saying:

These are those who expect the pontiff to be a statesman, a diplomat, a scholar, the organiser of the collective life of society, or someone whose mind is attuned to every form of modern knowledge...[these] human qualities – learning, diplomatic cleverness and skill, organising ability – may embellish and fill out a pontificate, but they can not be a substitute for being the shepherd of the whole flock...[the qualities just mentioned] betrayed a concept of the Supreme Pontiff that was not fully in conformity with its true ideal...[whereas] the new Pope...is like the son of Jacob who, meeting with his brothers, burst into tears and said, "I am Joseph, your brother".⁶²

There is a consensus amongst the journalists – among them a few tough-minded ones – covering the Pope that here was a naïve, simple yet quite an unpredictable pope who could have them eating out of his hands. 'It was not so much what he had to say as his evident friendliness and warmth that won them over'.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.281.

⁶² Ibid., p.295. The arrangement of the quotations is mine without corrupting the sense or purport desired by Hebblethwaite.

For such a plain, loving, down-to-earth, pastoral and spiritually unworldly pope to have been planning to summon a full-blown council was the last thing on ones mind; yet, this was the bomb that the Pope dropped within three months of his pontificate.

BIRTH OF THE IDEA OF A COUNCIL AND ITS PROCLAMATION

Whether the idea of a council was Pope John XXIII's or he had borrowed it from elsewhere, is one of the hotly debated topics in the annals of the history of Vatican II. Most historians including the careful Francis X. Murphy, writing under the pen name Xavier Rynne and Giuseppe Alberigo, have exclusively ascribed the idea of summoning a council to a sudden inspiration on the part of the Pope.⁶³ Historically, however, this does not seem to be correct although the Pope, on more than one occasion and through various sources, seems to have been less than inconsistent about the inspirational nature of this idea.⁶⁴ The Pope's assertion that 'suddenly [*a un tratto*] my soul was illumined by a great idea which came precisely at that moment' seems to indicate that the idea was a bolt from the blue.

We know for certain, however, that long before Pope John XXIII had even dreamt of a council, Cardinals Ruffini and Ottaviani, in February 1948, had presented a memo to Pius XII jotting down some reasons for a much needed council:

To clarify and define a number of doctrinal points, since a mass of errors are aboard on philosophy, theology and moral and social questions.

Then there are the great problems posed by Communism and caused by the recent war, not to mention questions that could be raised about the method and means that could be morally used in any future war.

The Code of Canon Law needs aggiornamento and reform.

⁶³ See Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), p.3. Also see Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, translated by Matthew Sherry (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2007), p.2. This book is an English rendering of the originally Italian *Breve Storia del Concilio Vaticano II (1959-1962)* (Bologna: Società Editrice Mulino, 2005).

⁶⁴ During a speech on May 08, 1962 to Venetian pilgrims, the Pope said: "Where did the idea of the Ecumenical Council come from? How did it develop? The truth is that the idea and even more its realization were so unforeseen as to seem unlikely.

A question was raised in a meeting I had with the Secretary of State, Cardinal Tardini, which led on to a discussion about the way the world was plunged into so many grave anxieties and troubles. One thing we noted was that though everyone said they wanted peace and harmony, unfortunately conflicts grew more acute and threats multiplied. What should the Church do? Should Christ's mystical barque simply drift along, tossed this way and that by the ebb and flow of the tides? Instead of issuing new warnings, shouldn't she stand out as a beacon of light? What could that exemplary light be?

My interlocutor listened with reverence and attention. Suddenly [*a un tratto*] my soul was illumined by a great idea which came precisely at that moment and which I welcomed with ineffable confidence in the divine Teacher. And there sprang to my lips a word that was solemn and committing. My voice uttered it for the first time: a Council." See Peter Hebblethwaite's *John XXIII: Pope of the Council*, pp.316-317.

Directives are needed in other areas of ecclesiastical discipline such as culture and Catholic Action etc....

The Assumption could be defined.⁶⁵

Pope Pius XII gave the idea a serious thought and felt that there was a need to display the unity of Catholics after the world wars. Initially, however, he hesitated because of the problems involved in the lodging of many bishops but he eventually set five secret commissions to make preparatory studies. There was so much disagreement among the commissions, the issues to be studied and the manner of work of the Council that the whole idea of a council had to be abandoned. Instead, Pope Pius XII thought he could handle these problems himself. He went on to define the Assumption and condemned contemporary errors in his encyclical *Humani Generis* as mentioned earlier.⁶⁶

The first documented mention of the idea comes on November 2, 1958 just five days after Roncalli's election as pope.⁶⁷ Not only that, Hebblethwaite provides cogent proof to the effect that even during the conclave which went on to choose Pope John XXIII, both the cardinals, i.e. Ottaviani and Ruffini, once certain that Roncalli would be elected pope went up to him and broached the idea of convoking a council. Ottaviani added later, with evident bitterness though, "Cardinal Roncalli made this idea his own, and was later heard to say, 'I was thinking about a council from the moment I became Pope.'"⁶⁸

What further strengthens this revelation of Ottaviani is the entry the Pope made in his diary (Pope John XXIII maintained a diary from his early Bergamo years) on January 20, 1959 when he met his Secretary of State Cardinal Tardini.

In conversation with Tardini, Secretary of State, I wanted to test his reaction to my idea of proposing the project of an Ecumenical Council to the members of the Sacred College when they met (sic) at St. Paul's on the 25th of this month for the conclusion to the week of prayer [for Christian Unity]. The Council would meet in due time when everything had been thought through [*omnibus perpensis*]. It would involve all Catholic Bishops of every rite and from every part of the world. I was rather hesitant and uncertain. His immediate response was the most gratifying surprise that I could have expected: 'Oh, that really is an idea, an enlightening and holy idea. It comes straight from heaven, Holy Father. You will

⁶⁵ Peter Hebblethwaite's *John XXIII: Pope of the Council*, p.310.

⁶⁶ For further details see *ibid.*, pp.310-312.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.306-307.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.283, quoting from the Italian weekly *Epocha*, on December 08, 1968 (issued from Rome) to which Ottaviani said this during an interview.

have to work on it, develop it and publicise it. It will be a great blessing for the whole world'...⁶⁹

The thrust of this note is clear. The Pope had deliberated much on the idea of convoking the Council well before he broached it with Cardinal Tardini. Tardini's notes written on the same evening, however, give an extra piece of information.

Audience with the Holy Father who told me that yesterday afternoon had been for him a period of meditation and recollection. As the programme of his pontificate, he has thought of three things:

Roman Synod,

Ecumenical Council,

*Aggiornamento of the Code of Canon Law.*⁷⁰

It implies that the Pope, as a result, of his previous afternoon's 'meditation and recollection' had thought of these three things. The sketch that we get of Cardinal Tardini is that of an apparently dry and cold man with calculated ideas and the ability to say 'No' even to the Pope. He would have written only what he would have heard without inserting explanations from himself.

Be that as it may, to say that a man of Pope John XXIII's upright conscience and spirituality was lying would be nothing short of treacherous. He was an old man and was known to forget names. For a man shouldering the responsibilities of the world Catholic church, to remember trivial details is simply asking for too much. The Pope probably got carried away with the idea of an ecumenical council to such an extent that he probably wanted to make that the hallmark of his pontificate. The Pope was probably also aware that he did not have too much time. He was approaching his 80s and as Hebblethwaite puts it 'the *most decisive moment* [of the Pope's pontificate] is transformed into the *moment of decision*'.⁷¹

The Pope told Tardini and a handful of his closest aides, swearing them to secrecy, about his plan to announce the idea of convoking a council on January 25, 1959 in a meeting with 17⁷² cardinals at St. Paul's-without-the-walls. All historians have portrayed a pensive and troubled-looking pope proceeding for Mass to St. Paul's-without-the-walls. If the idea of the Council was not a particularly guarded secret for

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.314-315. Quoting from Giancarlo Zizola, *L'Utopia di Papa Giovanni* (Assisi: Cittadella Editrice, 1973), p.316. Trans. by Helen Barolini, *The Utopia of Pope John XXIII* (New York: Orbis Books, 1978).

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.314.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.317.

⁷² Some historians put the number of cardinals at 18. See for instance Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II*, p.3.

many of the cardinals and many of them had even mentioned this to the Pope prior to his coronation, what exactly troubled the Pope? Hebblethwaite seems to suggest that announcing the idea of the Council itself had put the Pope under pressure. Although this might be partly true, given the fact that many conservatives of the Roman Curia—Ruffini and Ottaviani inclusive—had a council in mind would suffice to dispel this notion. The quip that was often heard was ‘Tardini reigns, Ottaviani governs, John blesses’.⁷³ Perhaps, the Pope’s tentativeness and cautious attitude had more to do with the nature of the Council that he wanted to convoke. He clearly was not interested in expounding doctrinal affairs, nor was he given to excommunications and expelling of church officials for being academically, even doctrinally slightly adventurous. The lure of his life had been ‘uniting the divided’ and this was what he wanted to make the primary objective as well as the driving force for the Council and those charged with its organisation.

At the end of his speech at St. Paul’s-without-the-walls, for instance, he had asked everyone to pray for

a good start, a successful implementation and a happy outcome for those projects that will involve hard work for the enlightenment, the edification and the joy of the Christian people, and *a friendly and renewed invitation to our brothers of the separated Christian Churches to share with us in this banquet of grace and brotherhood*, to which so many souls in every corner of the world aspire.⁷⁴ (italics added)

The ‘authorised’ version of the speech was censored by the Holy Office. The italicised clause of the ‘authorised’ version of the speech read ‘a renewed invitation to the faithful of separated communities likewise to follow Us, in good will, in this search for unity and peace’.⁷⁵

Similarly, the ever-calculated Tardini, while addressing a meeting of rectors of Roman Universities and other theological institutes on July 03, 1959 explained the purpose of the Council:

It is more than likely from what can be seen as of now

⁷³ Peter Hebblethwaite’s *John XXIII: Pope of the Council*, p.326.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.321.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.321-322. Quoting E.E.Y. Hales, *Pope John and his Revolution* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1965), p.98. This censorship act clearly indicated the initial mental state and attitude of the majority of the congregation of the Holy Office. ‘Followers’ of the separated Christian churches were ‘faithfuls’, certainly not ‘brothers’ and who said that separated Christian churches were churches anyway. They could be called separated communities at best. Lastly, they were supposed to follow ‘Us’ in the ‘search’ for ‘unity’ and ‘peace’; there was no question of ‘sharing’ in ‘this banquet of grace and brotherhood’.

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that the Council will be more practical than dogmatic, more pastoral than ideological, and that it will provide norms for action rather than new definitions. However,

this does not take away the fact that

we can (or should) recall and reaffirm those points of doctrine that are most important and nowadays most threatened, or,

that we can (or must) move rapidly from a speedy and solid summary of doctrinal principles to 'practical norms'.⁷⁶

According to Alberigo, the first clear formulation of the fundamental aim of the Council was made by the Pope towards the end of April 1959. It was

to increase Christians' commitment to their faith, "to make more room for charity...with clarity of thought and greatness of heart."⁷⁷

The last witness to Pope John's charitable nature, greatness of heart and his perception of the objectives of the Council is easily some of the last words that he uttered before passing away. Three days prior to his death, the Pope after having received the Viaticum⁷⁸ from Mgr Alfredo Cavagna said:

The secret of my ministry is in that crucifix you see opposite my bed. It's there so that I can see it in my first waking moment and before going to sleep. It's there, also, so that I can talk to it during the long evening hours. Look at it, see it as I see it. Those open arms have been the programme of my pontificate; they say that Christ died for all, for all. None is excluded from his love, from his forgiveness.

What did Christ leave to his Church? He left us '*ut omnes unum sint*' ['that all may be one': John 10:16].⁷⁹

PREPARATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL

Standing before you I tremble somewhat with emotion but am humbly resolute in my purpose to proclaim a twofold celebration: a diocesan synod for the city of Rome, and a general council for the universal Church.⁸⁰

It was with these words that Pope John XXIII announced the ecumenical Council. The date was January 25, 1959 and his audience, as mentioned earlier, was a handful of cardinals. The reaction of the cardinals to his speech has been recorded by the Pope in his usual humble way. There was an 'impressive, devout silence'. The cardinals were

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.335. Quoting Giulio Nicolini, *Il Cardinale Domenico Tardini* (Padua: Messagero, 1980).

⁷⁷ See Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, p.9.

⁷⁸ A Latin word meaning provisions for a journey, is now used for the Eucharist given to one in danger of death as the food for his journey into the next world. Today, however, it is limited to mean Holy Communion administered in danger of death. See M. Burbach, "Viaticum" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 14, p.637.

⁷⁹ Peter Hebblethwaite's *John XXIII: Pope of the Council*, p.502. Quoting Loris Capovilla, *Ite Missa Est* (Padua: Messagero, and Bergamo: Grafica e Arte, 1983).

⁸⁰ See Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, p.1.

invited to give in writing their opinion on how to go along with the Council. Few replied and that too in 'cold and formal language'.

This, however, was not the reaction of the world outside Rome. Embassies, journalists, lay Catholics and many Protestant organizations started taking interest in the Pope's announcement. The Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople at the World Council of Churches (WCC), Metropolitan Iakovos of Malta went to meet the Pope. Only two days after the announcement, the World Council of Churches sent its message through its general secretary then, Willem A. Visser't Hooft, expressing very particular interest in the Pope's gesture toward Christian unity. Within two weeks, the executive commission of the WCC made the declaration its own.⁸¹

There seems to have been a deliberate lull in the attitude of the Catholic as far as the idea of the Council was concerned. *La Civiltà Cattolica*—the Jesuits' authoritative biweekly magazine published from Rome itself—completely ignored the announcement throughout the first few months of the year, probably thinking that the poor Pope had taken leave of his senses. By the end of April only, did it take the trouble of publishing the reaction to the announcement of the Pope. Yves Congar described the mood of the Catholic world, Rome in particular, at that time:

Little by little, the hopes raised by the proclamation of the Council were obscured as though by a thin layer of ashes. There was a long silence, a sort of blackout, interrupted only occasionally by some cheerful statement from the pope. But these declarations were rather vague, and seemed to retreat from the stance of the original announcement. This was widely noticed, even though the pope himself declared publicly that his intentions had not changed.⁸²

The Pope, on the other hand, was quiet as if waiting for the idea to sink into the heart and mind of the Catholic world. During this waiting period, the Pope kept on working in a rather quiet way to push the Council ahead. On February 06, 1959, he formed an initially restricted group of workers to prepare for the Council and on May 17, 1959, a public announcement revealed that an Ante-preparatory Commission comprising of 10 members—mostly Italians—had been set up to 'gather material that would permit the start of the preparations of the Council's work...[and] to delineate the topics to be considered at the Council and to formulate proposals for the composition of working bodies that would manage the real and proper preparation for the Council itself'.⁸³

⁸¹ Ibid., p.7.

⁸² Ibid., p.10. Quoting *Discorsi Messaggi Colloqui del S. Padre Giovanni XXIII*, 6 vols. (Vatican City: Editrice Vaticana, 1963-67), vol.4, p.875.

⁸³ Ibid., p.11.

Cardinal Tardini, Secretary of State was named president of this ante-preparatory commission while Pericle Felici, 'an obscure auditor of the Vatican tribunal' and 'titular Archbishop of Samosata, was named its secretary. This announcement must have doused all hopes on the part of the conservatives who were not too eager to see the Council kick off.

On June 18, 1959, a letter signed by Cardinal Tardini was dispatched by Monsignor Felici to all the bishops and prelates of the world—2593 in number—to discover what they thought were the more pertinent problems being faced by the contemporary Church and how it ought to be handled. Tardini had initially thought of dispatching a questionnaire highlighting probable issues and topics.⁸⁴ We don't know, whether on his own behalf or through instructions from the Pope, he cancelled that (although there seems to have been evident support for that from the Roman Curia) and requested the bishops to jot down what they perceived as topics worth discussion. Whatever the case, Tardini was well aware of the Pope's eagerness to 'let some fresh air into the Church' as well as his democratic nature. Rev. Ralph M. Wiltgen, S.V.D. further tells us

He added in his letter that the prelates were at liberty to consult "prudent and expert clerics" in formulating their replies. The letter was sent not only to those entitled to attend the Council by virtue of canon law, but also to titular bishops, vicars and prefects apostolic, and superiors general of nonexempt religious congregations.⁸⁵

Almost another month goes by before we hear of another major development; the Pope wrote a letter to Cardinal Tardini on July 14, 1959, about the name of the Council; it was to be called Vatican II. This was tantamount to an unequivocal affirmation that Vatican II was not a completion of Vatican I which had been jeopardized because of the French Prussian War in 1870 and hence never closed. And as the Council was a new one, the agenda could be quite different. Alberigo rightly points out, 'It would be a blank page in the centuries-old history of the councils'.⁸⁶

As responses to Cardinal Tardini's letter started pouring in, it was decided to classify the contents of these responses into various headings. Alberigo states that the

⁸⁴ It is for the Pope to determine matters to be treated in a council. See Canon 338 in *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, edited by James A. Corideen, Thomas J. Green and Donald E. Heintschel (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985 and Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1991), pp.279-280. Page numbers for this source are based upon the Indian edition throughout the thesis.

⁸⁵ See Ralph M. Wiltgen, S.V.D., *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: The Unknown Council* (New York City: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1967), p.20.

⁸⁶ See Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, p.12.

classification process came to an end by January, 1960,⁸⁷ while Wiltgen informs us that Monsignor Felici dispatched another letter on March 21, 1960 to the prelates who had not responded. The total number of replies received was 1998 which accounted for 77 percent of the letters dispatched.⁸⁸

Monsignor Felici worked with nine assistants in order to classify and summarize the recommendations that had come in. Each letter was first photocopied and the original filed away. The photocopies were then cut into sections and sorted according to the topics. The classification process resulted in 16 huge volumes with more than ten thousand pages, of which the last volume alone was an index of 1500 pages. It was called *Analyticus conspectus consiliorum et votorum quae ab episcopis et praelatis data* (An Analytical Synthesis of the Advice and Suggestions from the Bishops).⁸⁹ After further work, a briefer *Final Synthesis of the Advice and Suggestions from the Most Reverend Bishops and Prelates of the Whole World for the Future Ecumenical Council* was prepared. With this, the first phase of Council preparations came to an end.

On June 05, 1960 on the feast of Pentecost, Pope John XXIII gave the first clear perception of how the preparations had gone and would go about in future.

An Ecumenical Council takes place in four stages; first there is an introductory, exploratory, ante-preparatory and general phase, which has lasted till now. This is followed by a preparatory phase, properly speaking, which we have just announced. Thirdly, there is the celebration or general meeting of the Council in all its solemnity. Finally, there is the promulgation of the Acts of the Council, that is, what the Council has agreed to determine, declare, and propose with respect to and for the improvement of thought and life, a deeper increase in spirituality and apostolic fervor, and the glorification of the Gospel of Christ, as applied and lived by His holy Church.⁹⁰

This was also the date on which the Pope through his *motu proprio Superno Dei nutu* established twelve⁹¹ Preparatory Commissions and three Secretariats which were as follows:

S. No.	Commissions	Presidents	Secretaries
1	Central Commission	Pope John XXIII	Archbishop Felici
2	Commission on Faith and	Cardinal Alfredo	Father Sebastian

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.12.

⁸⁸ Ralph M. Wiltgen, S.V.D., *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: The Unknown Council*, p.20.

⁸⁹ See Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, p.12.

⁹⁰ See Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II*, p.29.

⁹¹ Strangely the three historians I was depending upon have two different numbers. While Alberigo and Heubsch think there were 11 Commissions, Rynne counts 12 with names.

	Morals	Ottaviani	Tromp, S.J.
3	Commission for Bishops and the Government of Diocese	Cardinal Mimmi, later Cardinal Paolo Marella	Father Berutti, O.P.
4	Commission for Discipline of the Clergy and Faithful	Cardinal Pietro Ciriaci	Father Berutti, O.P.
5	Commission for Religious	Cardinal Valerio Valeri	Father Rousseau, O.M.I.
6	Commission for the Sacraments	Cardinal Benedetto Aloisi Masella	Father Bigador, S.J.
7	Commission for the Liturgy	Cardinal G. Cicognani, later Cardinal Larraona	Father Bugnini, C.M.
8	Commission for Studies and Seminaries	Cardinal Giuseppe Pizzardo	Father Mayer, O.S.B.
9	Commission for Oriental Churches	Cardinal Amleto Cicognani	Father Welykyj
10	Commission for Missions	Cardinal Agagianian	Monsignor Mathew
11	Commission for Apostolate of the Laity	Cardinal Fernando Cento	Monsignor Glorieux
12	Commission for Ceremonial	Cardinal Tisserant	Monsignor Nardone

Table 1 List of Preparatory Commissions for Vatican II

S. No.	Secretariats	Presidents	Secretaries
1	Press and Informational Media	Archbishop O'Connor	Monsignor Deskur
2	Promoting Christian Unity	Cardinal Bea	Monsignor Willebrands
3	Administration	Cardinal Di Jorio	Monsignor Guerri

Table 2 List of Secretariats for Vatican II⁹²

⁹² For both the tables see Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II*, pp.28-29. Also see Bill Huebsch, *Vatican II in Plain English: The Council*, vol.1, pp.163-164. There seems to be some difference between the lists drawn by both the historians but I have primarily taken Rynne's list and added to it from Huebsch's, as the former is academically more meticulous and considered a sound source by all historians of Vatican II.

The presidents of these Commissions and Secretariats were also heads of their counterpart Congregations of the Roman Curia. This meant that the Roman Curia which was obviously teeming with conservatives, would also have a great deal of say in matters pertaining to the Commissions and Secretariats of the Council. The Pope realized this all to well. He took one simple and bold step which, to the utter chagrin of the conservatives, proved to be an instrumental tool in the hands of the liberals for all sessions of the Council. While speaking to the heads of the various Commissions and Secretariats just established, he said:

The Ecumenical Council has its own structure and organization which cannot be confused with the ordinary functions of the various departments that constitute the Roman Curia. The latter will carry on as usual during the Council. The preparation of the Council, however, will not be the task of the Roman Curia but, together with the illustrious prelates and consultors of the Roman Curia, bishops and scholars from all over the world will offer their contribution. This distinction is therefore precise: the ordinary government of the Church with which the Roman Curia is concerned is one matter, and the Council another.⁹³

In the early days of July, Archbishop Felici composed *Quaestiones commissionibus praeparatoriis Concilii Oecumenicis Vaticani II positae* (Questions Posed to the Preparatory Commission of the Council)—the topics to be studied by them—and had it approved from the Pope. On July 09, 1960, he mailed these questions to the members of the Preparatory Commissions. There were 54 topics divided into eleven categories. The Ante-preparatory session had finally come to an end after concerted efforts by Archbishop Felici and his team.

Now, it was upon the various Preparatory Commissions to study these topics and prepare *schemas* to be submitted to the fathers of the Council. The Pope had invited 871 men to take part in the preparation of various schemas. This process took a little more than two years. At the end, a total of seventy-five schemas had been prepared.

Some were merely chapters of full schemas, some were later combined with others by the Central Preparatory Commission, and still others were considered too specialized for treatment by the Council, and were referred to the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law. In this way, the seventy-five schemas were ultimately reduced to twenty.⁹⁴

In the meantime two events are worthy of mention regarding preparation of the Council. On Christmas Day, 1961, the Pope issued a bull—*Humanae Salutis*—formally convoking the Second Vatican Council to the dismay of many Curia members who were

⁹³ Ibid., p.29.

⁹⁴ Ralph M. Willigen, S.V.D., *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: The Unknown Council*, p.22.

still hopeful that the Council may not get underway. And then, on February 05, 1962, through his *motu proprio Concilium*, the Pope set the opening date of the Council to be October 11, 1962, corresponding to the feast of the Divine Maternity of Mary.

On July 13, 1962, the Pope approved seven schemas to be sent to the Council Fathers for study. It was officially called the "First Series of Schemas of Constitutions and Decrees" and included:

1. Sources of Revelation
2. Preserving Pure the Deposit of Faith
3. Christian Moral Order
4. Chastity, Matrimony, the Family and Virginity
5. The Liturgy
6. Social Communications
7. Church Unity

Although, so far everything was going well and perhaps in sync with the Pope's vision of the Council, the conservatives (insiders as some called them) were doing their part of the work. They had already ensured that each of the Preparatory Commissions was headed by one of them, i.e. a Curia man to forestall the winds of change which had started blowing the Church's way. One particular incident would suffice to portray the lengths to which these Curia members could go to for the sake of enforcing their intransigent policies. We have already met Cardinal Ruffini of Palermo. He had specialized in biblical research as a priest but had turned against it. He strongly believed that the Bible ought to be interpreted in a fundamentalist way, i.e. allowing for no change in the position that the Church had taken with respect to various issues over the past centuries. In an article, which the cardinal published in *L'Osservatore Romano* in June 1961, he openly contradicted Pope Pius XII's 1943 encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* whose details we mentioned earlier, terming the Pope's position on new avenues of biblical research "absurd". Had a non-Curia member proceeded to make such an insolent remark that also, against a papal encyclical, he would have been ostracized, his works banned and he would have been forced to recant from his position.

Furthermore, the Curia had also been successful in having Latin to be the only admissible language at the Council. Latin was virtually a dead language. Few Church officials outside Italy could understand, let alone talk or debate in Latin. Hans Küng tried explaining the limits which using Latin as the official language of the Council had. Latin according to him was 'a hindrance' to:

1. Intelligibility in the discussions.
2. The living quality of discussion.
3. The freedom of discussion.⁹⁵

Even when an offer was made for simultaneous translation services, it was turned down.⁹⁶ Here, the Curia scored full marks.

Many similar incidents took place during the two significant years when the schemas were being prepared. Two things, however, ought to remain under consideration. Firstly, it is possible that by behaving the way it was, the Curia was trying to tell the Pope who exactly was in charge. We have already mentioned the quip that went round in Rome regarding who was in power. Similarly, most historians have mentioned incidents where papal instructions, some quite explicit, were categorically rejected leaving the Pope staring back in sheer disbelief.⁹⁷ On the other hand, from what we know of Pope John XXIII's intelligence and wit, one can safely venture to say that the Pope was playing the waiting game and allowed the Curia members enough liberty to let them guess as to on whose side the Pope actually was. He had probably foreseen that the change that was to precipitate as a result of the Council would transform the Church a great deal diluting, if not totally dissipating the control of the Curia on the Church.

One need also remember that the Pope had planned a Roman Synod and an *Aggiornamento* of the Code of Canon Law as part of his pontifical programme. Although, there is every reason to believe in the pertinence of holding the Synod and the revision of the Code of Canon Law then and there, it can perhaps also be conjectured that both the events would have acted as convenient *ruses* to establish the Pope's 'traditional' Catholicity and endorse his name in the good books of the Curia.

All this might sound mean to Catholic ears, and if so, an apology is certainly due, but I do not imply by this that the Pope was resolving to shameful tactics to get his way round the Roman Curia. He had had first hand experience of political manoeuvrings and stressful situations in Bulgaria, Turkey and France and had displayed his intelligence and courage to the pleasure and satisfaction of his predecessors. To match the craftiness and wit of some respectable members of the Curia, the Pope needed to think one step ahead. Perhaps it was in his announcement of three major events together that he took

⁹⁵ Hans Küng, *The Council in Action: Theological Reflections on the Second Vatican Council* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), pp.885-88.

⁹⁶ See Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, p.17. Also see Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II*, pp.38-39.

⁹⁷ See for instance Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II*, p.7.

the one step ahead. Idiomatically, he had killed two birds with one stone. What reinforces this is the fact that while he wrote his diary on the evening of January 20, 1959, after having talked to Cardinal Tardini of his plans to hold an ecumenical council, he only wrote his thoughts on the ecumenical council and Tardini's reaction to it. There was no mention of the Synod or of the revision of the Canon. Obviously, it was the Council which mattered for him most. The Synod and the revision of the Canon would ensure that he is able to carry out his plans without invoking the displeasure of the Curia while ensuring it of his 'traditionally Catholic' standing.

Secondly, and on a more cautious note, there is also no reason to believe that the Curia was playing the role of the 'bad guy' as many works, by Catholic and Protestant historians alike, would have us believe. Alberigo, Wiltgen, and Berkouwer, to name a few, have portrayed a none too impressive picture of the Curia. Even while acceding to many of their portrayals, one is wont to say that concerned Curia members were acting in good faith. Battered by the storm of Modernism, which had heavily undermined Christianity and continued to clip away at its remnants forcing it to the periphery of the society, the Curia was behaving quite normally; trying to preserve, even salvage, what little remained of their bygone honour and glory. This required being assertive, intransigent and to a certain degree haughty. These are by no means the most ideal of traits in the given circumstances, but neither are they unnatural traits. A section of the human society, out of sheer sincerity, always tends to become so incorrigibly affixed to its ideals and values that no amount of persuasion can possibly change them. Perhaps this phenomenon of human behaviour offers an enlightening example of the Hegelian process of change in history.

Rynne has tried to analyse this attitude of the Curia. This is what he has to say:

It has been said that the most important factor in the formation of the rigid or closed ecclesiastical mind was the conviction... that the function of the theologian was to preserve Catholic doctrine from the least taint of change or error. "No heresy has ever originated in Italy" was the erroneous but persuasive axiom used in inculcating this conviction. A second factor was a method of instruction that was essentially a lecture-memory exercise, the student being trained to absorb attentively the words of the professor, to analyze by a rigidly logical interpretation of the terms the significance of the doctrine being explained, and, finally, to repeat verbatim the text of the lectures or of the manual in use.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp.37-38. Unfortunately, this description neatly fits in with the attitudes and methodologies of the contemporary Muslim world, particularly our religious institutions. I say this only to highlight the similarities in our two responses and the fact that the attitude of the Curia was not a sole incident.

Happily, the Pope seemed to have been indifferent to these manoeuvrings having focused all his attention to the preparations of the Council. On September 05, 1962, the Pope issued another *motu proprio* in which he established the general rules and some procedural matters related to the Council. It is worth mentioning those which would help us in understanding some of the events that unfolded during the course of the Council.

1. A presiding council was named.
2. The Pope appointed Cardinal Cicognani, the Pope's secretary of State (Cardinal Tardini died in July 1961), as president of a special office that would oversee unforeseen problems at the Council.
3. Two-thirds majority (in addition to the Pope's approval) was required to enact decrees at the council itself.
4. Non-Catholic observers were invited to attend both the general sessions as well as the actual working sessions.
5. Established norms for a profession of faith and an oath of secrecy regarding council proceedings.
6. Established the dress code for cardinals, bishops, abbots and other prelates for various occasions.

The Pope indicated how the discussion at the general sessions would proceed; introduction of the topic with a brief explanation, speeches for or against which must stick to the topic and not exceed ten minutes of length, voting on amendments, revision of the documents, resubmission of the total schema, more voting, eventual promulgation if it pleased the council fathers and the Pope.⁹⁹

One month prior to commencement of the Council, i.e. September 11, 1962, the Pope sent a radio message asking the world to pray for success of the Council.¹⁰⁰

THE COUNCIL GETS UNDERWAY

October 11, 1962 is a red-letter day in the history of Christianity, more particularly so in that of Catholicism. The history of Catholicism in the twentieth century and thereafter, would forever be divided into pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II. It would be termed "a

⁹⁹ See Bill Huebsch, *Vatican II in Plain English: The Council*, vol.1, pp.62-63.
¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.108. Also see Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, p.15.

watershed in the flow of theological thought" in the twentieth century.¹⁰¹ On this particular day, more than 2500 bishops, patriarchs, abbots and cardinals were present for the inauguration of the Council. Leaving aside the peripheral details regarding the timings, those who attended and in which attire, it would seem more propitious to point to the Pope's Inaugural Address which was the highlight of the day. The Pope made a simple speech, which many say he had been preparing for months.¹⁰² After briefly commenting on the previous councils and their significance, he pin-pointedly mentioned how the idea of calling such a council came to him. As mentioned earlier, it was 'completely unexpected' and 'like a flash of heavenly light'. While analyzing the preparations for the Council, he had become aware of the 'spiritual tendencies that, although they are full of fervor and zeal, are by no means equipped with an abundant sense of discretion and moderation, seeing in the modern era nothing but transgression and disaster, and claiming that our own age has become worse than previous ones' and 'they behaved as though they had learned nothing from history, which is nonetheless, the great teacher of life'. These people are under the illusion that 'at the time of former councils, everything was a full triumph for the Christian idea and way of life and true religious liberty'. To this, the Pope added his famous sentence, 'We feel that we must disagree with these prophets of doom'¹⁰³, who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world were at hand'. He further declared that the purpose of the Council was not to elucidate doctrinal matters point-by-point as this had already been done by ancient and modern theologians. For this a council was not necessary. 'Instead, the work of this council is to better articulate the doctrine of the Church for this age. This doctrine should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and literary forms of modern thought'. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the Deposit of Faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another'.¹⁰⁴ Once again there is virtual unanimity among scholars that this was probably the most significant statement the Pope ever made. Emphasizing the pastoral nature of the Council, he added, 'Nowadays, the bride of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than

¹⁰¹ See Robert J. Schreiter, "The Impact of Vatican II" in *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview*, Gregory Baum (ed.) (New York: Orbis, 1999), p.158.

¹⁰² Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, p.21.

¹⁰³ Most historians believe that the Pope had Cardinal Ottaviani and his group of conservatives in mind. See for instance Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II*, p.46.

¹⁰⁴ See Bill Huebsch, *Vatican II in Plain English: The Council*, vol.1, pp.85-95. Also see Ralph M. Wilgen, S.V.D., *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: The Unknown Council*, p.14-15. Also Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II*, p.45-48.

that of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnation'.

A great deal can be said about the Pope's speech but this is not the occasion for it, though, it needs to be recorded that it was simple, bold and depicted a clear 'disavowal of the condemnatory approach of the Holy Office'. It also set the pace and mood for the future sessions of the Council as we shall come to know in the next chapter. In short, it would go down in the annals of Christian history as a significant contribution in laying down the principles for making Christianity more palatable in contemporary times.

Before going on to the main issues that came under discussion during the Council, I would like to mention an incident which was of great significance and would assist us in putting things in perspective and understanding the development of the concept of 'revelation' and the 'Christian view of non-Christians'.

The first General Congregation of the Council got underway on October 13, 1962. Cardinal Tisserant was the president of the Congregation and the agenda was election of members to the various commissions of the Council, which would then present the schemas and consider the changes proposed by the Council during the course of its sessions. Sixteen members would be elected by the Council itself while the Pope would choose eight members himself.¹⁰⁵ The council Fathers received three booklets prepared by the General Secretariat. The first contained a list of all eligible Fathers for appointment. The second listed the Fathers who had taken part in the various Preparatory Commissions of the Council. All members in this list had been appointed by the Holy Office and therefore were pre-dominantly Italians and conservatives, much to the consternation of non-Italians. The third booklet contained ten pages with 16 numbered blanks on each page on which the Fathers were to enter the candidates of their choice.

When Archbishop Felici, Secretary General of the Council, started expounding the process of election to the Council Fathers, Cardinal Liénart of Lille requested that the Fathers should be given more time to study the qualifications of the various candidates and meet their regional and national episcopal conferences so that consolidated lists could be prepared. Cardinal Frings of Cologne immediately seconded the proposal.

¹⁰⁵ This was raised to nine later on. See Ralph M. Wiltgen, S.V.D., *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: The Unknown Council*, p.16 and Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II*, p.54. Obviously, the Pope felt that he ought to exercise his powers in 'balancing' the tug-of-war which he had anticipated would ensue between the conservatives and the progressives.

Both the cardinals were met with vigorous applause clearly indicating that the Council Fathers wanted to exercise their rights and would not have distinct elements of the Curia to impose upon them. As a result, voting was postponed until October 16 and the session terminated within fifty minutes.

The three days that the Council Fathers had gained was enough to change the course of the whole Council. Rynne rightly says:

If the bishops had been slow at first in getting to know each other, this consultation, by breaking down barriers, served to fuse them into a real corporate body.¹⁰⁶

It was known in the early days of the Council that United States, Britain, Australia and all of Latin America would vote for conservatives. To counter the conservatives and enable a larger representation of progressives, the Europeans sought the help of Africans and Asians which, fortunately came in. Results on the 20th of October indicated that the European Alliance—as it was now called—was able to get 50% representation in all conciliar commissions which was considered a victory by the Europeans.

It was thought that achieving a two-third majority as required by the Canon Law, would greatly delay matters. The Pope, with his usual wisdom, ruled that simple majority would be enough. This was the first timely intervention from the Pope to allow for an even flow of events. There would be many in the days to come.

ISSUES

The Second Vatican Council which commenced on October 11, 1962, officially closed on December 08, 1965, i.e. after a relatively short period of three years and two months. During the course of these three years, four constitutions, nine decrees and three declarations were passed. Before proceeding with a rough sketch of the issues involved in each of these church documents, it would be beneficial to see what each of these terminologies mean.

Constitution: 'A constitution is used to declare a teaching that is of substantial nature, one that is central to the entire Church'.¹⁰⁷ [Moreover, these are] major documents

¹⁰⁶ Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II*, p.53.

¹⁰⁷ See Bill Huebsch, *Vatican II in Plain English: The Council*, vol.1, p.101.

[which] set the direction for the whole church.¹⁰⁸ Anne Fremantle, however, thinks that constitutions 'are ordinarily used for doctrinal and disciplinary pronouncements'.¹⁰⁹

Decrees: 'A decree gives a significant teaching but one that requires further discussion'. Anne Fremantle adds that it is 'ordinarily issued by one of the Roman offices or congregations, to which the pope's approval is attached, either *in forma communi* (in the common form) or *in forma specifica* (in a special form)'.¹¹⁰

The *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* provides a clearer picture of the distinction between the above mentioned terminologies:

Roman Catholic canon law distinguishes first between two sources of law, *ius scriptum* and *ius non scriptum*. The *ius scriptum* consists of laws which are formally laid down by authority in an authentic document;...[These are] (1) The New Testament... (2) The decrees of synods... Before the Council of Trent decrees about faith were called dogmas, and those about positive law were called canons. The Council of Trent changed these terms, calling its decrees about faith *canones*, and its disciplinary laws *decreta*. The Vatican Council followed this new terminology. Only the decrees of ecumenical councils have force for all Catholics. (3) Constitutions of popes... General laws for the whole Church are called by the generic name *constitutiones*, and *decreta* are those which are issued 'motu proprio'... All Roman Catholics are bound by general constitutions.¹¹¹

Declarations: A declaration 'usually addresses an area that may be, by its nature, controversial and in need of further doctrinal development'.¹¹²

Michael Sean Attridge in his doctoral thesis entitled 'The Christology of Vatican II in Relation to Article 8 of *Dei Verbum*' has the following to say regarding the distinction between these terms:

Roman Catholic theologian Adrian Hastings describes the precedence of the constitutions over the other conciliar documents (decrees and declarations) by using a "spectrum" of significance. For Hastings, constitutions are theologically more weighty than decrees, which in turn are more consequential than declarations. Canon lawyer Francis Morrissey agrees, saying that constitutions are "fundamental documents addressed to the Church universal" whereas "decrees" are directed toward "a given category of the faithful or a special form of apostolate" and declarations are "policy statements" based on church teaching.

¹⁰⁸ See Bill Huebsch and Paul Thurnes, *Vatican II in Plain English: The Constitutions*, vol.2, pp.195.

¹⁰⁹ See Anne Fremantle (ed.), *The Papal Encyclical in their Historical Context*, p.24.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.25.

¹¹¹ Adrian Fortesque, "Law (Christian, Western)" in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hastings (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1967), vol.7, pp.832-838.

¹¹² Bill Huebsch, *Vatican II in Plain English: The Council*, vol.1, p.102.

"more likely to be revised by time."...[The four constitutions] contain "the interpretive key for the decrees and declarations."¹¹³

These church documents acquire their authority on the basis of their hierarchical status as well as some other factors. The highest in this hierarchy are the constitutions and decretal letters.¹¹⁴ After these come the papal bulls, *motu proprios* and encyclicals to be followed by decrees and declarations. Although the status of each of these forms of documents is defined in books of Canon Law in Catholicism, the possibility remains that a constitutional document badly drafted becomes worthless while a decree or declaration accepted by leading theologians becomes extremely authoritative.

As was mentioned earlier, four constitutions, nine decrees and three declarations were promulgated during the Second Vatican Council. A brief write-up of each is given below which would hopefully assist a great deal during the course of our work.

THE FOUR CONSTITUTIONS:

1- Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium* – Light of All Nations)

Approved on November 21, 1964.

This document contains 69 articles spread over eight chapters. It was first drafted by the Theological Commission and presented in the first session (1962) but faced violent opposition from Council Fathers. It was later redrafted in the interval between the first and second sessions, revised in the light of discussions in the second session (1963) and finally approved in the third session (1964).

Instead of defining the structure and government of the Church, it begins with the notion of the Church as a people to whom God communicates Himself in love. Later chapters talk about the clergy and religious. The focus of the constitution however, is on the hierarchy of the church and the priestly role of bishops collectively, i.e. the collegiality of bishops, instead of the powers conferred on them through appointment. As Avery Dulles, S.J., puts it, the orientation of *Lumen Gentium* are pastoral, Christocentric, biblical, historical, eschatological and strongly ecumenical.¹¹⁵ This constitution best represents the spirit which Pope John XXIII wanted to see in the Church.

¹¹³ Michael Sean Attridge, *The Christology of Vatican II in Relation to Article 8 of Dei Verbum*, unpublished PhD thesis (Toronto: Faculty of Theology of the University of St. Michael's College and the Theology Department of the Toronto School of Theology, 2004), p.4.

¹¹⁴ This is used to declare an infallible doctrine or to pronounce the canonization of a saint. See Bill Huebsch, *Vatican II in Plain English: The Council*, vol.1, p.101.

¹¹⁵ Avery Dulles, S.J., "Introduction [to the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church]" in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (General Editor) (New York: The America Press, 1966), pp.9-13.

2- Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*)

Since this constitution forms an essential part of this work, we shall be dealing with in the second and third chapters in far more detail.

3- Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*)

Approved on December 04, 1963.

The document contains 130 articles in 8 chapters. The constitution on Liturgy was a direct fruit of the Liturgical Movement which had started in Europe several decades prior to the Council. The constitution was so well prepared that when it was voted upon on November 14, except for 46 negative votes, the rest of the Council Fathers approved it generally. After revision and amendment, it was finally approved in the second session. Unlike other constitutions and decrees, its effect started trickling down to the masses almost immediately. It hovers around the principles for restoration and promotion of the Sacred Liturgy, allows for Mass in the vernacular, 'restores Eucharist as an *act* and not a *static devotional object*'.

4- Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*)

Approved on December 07, 1965.

The document contains 93 articles in nine chapters. It was the first document issued by the Council to address the whole world. The document is divided into two main parts; in the first part, the Church's relation with man and the world, man's dignity and his relation to other fellow beings is highlighted; in the second part attention is given to "some problems of special urgency" such as 'various aspects of modern life and human society' which includes the proper development of culture, economic and social life, fostering peace and the promotion of a community of nations and the nobility of marriage and the family. The coherence of science with faith is also emphasized.

THE NINE DECREES

1- Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication (*Inter Mirifica*)

Approved on December 04, 1963.

This document contains 24 articles in two chapters. It addresses the people who control the media and requests the Church to use the modern media to preach the Good News and reject its 'ungodly' aspects. Most Catholic theologians view this decree as incoherent with the general mood of the Council, although, the fact that this was the first time the Council was addressing itself to the problem of communication was in itself significant.

2- Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*)

Approved on November 21, 1964.

This document contains 24 articles spread over three chapters. This is an important document in that it casts a critical view upon the Roman Catholic Church and its relations with non-Catholic Christians. The Roman Catholic Church had so far been lagging behind in its relations with non-Catholics and the little 'ecumenical' talk that there was in Catholic circles, centred upon all non-Catholics returning in repentance to the Catholic Church. *Unitatis Redintegration* looks forward to 'a "pilgrim" Church moving towards Christ'. As correctly pointed out by many non-Catholics, this was a ground-breaking document which calls for the reformation of the Roman Church as well as encourages dialogue.

3- Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*)

Approved on November 21, 1964.

This document contains 30 articles in six chapters. It emphasizes the equality of the Eastern and Western traditions and expresses the rights of the Eastern communities in the Catholic Church and 'reestablishes privileges and customs which had been abolished in the past'. The six Eastern Rite communities are Chaldean, Syrian, Maronite, Coptic, Armenian and Byzantine.

4- Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church (*Christus Dominus*)

Approved on October 28, 1965.

The document contains 44 articles in four chapters. It starts with an emphasis on the supremacy of the Pope over the whole church and then goes on to clarify the role of bishops in various capacities as teacher, priest and pastor, new methods of religious and social research. Essentially speaking the tone is not about the rights of bishops, rather, about their selfless service for the Christianity community. The collegiality of bishops also comes under discussion.

5- Decree on Priestly Formation (*Optatam Totius*)

Approved on October 28, 1965.

The document contains 22 articles in seven chapters. The Catholic world had been obliged to the Council of Trent for instructions that were being followed with respect to the training of priests. All that came under revision in this document which was very much in the open, pastoral spirit of Vatican II. Priests needed to be trained in Scriptures, pastoral counseling, history and ecumenism. Setting up major seminaries with newer disciplines while catering for the spiritual growth of the seminarians was particularly emphasized in this decree.

6- Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life (*Perfectae Caritatis – Perfect Charity*)

Approved on October 28, 1965.

The document contains 25 articles in one chapter. Religious life has always been viewed in Catholicism as better than married life. However, in this decree, this stance is virtually diluted although the pleasing effects of religious life for both men and women is highlighted and therefore this life of devotion is worth living and needs to be encouraged. Two conditions, however, seem to be important in this regard. One, the religious should try to understand the roots of this sort of life and two, the changes required to bring the life of the religious at par with ever-changing realities and circumstances.

7- Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*)

Approved on November 18, 1965.

The document consists of 33 articles in seven chapters. It is the first time that an ecumenical council has something to say to the laity. The Liturgy Movement, undoubtedly had a major role to play in the way the laity was involved in many church activities although a 'lay apostolate' had existed from the time of Christ but it was not really invoked properly. This decree takes all those avenues into account where the laity can contribute to carrying the message of the Church to the modern world which is basically the arena of the lay people. It could then, be assumed, that the lay people are the Church's connection to modernity. The decree offers basic principles for the lay apostolate as well as pastoral suggestions for its effective exercise.

8- Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*)

Approved on December 07, 1965.

The document contains 22 articles in four chapters. This document reads well with several other documents of the council. It emphasizes the three-fold ministry through which he charges his mission, namely, Christ the King, Christ the Teacher and Christ the Priest. It further deals with the relation between the Priest and the laity and finally encourages celibacy as a 'suitable' way of life.

9- Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes*)

Approved on December 07, 1965.

The document contains 41 articles in six chapters. Missionary activity has been defined in the document as 'that which is undertaken by the Church in favour of nations or peoples who have not yet heard the gospel and into whose non-Christian culture the

gospel message has never been implanted'. It further encourages 'retaining local religious customs and incorporating the Gospel into them.'

THE THREE DECLARATIONS

1- Declaration on Christian Education (*Gravissimum Educationis*)

Approved on October 28, 1965.

The document consists of 12 articles. The document as it stands is incomplete and so it specifically states that 'only a few fundamental principles' are being dealt with while a more developed point of view is being left to a special postconciliar Commission and to the Conferences of Bishops. It emphasizes the integration of Christian education in all spheres of human life.

2- Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christians (*Nostra Aetate*)

Approved on October 28, 1965.

The document contains five articles in one chapter. Since this declaration is an essential part of this work, we shall be dealing with it in the fourth chapter in some detail.

3- Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*)

Approved on December 07, 1965.

The document contains 15 articles in one chapter. This has been termed the most controversial document in the history of the Council since it raises the issue of the development of doctrine. It had to go through 5 drafts before the sixth one was finally approved. In it, the Church has allowed people to practice any religion anywhere in the world.

SUMMARY:

The main concern of this chapter was to pave the way for the author and the reader to understand the background against which Vatican II convened. This included a study of the theological and social scenario (interspersed with the political situation here and there) prior to the summoning of the Council. Next, we introduce the reader to Pope John XXIII, the architect of the Council and its convener, his brief life sketch and how and why he thought of the Council in the first place. After that, we take a bird's-eye view of the preparations that went in making the Council possible. Needless to say, several details have been deliberately overlooked as our only purpose was to enable the reader to understand what a council means in the Catholic perspective. Lastly, we summarised the issues—that were studied in the Council and finally came out in the form of various documents of varying importance—in an extremely fragmentary

fashion. This was done because most of these documents are so intimately linked to each other that unless one is roughly aware of their essential contents and the Latin names used to describe them, it becomes exceedingly difficult to apprehend their import.

In the next chapter, we shall begin with the issue of revelation as generally understood in Catholic circles.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CATHOLIC VIEW OF REVELATION

REVELATION PRIOR TO VATICAN II

Like all great religions of the world, Christianity is a religion steeped in revelation. It shares with other religions essential aspects of a revelatory call and distinguishes itself in many other aspects. It tries to convince its followers that it was through the process of revelation that God made Himself known both in the Old and New Testaments, climaxing in the saving action of Jesus Christ. Although this has been the supposedly starting point of Christian revelation, it would surprise many to know that it was only in the last three to four centuries that Christians started discussing the issue of revelation and its nature.

One thing that came out strongly through the discussions on revelation was that it was closely related to all aspects of Christian theology and might rightly be termed its bedrock. In this chapter, we shall try to understand what Catholics mean by revelation, how they have understood it and what the Second Vatican Council in particular has to say about it.

THE TERM 'REVELATION'

Reading what Christian theologians have written on revelation over the last few years, one is bound to claim that revelation seems to be a major point of discourse in the Holy Bible. The truth however, is that it is a rarely used word in the Bible. Even in the New Testament, it is more frequently equated with the events at the end of time than anything else.¹ Be that as it may, we shall not limit ourselves to a textual exposition of the term 'revelation' and hope to see it in a wider sense.

The term 'revelation' comes from the Latin *revelare* meaning "to take away the veil" or to bring into view something that was earlier out of sight. This bringing into view might be partial or complete. Needless to say, when Christians, Catholics in our case, talk about revelation, they obviously mean the partial revelation of God, for the Bible has unequivocally decided that "No one has ever seen God".² What is this revelation and how does it occur? How can we be sure that a revelation has occurred and what exactly is revealed are some of the questions that we would be trying to answer from the

¹ See for instance (1 Corinthians 1.7f) (2 Thessalonians 1.7) (Titus 2.13) (Heb 9.28).

² John 1:18.

Catholic point of view. Since Catholicism considers both the Old Testament and the New Testament as indispensable sources for its theological structure, it would help us to understand briefly how the Old Testament portrays the general idea of revelation³ before we go on to discuss the notion of revelation as perceived by Catholicism.⁴

REVELATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The most common vehicles of the idea of revelation in the Old Testament are two primary expressions: "the word of Yahweh" or "the law". Richard P. McBrien in his celebrated work *Catholicism* has masterfully summarised the various modes or paradigms of revelation in the Old Testament as viewed by Catholics.⁵ He says

the earliest stage of revelation in the Old Testament is characterized by the predominance of theophanies and oracles.⁶

A couple of examples of such theophanies would clarify how God communicated with individuals:

Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." (Genesis 12:7)

Similarly,

God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." (Genesis 35:9)

Although McBrien upholds the impossibility of being able to understand the nature of these manifestations, the *New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* provides us with some food for thought.

J. Jeremais would classify the appearances of God under two heads: Yahweh comes either to bless or to punish. When he appears as judge to inflict punishment, his form is never described; there is only an account of what happens

³ Perhaps the best study of the concept of revelation as depicted in the Old Testament is Norbert M. Samuelson's *Revelation and the God of Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁴ For an excellent treatment of this idea read Rolf Rendtorff, "The Concept of Revelation in Ancient Israel" in *Revelation as History*, Wolfhart Pannenberg (ed.) (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979), pp.23-54.

⁵ Wolfgang Beinert has identified four separate paradigms through which the 'revealing activity' of God becomes evident:

- i- in inner experiences of God (inner voices, visions, oracles, dreams),
- ii- in historical experiences that are grasped conceptually in the categories of promise/fulfillment, slavery/freedom, perdition/salvation,
- iii- in the experience of the word of God that reveals God's self as the God of human beings and
- iv- in the experience of the covenant through which Israel, as the unique people from the very beginning, is made God's people.

See Wolfgang Beinert, "Revelation" in *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, Wolfgang Beinert and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (eds.) (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995), pp.598-604. See also Karl Hermann Schelekle, *Theology of the New Testament, Volume Two: Salvation History—Revelation*, translated by William A. Jurgens (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1976).

⁶ Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980), p.202.

as a result of his coming. The form of God is, however, more or less recognizable on those occasions when he appears in order to bless...An ancient Israelite belief is that of Yahweh's self-manifestation in human form...At different stages in her religious history Israel made differing statements about God in relation to the world...Alongside such concrete imagery attempts were made at a progressively spiritual presentation of God's self-manifestation. The first of these is the mal'ākh Yahweh, the messenger or angel of God...Possibly the spheres of activity of different divine beings were attributed to the 'angel of Yahweh'. Passages such as Gn. 16, where the angel is practically identified with Yahweh, express the presence of God in the angel phenomenon.⁷

Gerald O'Collins has moreover described the process of 'seeing' or the 'vision' a manifestation of God. He says:

What is called a 'vision' can turn out to be merely the reception of a message. With 'eyes wide open' and penetrating gaze' Balaam sees a vision, but this means simply that God puts words into his mouth (Numbers 24: 15-16).⁸

Sometimes these theophanies consist of 'The word being seen by...' (Isaiah 1:2) or 'behold the word of Yahweh' (Jeremiah 2:31).

In all these appearances however, whatever the form of this appearance, the most important thing is what God had to say, that is, the word of God.

These theophanies started developing into consultations with God through seers and priests (1 Samuel 14:36). Israel also acknowledged that God revealed Himself in dreams (Genesis 20:3, 1 Kings 3:5-14). Over a period of time, Israel started differentiating between dreams through which God communicated with prophets (Deuteronomy 13:2) and those through which He communicated with the professional seers (Jeremiah 23:25-32).⁹

The next paradigm of revelation and perhaps the most important of all, is the Sinai Covenant. Through it, God not only expressed His will but also demanded a vow of fidelity to the Law (Exodus 20:1-17). In all future interaction with Israel, God would continuously bless or reprimand Israel reminding her of either keeping or violating her pledge of obedience to the Law.

Yet another important mode of revelation was the agency of prophets who were considered as intermediaries between God and the people. The prophet plays a dual

⁷ See W. Watson, "Theology of the Old Testament" in *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, Rev. Reginald C. Fuller (general editor) (Surrey: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1981), pp.131-138.

⁸ Gerald O'Collins, *Theology and Revelation* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1968), p.18.

⁹ Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, p.202.

role; that of a seer and a speaker.¹⁰ Being the divine spokesperson, he interprets for his people the meaning of the events being faced by Israel.

Thus a prophet will understand a catastrophe not as a secular disaster, but as a divine punishment for sin.¹¹

Although Moses was the prophet *par excellence* (Deuteronomy 34:10), Israel was bestowed with several great prophets. Once a prophet was chosen to deliver the word of God to the people, he had no choice but to relent (Amos 3:8) whether the people wanted to hear him or not (Ezekiel 3:11). Prophethood was an important issue in Jewish philosophy and some of the greatest Jewish minds wrote treatises raising all kinds of questions pertaining to it.

McBrien enlightens us with a particularly interesting detail regarding 'criteria by which the authentic word of God could be recognized':

- 1- the fulfillment of the word of the prophet, i.e., what the prophet says will happen, happens (Jeremiah 28:9)
- 2- the prophecy's fidelity to Yahweh and to the traditional religion (Jeremiah 23:13-32)
- 3- and the often heroic witness of the prophet himself (Jeremiah 1:4-6).¹²

It is also through the wisdom of the faithful of Israel that Yahweh is revealed. A wise person is the person who fulfills the Law of God.¹³

The man who fears the Lord will do this, and he who holds to the Law will obtain wisdom.
(Sirach 14:1)

This is because God is the source of all wisdom.

For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
(Proverb 2:6)

The wisdom of God is depicted in the works of God and is communicated to those who love Him. Not only that, wisdom comes from God's mouth from the beginning of creation. (Sirach 24: 1-34). It is identified with the word of God and therefore is creative and revealing.

¹⁰ Gerald O'Collins, *Theology and Revelation*, p.23.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.24.

¹² Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, p.203-204. For a clearer account which keeps the findings of Biblical criticism in view, see Gerald O'Collins, *Theology and Revelation*, p.20. Despite the great advances that have been made by scholars of biblical criticism, one is wont to say that there is much to learn for our Christian friends from the methodology pursued by Muslims in the authentication of the Quranic text and the text of the sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

¹³ See Edward J. Gratsch, John R. Civille, Ralph J. Lawrence and Donald G. McCarthy, *Principles of Catholic Theology: A Synthesis of Dogma and Morals* (New York: Alba House, 1981), p.

Lastly, Yahweh is revealed through His creation and nature.

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork
(Psalms 19:1)

THE CATHOLIC VIEW OF REVELATION: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Catholics define revelation as the self-disclosure of God.¹⁴ The most significant text of the Bible upon which rests the whole edifice of Catholic as well as Christian revelation is:

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power.
(Hebrews 1:1-3)

The first few words sum up the totality of revelation in the Old Testament with all its themes. The verse then goes on to add that this time around, God has decided to speak through His son Jesus who ought to be considered the fullness of revelation.

Theologically, God unveils and therefore reveals Himself for man through two modes as far as Catholics are concerned. The first mode is when God reveals Himself through nature. This is what we just mentioned a little while ago regarding the Old Testament as well. The Holy Bible is replete with verses which attempt to draw the attention of man to the universe around him and through it arrive at the truth that there is a God who has brought everything to life. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans says:

Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.
(Romans 1:20)

To arrive thus at God is called natural revelation. Every human being who bears a sound mind and desires to attain God can do so through natural revelation, albeit, not fully. St. Thomas Aquinas proved quite cogently how God could be known through his famous “five ways”¹⁵ using Aristotelian logic. Its basic characteristic is that one arrives at the knowledge of God through the light of reason. St. Thomas Aquinas would have added that there were two kinds of revelation: one the natural or rational type while the other the historic or special one. The first was ‘an ascent by the natural light of reason, through created things to the knowledge of God’ and the other was ‘a descent, by mode

¹⁴ Edward J. Gratsch et al., *Principles of Catholic Theology: A Synthesis of Dogma and Morals*, p.3.

¹⁵ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation*, edited by Timothy McDermott (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1989), pp.12-14. For a succinct treatment of these five ways see, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Volume 1 The Existence of God, Part One: Questions 1-13*, Thomas Gilby, O.P., General Editor (New York: Image Books, 1969), pp.262-292.

of revelation, of divine truth which exceeds human intellect, yet not as demonstrated to our sight but as a communication delivered for our belief.¹⁶

The first kind he further elaborated:

Our natural knowledge takes its beginning from sense. Hence our natural knowledge can reach as far as it can be led by things of sense. But, starting from sensible things, our intellect cannot reach so far as to see the divine essence; because sensible things, which are created by God, are not equal to the power of God which is their Cause. Hence from the knowledge of sensible things the whole power of God cannot be known; from which it follows that His essence cannot be seen. But because they are His effects and dependent on Him as their Cause, we can be led from them so far as to know that God exists, and to know concerning Him those things which must necessarily appertain to Him in virtue of His being the first Cause of all things, exceeding all that He has caused.

Man, in spite of his intelligence and in spite of the fact that he might be trying to seek God, may not reach Him. St Paul in the book of Wisdom creates room for such men:

Yet these men are little to be blamed, for perhaps they go astray while seeking God and desiring to find him. For as they live among his works they keep searching (13.6f)

The second form of revelation is supernatural revelation. This is when God manifests Himself to man without any effort on the part of man. This revelation is made mainly through prophets, apostles and sacred writers, more particularly so through his Divine Son. It is supernatural because its truth is not part of our nature nor can it be attained by the unaided powers of our body and spirit. The response to this sort of revelation is faith. Unless otherwise stated, when we talk about revelation through the course of this chapter, our concern would be its second form. Needless to say, a supernatural revelation can only be made through supernatural means and for supernatural ends. The supernatural end which a Catholic aspires for is undoubtedly the Beatific Vision, namely, beholding God face to face. (1 Corinthians 13:12 and 1 John 3:2).¹⁷

If one takes a look at the Synoptic Gospels, it becomes clear that the main theme of Jesus' message was the kingdom of God and he had come to fulfill the Law and the prophets.

Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them...For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
(Matthew 5: 17-20)

¹⁶ See Thomas Aquina, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, Chapter I, in Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Cd Version.

¹⁷ Charles Coppens, *A Systematic Study of the Catholic Religion* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1904), p.3.

Similarly, in the apostolic letters, Christ's theological status is enhanced as he is said to have been revealed for the sake of people in the last days (1 Peter 1:20). He has come to 'put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Hebrew 9:26). God's grace has become manifest through Christ (2 Timothy 1:10). Christ would eventually be revealed more clearly at the Parousia (2 Thessalonians 1:7).¹⁸

The Gospel of John is perhaps the most emphatic in declaring Christ God Himself (John 1:1-17) adding in plain language that he who sees Christ sees God (the Father) because the Father is in Christ and the Christ in Him (John 14:8-11).

From here onwards, we shall take a brief excursion of the New Testament itself and then move on to the fathers of the early church to see how the issue of revelation was perceived by them.

REVELATION IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Revelation is primarily understood as what Christ informs his listeners while teaching and preaching. The most fundamental aspect of this revelation is that he reveals the coming of the Kingdom of God with authority. This also makes him a prophet as he is so often heralded in the New Testament:

And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?"
And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee."
(Matthew 21:11)

But Christ considers himself more than a Prophet; he is the son of God. The prophets spoke themselves on the authority of God. But Christ does not say that. Instead of saying "Thus speaks Yahweh", he says: "But I say to you". (Matthew 5: 22, 28).

The cause for this authority is of course the Father. Because as Christ himself says:

All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.
(Matthew 11: 27)

And only Father and Son know each other; both in their own ways reveal the other to the people. The Son revealing the Father is quite obvious but the Father also reveals the Son as pointed out by Christ.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Eli'jah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you,

¹⁸ Edward J. Gratsch et al., *Principles of Catholic Theology: A Synthesis of Dogma and Morals*, p.9.

Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 16: 13-17)

As Latourelle clarifies “the revelation of the Father makes men accept the revelation of Jesus concerning the Father and the mysteries of the Kingdom. Jesus teaches and preaches in vain if the Father does not give souls the understanding of what He says.”¹⁹ Faith is the response which people should ideally show to revelation of the Kingdom of God and salvation. This response would only be beneficial if one hears and then understands the message of the revelation.

REVELATION IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

After the resurrection of Christ, it is his disciples who would have to carry out the work of teaching and preaching. They have fortunately been witness to the life of Christ and his words and deeds and the primary function of a witness is that he/she transfers a piece of information regarding an event (ideally, truthfully and with care) to those who have not witnessed the event. So in a way the witness becomes a repository of information regarding that event. In our case, the information is nothing less than revelation itself which has been passed on to the disciples. Not only that, Christ has explicitly instructed his disciples to carry his word to all nations.

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16)

The disciples therefore, when witnessing to the words and deeds of Christ are transferring revelation. Rather, since Christ is revelation *par excellence*, anything which the disciples witnessed to concerning Christ himself is itself revelation as it informs its hearer and seer something about God.

REVELATION IN THE WRITINGS OF SAINT PAUL

So far, revelation was inherently related to Christ. In the works and letters of Saint Paul, however, the whole idea of revelation takes a mysterious turn. Paul is of course preaching Christ’s message, or so he thinks at least. He makes a clear distinction between himself and the other apostles of Christ. Although he was not an apostle in the sense that the others were (as he had not seen Christ in person), his letters clearly show that he did not consider himself any lesser an apostle either. On numerous occasions, Paul mentions ‘my Gospel’²⁰ clearly indicating that he had a Gospel and a message

¹⁹ Ibid., p.50.

²⁰ See for instance, Roman 2: 16, 16: 25 and 2 Timothy 2: 8.

contrary to which even if ‘an angel from heaven’ were to preach, ‘let him be accursed’.²¹

To come back to the theme of revelation as comes forth from the writings of Paul, one is immediately confronted with the revelation of a ‘mystery’ which ‘was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith’.²² And Paul is able to say that on an authority no less than God’s. In the letter to the Colossians, he writes:

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the divine office which was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. (Colossians 1: 24-26)

This mystery is of course as he mentions in his letter to the Ephesians,

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Ephesians 1: 7-10)

More explicitly,

When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Ephesians 3: 4-6)

Here also, as in previous cases, the response of human beings to this teaching would be termed faith. Dulles makes an interesting addition here which one finds wanting in Latourelle. He says:

Although the notion of apostolic tradition (*paradosis*) already occurs in the earlier Pauline epistles (2 Thessalonians 2:15, 1 Corinthians 11), the Pastorals particularly stress the concept of revelation as a deposit (*parathēkē*) to be faithfully safeguarded and handed on (1 Timothy 6:20, 2 Timothy 1:12-14).²³

It becomes clear by reading these letters that revelation had already started taking a tangible form as teachings worthy of recording and preservation and would eventually lead to revelation being classified as *depositum fidei*.

²¹ For more details on this see for instance the opening lines of Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

²² Romans 16: 25-26.

²³ See Avery Dulles, *Revelation Theology*, p.25.

REVELATION IN THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

In the Gospel according to St. John, the whole idea of revelation is once again brought forth in a highly philosophical manner clearly betraying the author's syncretistic presentation of the 'word' and 'wisdom' as understood in Judaism and 'logos' as understood in Greek thought. We have said earlier that the word of God was closely related to the act of creation and revealing. It was through the word and wisdom that God in fact created and thus revealed Himself to His creation.

The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; (Proverbs 3:19)

Not only that, the idea of wisdom is already developing in the Old Testament and the Apocryphal books as something that God has with Him and the fluid contours of a distinction between them begin to appear much like the distinction between God and the word of God. The following verses explain this phenomenon.

Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me; I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. (Wisdom of Solomon 7: 7)

O God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who hast made all things by thy word, and by thy wisdom hast formed man, to have dominion over the creatures thou hast made, and rule the world in holiness and righteousness, and pronounce judgment in uprightness of soul, give me the wisdom that sits by thy throne, and do not reject me from among thy servants. (Wisdom of Solomon 9: 1-4)

St. John employs these terms interchangeably and finally clothes them in the garb of 'logos' to make his novel presentation. He reiterated the words of St. Paul (see Colossians 1:15-16) when he says:

All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. (John 1: 3)

Moreover, God created everything through His wisdom (Logos in Greek) but He also created through His word meaning thereby that wisdom and therefore Logos are similar to His word.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth (John 1:14)

As Latourelle gleefully explains after putting two and two together:

Revelation was finally accomplished because the Word was made flesh and, thereby, becomes a divine message, speaking in human terms and propositions and telling us the secrets of the Father, especially the mystery of His love for His children. There are three elements that make Christ the perfect Revealer of the Father: His pre-existence as Logos of God (Jn. 1: 1-2), the incarnation of the

Logos (Jn. 1:14), the permanent intimacy of life shared by the Father and Son, before as well as after the Incarnation (Jn. 1:18).²⁴

If one were to take a close look at this passage reading the verses from St. John's Gospel, the following notions become quite clear from a Christian perspective:

1. Christ is the Word of God and so has been with God from pre- eternity.
2. Just as the word of God is not other than God, similarly Christ is not other than God either which squarely means that he is God. This is exactly what the very first verse of John's Gospel states, namely, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". (John 1:1)
3. As a result, it can be safely conjectured once one asks oneself what does all this have to do with revelation, that here we have God revealing god, or the Father revealing His son. The revealer therefore is also the revealed. This further means that while the Father reveals the son, the son simultaneously is revealing the Father and His plan (of the salvation of humanity).

So far, we have studied, albeit quite briefly, the issue of revelation as elaborated both in the Old and the New Testaments. Now, we would like to proceed with equal brevity to see how the early Fathers and theologians viewed the idea of revelation.

REVELATION IN THE WRITINGS OF CHURCH FATHERS

In this section, I am going to be guided almost exclusively by the writings of two foremost contemporary Catholic theologians, Avery Dulles and Rene Latourelle. Of the two, Latourelle has given a much copious account of the writings of early church Fathers while Dulles is quite brief. Both however, are of the view that there is increasing need to carefully sift through the works of these Fathers individually and see what they had to say regarding revelation. Both have incidentally lamented that no such work had been done. Unfortunately, even after a lapse of 35 years or so since the two works were composed, the situation remains much the same. While reviewing various articles, books and theses on the issue of revelation (mostly through the various electronic databases that were available in Pakistan and the United States), I did not come across any work at least in English language which has taken into account the concept of revelation in the writings of the Fathers of early Christianity or even the theologians of the Medieval period. Their theologies have been studied but revelation as

²⁴ See Rene Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation including a commentary on the Constitution "Dei Verbum" of Vatican II*, p.73.

a subject, has unfortunately, found little place in that. I was relieved to see Dulles saying:

...revelation did not emerge as a major theological theme until after the Enlightenment...In most of the early theologians, as in the Bible itself, there is no systematic doctrine of revelation. Although the word appears here and there, it is rarely used with the technical meaning it has acquired in modern theology.²⁵

However that might be, we shall start with a brief presentation on the few sketches of revelation that we find in the writings of the earlier Church Fathers. What needs to be noted at the very outset is the choice of the Fathers that we would be making. The two sources that we have in front of us do not leave us with too great a choice. While Dulles has been quite brief and takes only a handful of Christian Fathers into account, Latourelle expounds on the teachings of almost 20 of them which is more than double the Fathers Dulles treats. What I have done in the pages to follow is to take only those Fathers who had something new to say, leaving out those whose basic teachings were more or less the same.

The initial writings on revelation that come down to us are in the form of polemics as one would quite easily imagine. In the case of Christian authors, they pointed to Jews and the Gnostics; against the Jews, to establish that Jesus had fulfilled Old Testament prophecies and against Gnostics to proclaim that the teachings of Christ far outstripped the wisdom and philosophy of the pagans, although in many cases as we shall see, pagan wisdom and writings of philosophers were hailed to be in close union with the teachings of Christ.

Amongst the first philosophical movements that came to combat Christian revelation were those espoused by the Montanists in the 2nd century and Manichaeanism in the 3rd century. Both tried to discredit the Holy Bible by claiming in the case of Montanists, that neither Christ nor the apostles after him had brought the 'fullness of spirit'. The Montanist priests and priestesses spoke in a state of wild frenzy and would equate their frenzied aphorisms to the teachings of the bishops. They also taught that in the person of Montanus and his companions the Holy Spirit had dawned with the final age. As for the Manichaeists, they believed that revelation was that which was given to Mani in Babylonia. Like the Gnostics, they considered matter to be filthy and therefore the material world a prison of darkness while light was to be sought in the spiritual realm.

²⁵ See Avery Dulles, *Revelation Theology*, p.31.

From here onwards, we would be looking at the writings of the Church Fathers and how they combated various philosophical currents and heresies to preserve Christianity and give some shape to its concept of revelation.

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Latourelle makes mention of Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Papias and Ignatius of Antioch. The first three write briefly and to the point. The teachings of the Apostles have reached them through Christ, the Lord and Master who has announced the way to salvation. Since he comes from God Himself, the only thing that makes sense is to follow the teachings of Christ and the Apostles after him. While Papias makes a contrast between the original teachings of Christ and the 'strange commandments' of others, Polycarp exhorts the Philippians to bade farewell 'to the false doctrines in order to come back to the teaching which has been handed down to us from the beginning'.²⁶

Ignatius of Antioch while endorsing all that has been said so far goes on to expound in his various writings the inextricable relation that exists between Christ, the apostles and the Church which is why all must remain 'inseparable from Jesus Christ our God and the bishop [representing the Church] and the precepts of the apostles'. It is Christ alone to whom 'the secrets of God have been entrusted. He is the gate of the Father through whom Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets and the Apostles of the Church all enter. All this leads to unity with God'. Christ is the ultimate Saviour and Revealer for all.²⁷

Latourelle thus summarizes the general set of teachings regarding revelation in the writings of the apostolic Fathers:

The apostolic Fathers are convinced that the teachings of the Church is of divine origin. The object of faith is the Word of God, the whole list of commandments and instructions which were given to humanity through Christ, the prophets and the Apostles. For everyone, Christ is the streaming fountainhead of Christianity, the one and only Teacher; the Church receives and transmits their teaching. More than any other, it is Ignatius of Antioch who sees in Christ the whole of revelation and the whole of salvation.²⁸

THE APOLOGISTS

The writings of the Apologists were generally meant for a public which was steeped in philosophical debates. It was a general belief then that God who was *Logos* and *Pneuma* permeated the whole universe. As is evident from the Gospel according to John, it was

²⁶ See Rene Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation including a commentary on the Constitution "Dei Verbum" of Vatican II*, p.87-88.

²⁷ Ibid., p.88-89.

²⁸ Ibid., p.89.

Logos through which everything was created. The Apologists banked on this argument to present the Christian message to their philosophy ridden society. Some of the Apologists whose writings are treated by Latourelle are Justyn Martyr, Athenagoras, St. Theophilus of Antioch and the anonymous author of the *Letter to Diognetus*. We shall take the most important and influential – Justyn Martyr – into account only.

Justyn Martyr was one of the earliest Apologists. Justyn wrote two important works in which the issue of revelation, evidently Christ, features significantly with particular emphasis upon the person of Christ. The first was his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* and the other two *Apologies*. In the latter book, he tried to make a strong case for the rationality of Christianity for pagans. According to him, God begot the Logos, 'before all creatures as a verbal power'. It was this Logos who was revealing God to the Jews through the prophets and finally became manifest in the person of Jesus Christ.

Since everything was created through the Logos, all humanity has a 'germ of the Logos'. Through this germ man has the ability to get to a 'partial knowledge of the truth', the whole of truth being approachable through Christ alone. It was also through this germ of the Logos that pagan philosophers were able to arrive at some of the truths that one finds in their writings, a feat which wins them the title of being Christians.²⁹ However, it needs to be added that Justyn goes on to say in his first *Apology* that the truths of pagan philosophers were really the result of borrowing lock, stock and barrel from the Old Testament. The reason that there is often contradiction in their writings is because they do not know the whole Logos which is Christ.³⁰

Justyn goes a step further. He claims in his *Dialogue* that it was Logos that appeared to the various patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament and revealed to them what he revealed.

The Father of the universe has a Son, who is Logos, first born of God and God Himself. He showed Himself first of all under the form of fire and under an incorporeal form to Moses and the other prophets; and now...He has become man, He is born of a virgin, following the will of the Father, for the salvation of those who believe in Him. (I Apologies 63: 15-16)³¹

Latourelle rightly notes that except for Justyn Martyr, most of the apologists tended to speak of the Logos instead of Christ. It was the Logos that spoke to all patriarchs and prophets and then manifested himself in his fullness through Incarnation in the form of

²⁹ Obviously Justyn Martyr had long anticipated what Karl Rahner would later call the 'Anonymous Christian'.

³⁰ Ibid., p.92.

³¹ Ibid., p.91.

Christ who taught people 'divine doctrine and precepts'. The apologists also seem to imply that revelation was the communication of the truth or a 'higher philosophy' one of whose major characteristics is that it is salvific in nature which would bring eternal bliss.

The reason for using this philosophical language is quite obvious. First of all, as stated above, it was important to impress upon the philosophers, and thus win support in the society, that there wasn't too wide a gap between the message of Christ and their own. Secondly, the fact that the philosophers of that era, most of whom were Stoics, believed in philosophy as a means of bliss and emancipation, terms which come conveniently close to salvation with a little theological twist.

We mentioned earlier that the Christian idea of revelation in the early period can be detected in their polemical works against the Jews and the Gnostics. It is here that we need to know a little about the Gnostics to understand the work of St. Irenaeus who comes as the next towering figure with respect to making an important contribution in the general conceptualization of the Christian revelation.

The Gnostics³² were the authors of two important heresies. One was related to the divine and human nature of Christ and the other was the canon of the Bible. The Gnostics denied the full humanity of Jesus Christ and refused to acknowledge the validity of the entire Old and New Testaments. The reason for the rejection of Jesus' humanity was based upon the idea that matter was necessarily filthy. So, that God should come down in material or corporeal form was inconceivable.

The divine Christ (they held) might have appeared to blinded worldlings as if he were tangible flesh and blood, but those with higher insight perceived that he was

³² The term Gnostics is derived from the ordinary Greek word for knowledge (*gnosis*). It is a generic term used primarily to refer to theosophical adaptations of Christianity propagated by a dozen or more rival sects which broke with the early church between 80-150 A.D. These sects claimed to possess a special 'knowledge' which transcended the simple faith of the Church. The New Testament makes a plain distinction between true and false gnosis. The true consists in a deep insight into the essence and structure of the Christian truth, springs from faith, is accompanied by the cardinal virtues of love and humility, serves to edify the church, and belongs among the gifts of grace wrought by the Holy Spirit. (See 1 Cor. 12:8); in this sense, Clement of Alexandria and Origen aimed at gnosis, and all speculative theologians who endeavour to reconcile reason and revelation, may be called Christian Gnostics. The false gnosis on the contrary, against which Paul warns Timothy (See 1 Tim. 6:20), and which he censures in the Corinthians and Colossians is a morbid pride of wisdom, an arrogant, self-conceited, ambitious knowledge, which puffs up, instead of edifying, runs into idle subtleties and disputes, and verifies in its course the apostle's word: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." (Rom. 1:22). See Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), pp.33-41 and Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), CD-ROM/online edition, Christian Classic Ethereal Library.

pure spirit and that the physical appearance was an optical illusion and mere semblance.³³

They also rejected the authority of the Church and its tradition. Among the great champions of this line of thought were Basilides³⁴, Marcion³⁵ and Valentinus.³⁶

Of these, the one who deserves particular attention is Marcion. He wrote a book entitled *Antitheses* in which he listed contradictions between the Old and the New Testaments to prove that the God of the Jews, the creator of this world, was quite different from the God of Jesus. The former was the creator, the distant and hostile emanation of the God of the Old Testament while the real God was the God of spirit. This led to an obvious consequence. He totally cast aside the Old Testament. What pained him most was the continuity of revelation, which the early Christians had taken for granted, from both the Old and the New Testaments. He went to the extent of saying that even St. Paul's epistles had been interpolated to 'make the apostle say that the Old Testament contained divine revelation'. He therefore set for himself the task of restoring the true text. He took it for granted that the Gospel according to Luke was the only authoritative one. But even that had been corrupted. So he looked for the pristine revelation of God in the writings of St. Paul and endeavoured to draw up an exclusive canonical list of Biblical books (the first of its kind) which excluded all the Old Testament and large parts of the New Testament.

Marcion's attack left the Church with two obligations. First, the Church had to define its attitude towards the Old Testament, which Marcion wished completely to discard, and it had also to make up its mind about the books that constituted the New Testament. The church affirmed its faith in the Old Testament; it had no intention of abandoning it.³⁷ It was the writings of St. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian that finally did away with the Marcionic threat.

³³ Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, pp. 37-38.

³⁴ Basilides produced the first well-developed system of Gnosis; He claimed to be a disciple of the apostle Matthias and of an interpreter of St. Peter, named Glauclias. He taught in Alexandria during the reign of Hadrian (A. D. 117-138). His early youth fell in the second generation of Christians, and this gives his quotations from the writings of the New Testament considerable apologetic value.

³⁵ Marcion was the son of a bishop of Sinope in Pontus, and gave in his first fervour his property to the church, but was excommunicated by his own father, probably on account of his heretical opinions and contempt of authority. Justin Martyr regarded him as the most formidable heretic of his day.

³⁶ Valentinus or Valentine is the author of the most profound and luxuriant, as well as the most influential and best known of the Gnostic systems. He founded a large school, and spread his doctrines in the West. He claimed to have derived them from Theodas or Theudas, a pupil of St. Paul. He also claimed to have received revelations from the Logos in a vision. He was probably of Egyptian Jewish descent and Alexandrian education. He was excommunicated, and went to Cyprus, where he died about 160 A.D.

³⁷ See William Barclay, *Introducing the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p.58-59.

In addition to the endorsement of what the apologists had said earlier, St. Irenaeus dwelt upon the ‘unity and progress of the plan of revelation in the Old Testament through to the New Testament’. For him, the plan of revelation starts with the process of creation itself. God could be known through creation which took place through the Word; next comes the knowledge of God through the prophets; the prophets, when experiencing theophanies, were in fact only experiencing the Word. At the end, when humanity was ready to receive the Word in person, comes Christ as Incarnation. He reminds us that it was out of His sheer love and gift for humanity that God revealed Himself. It was God who took the initiative to let Himself be known. No human endeavour could unveil God to man.

St. Irenaeus sees in this economy of revelation the love, care and nurture that a mother provides to her child. She does not start feeding him/her all kinds of edibles from day one. She starts with breast-feeding, to soft food until the child is grown enough to digest solid food. Through this parable St. Irenaeus explains the inherent unity of the Old and the New Testaments. Just as this behaviour of the mother is not questioned by the wise, there is no occasion to question the wisdom of God when He feeds humanity with light doses of epiphanies through His prophets in the beginning [the Old Testament] all the while preparing them to witness His total and final incarnation in Christ whose life is recorded in a trustworthy manner in the New Testament. St. Irenaeus says:

“It is not one God who inspired the prophets and another God who inspired the apostles,” [says St. Irenaeus] “...but one and the same God gave to some the power to preach the Lord, to others the power to make the Father known, to others the power to proclaim in advance the coming of the Son of God, to others finally the power to announce His presence to those who were distant.”³⁸

Some of the characteristics of this revelation of God that are markedly obvious in St. Irenaeus’ writings are:

1. Revelation is purely a work of grace, i.e. it is God revealing Himself out of His own accord and not related to man’s endeavours.
2. Revelation is also a work of salvation. It is the acknowledgement of this revelation that would win man salvation. If he refuses to believe, he remains sinful and therefore doomed to perdition.
3. It is both an unveiling and a veiling of God. Unveiling because God is indeed hidden from man and unveils Himself so that man may recognize Him. But the

³⁸ Rene Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation including a commentary on the Constitution “Dei Verbum” of Vatican II*, p.101.

Father is always invisible and so in a veil so that man would always keep on moving towards Him. Irenaeus says, [The Word of God] 'has been made the Dispenser of the Father's glory in view of man's best interests. That is why He accomplished this whole economy, showing God to man, presenting man to God, preserving the invisibility of the Father, for fear that man should come to despise God and so that there will always be room for progress but on the other hand making God visible to man through numerous theophanies, for fear that man, totally lacking the vision of his God, might cease to exist. For the glory of God is man alive, and the life of man is the vision of God'. (IV, 20, 6-7)³⁹

Next we come to the Greek Fathers among whom we would consider two of the most prominent, i.e. St. Clement of Alexandria and Origen.

In St. Clement's theology, revelation or knowledge of God is the primary issue. 'If,' he is reported to have said, 'for example, someone were to offer the Gnostic a choice between the knowledge of God and eternal salvation, if these two things were really separate and distinct (whereas, on the contrary, they are one and the same) the Gnostic would not hesitate for a moment to choose the knowledge of God'.⁴⁰

Knowledge of God, as seen from the writings of previous Fathers, can be obtained through the Logos, the source of all knowledge. 'The Son is called the Face of the Father (Ps. 23:6) because He, the Word, revealer of the innermost nature of the Father, has put on human flesh'.⁴¹

He goes on to explain how this knowledge of God was gradually revealed through the Law of Moses and manifested clearly in Christ. But in this economy of revelation, St. Clement includes Greek philosophy. As Latourelle tells us, St. Clement considers it as a "gift of God to the Greeks".

"Just as in giving them the prophets, God willed that the Jews should be saved, even so he stirs up, as it were their own prophets among the Greeks, in their language, the most gifted minds among them, in the measure in which they were capable of receiving the gift of God."⁴²

Just as the Jews were given the Law through Moses and it assisted them or at least should have assisted them in realizing that the completion of Law is knowledge of Christ, similarly the Greeks were given philosophy to prepare them to receive Christ.

³⁹ Ibid., p.105.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.107.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.108.

⁴² Ibid., p.110.

But it does this in so far as philosophy is the 'search for truth'. This naturally means that as soon as philosophy arrives at the truth, it should be able to recognize Christ as the Logos and teacher and his testament as better and perfect.

St. Clement then goes a step further and is ready to consider philosophy as a third Testament besides the Old and New Testaments all of whom have Logos as their author.⁴³

Origen, also writing with the Gnostic movement as his primary consideration, continues to make almost the same point as St. Clement and his predecessors did. Revelation was made in different forms to different nations especially to the Jews to whom it came through the prophets. The prophets were simply paving the way until mankind was spiritually and intellectually ready to receive and understand the revelation of God in Christ. All previous prophets had also been looking forward to the fullness of time when Christ would arrive but their existential and cultural limitations stood as impediments.

It is here that Origen adds something quite unique to him. He says that even though Christ is the fullness of revelation, he did not reveal himself except in the measure and capacity to which his audience could recognize him.⁴⁴ So there isn't only a gradation of revelation in the total economy of revelation, there is also a gradation in the revelation of Christ himself. Some understand him as word made flesh, others are able to grasp his divinity and still others are able to see in his life signs and symbols which carry them to 'spirit' of Christ, rather than his 'flesh'.

It is perhaps safe to say that although, revelation is there in Christ in its fullness, yet nobody would perceive of this revelation in one leap. This revelation would unveil itself to various individuals and peoples in various modes each according to his/her understanding. Perhaps it is because of this idea in his mind that Origen exhorts theologians and exegetes to look carefully into the scripture.

The texts of the Gospel are not to be taken simply in their immediate sense; they are offered, pedagogically, to the simple as simple, but for those who can and will understand in a more penetrating fashion, wise instructions, worthy of the Gospel must stimulate the reader to discover its true meaning.⁴⁵

Origen goes on to differentiate between the eternal Gospel and the time Gospel. The time Gospel is what one has in front of him; the eternal Gospel being the state one would be heralded to after the Parousia or the second coming of Christ. In the time

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.118.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.119.

Gospel 'a great many things have been sketched in outline by this first coming...their accomplishment and perfection will be consummated by the second coming.... What we now have only a foretaste of, in faith and hope, we shall then grasp effectively in its substance [with the second coming]'.⁴⁶

One last issue which stands prominent in Origen's thought is the subjectivity of revelation. Undoubtedly, revelation is God's initiative and through His Grace alone, yet in this whole process, man has to recognize that God is being revealed and this leads Origen to speak about illumination. Once again this illumination is directly proportional to faith. To the measure that ones faith is stronger, to that measure would one be more profoundly illuminated by the revelation of God. The closer that one gets to God, the more perfect is his/her illumination and thus the ability to understand revelation. This illumination is also gradual by the way. One is wont to think of it in the sense that as humanity proceeds further through time, it would gradually mature more and more and thus arrive at the fullness of time at the second coming of Christ.

THE CAPPADOCIAN FATHERS

The Cappadocian Fathers, Gregory of Nazianzen⁴⁷, St. Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, as Latourelle rightly points out, were not really concerned with the issue of revelation as such. Their main concern was Trinity and Christology. The main thrust of their theology was to get square with Eunomius who taught that once divine essence was revealed there was nothing mysterious left about it. The Cappadocian fathers spent all their intellectual ability and rhetorical acumen in emphasizing the unfathomable nature and essence of God. One of their theological mainstays was also the recognition of the two ways to the knowledge of God, namely, through visible creation and through the teaching of the faith.

The last of the Greek Fathers whose writings one could explore is St. John Chrysostom. He, like the Cappadocian Fathers, emphasized the incomprehensibility of God even after His self-revelation. Perfect knowledge of God was only reserved for the Son and the Spirit. What we know of God with any degree of 'absoluteness' only comes to us through His Prophets and finally through Christ.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.120.

⁴⁷ For an excellent treatment of Gregory of Nazianzen see John A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminar Press, 2001).

⁴⁸ Rene Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation including a commentary on the Constitution "Dei Verbum" of Vatican II*, p.129-131.

ST. AUGUSTINE

Like his ancestors, St. Augustine ends up saying virtually the same thing about revelation as they did. For him, God can not be seen, which means what Moses saw was not God but an angel representing God in a way human beings could comprehend. The only sure knowledge of God which has been imparted comes from Christ, the Way and Mediator. St. Augustine is also a great champion of achieving the realization of God through His creations but the way of faith is 'incomparably easier'. 'It is in order to allow man, whose inner eye is frequently blinded by sin, to walk with assurance in the path of truth that the Son of God took human flesh, becoming thus our Way and our Goal'.⁴⁹

But seeing God in flesh does not necessitate an understanding of God because the external eyes and ears are not enough to comprehend what God wanted to reveal to mankind through His son. While revealing His Son, God also reveals through the Holy Spirit an 'attraction and light' in the hearts of the believers only which allows them to see and hear the truth of the message of Christ. "Jesus Christ is our Master and His anointing is our instruction. If this inspiration and this anointing are lacking, the outer words strike against our ear in vain".⁵⁰ It is therefore the external word of Christ accompanied by the illumination of the Holy Spirit that the Word of God is seen to be complete. But this revelation is not of the Father alone. It is a mutual sort of a relationship where the Father reveals the Son and the Son reveals the Father. But it is not to be forgotten that both Father and Son are one and therefore, no activity of God occurs without the involvement of both the Father and Son. It is Christ therefore, who is being revealed and Christ is also the revealer. St. Augustine delights in saying, 'Jesus Christ preaches Jesus Christ, because He Himself is the object of His preaching'.⁵¹ It also follows from the above that Jesus is both the Goal and the Way.

Since this revelation is to be carried on, the Apostles make a contribution by reporting about the God they beheld in flesh both His actions and words. These reports were collected in the form of scriptures. It follows therefore that 'the word of the Apostles is the word of God and we must believe it'. 'We must receive the Gospel account as if the hand of the Saviour Himself had written it'.⁵² 'The apostles, the Church [which catered

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.138-139.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.141.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., p.142.

for the preservation of the apostolic word and teachings], Scripture: these are the links which bind us to Christ and guarantee the authenticity of the Catholic Faith.⁵³

From what we have learnt so far of revelation from leading Christian theologians of the early age, one can deduce the following. I happily acknowledge my indebtedness to Latourelle and Dulles for some of these conclusions, although to be fair to myself some of these points were my personal conclusions as well even before I read came across their conclusions:

- 1- Revelation was an idea under continuous discussion in the writings of the early fathers although not necessarily under the same term. They had understood revelation as God revealing Himself to the Jews through prophets and the Law. To Christians, however, God had revealed Himself in the person of Christ-the Incarnate Word of God.
- 2- God is unknowable yet through His grace He reveals Himself for the benefit of mankind. This unknowability of God is the very reason for the necessity of revelation, i.e. the self-disclosure of God. So although God is truly known only when He reveals Himself, there are several signs in creation itself which might lead man to the creator of the universe. All church fathers are however, adamant, that this 'natural' knowledge of God is imperfect compared to the 'supernatural' revelatory knowledge of God.
- 3- There is a sort of unity and continuity in the two Testaments which has been emphasized by church fathers in various ways. So, the Old Testament is undoubtedly revelation, yet the New Testament is its completion, perfection, accomplishment and realization.
- 4- God has gradually revealed Himself more and more fully with the passage of time and with the gradual maturity of the human mind until the time was ripe for the revelation of Christ, the fulness of revelation. There is therefore, an inherent growth of revelation which some fathers have attributed to divine pedagogy while others have merely called various stages of revelation.
- 5- The Prophets, Apostles and the Church are all mediators of revelation. They have preserved, announced, taught and witnessed the truth of Christ.

⁵³ Ibid., p.142-143.

- 6- Revelation is seen by many as an ongoing process which does not stop with the Scripture or the Apostles. Moreover, the Holy Spirit continues to reveal the will of God to the faithful.

Although Church Fathers have not talked a great deal about the term 'revelation', it is pretty obvious that whenever faith and reason are being discussed, it is invariably revelation that is also in the minds of these fathers. Dulles puts it in succinct terms:

If one were to look for a doctrine of revelation, as the term is currently understood, in the medieval authors, one might be well advised to begin with their statements regarding the relations between faith and reason. For by the object of faith they generally meant approximately that which, in post-Tridentine theology is called "revelation."

In spite of the fact that nearly every major theologian took a definite position on this disputed point, it is hard to find very satisfying explanations of what they meant by revelation. The reason for this deficiency is no doubt a historical one. The medieval theologians took it for granted that the distinction between faith and reason was clear. Faith, in the objective sense, was identified in their minds with the body of Christian doctrine preached by the Church on the basis of the Bible. And by "reason" they understood, by and large, the heritage of classical pagan culture. Faith was frequently held to be indemonstrable, accepted on authority. Reason was a body of demonstrable truths, attainable by "science" in the Aristotelian sense.⁵⁴

So far, we have seen, quite briefly though, how the notion of revelation was perceived by the fathers of the first few centuries. We shall make a huge leap here of several centuries to get to the thirteenth century and see how St. Thomas Aquinas understood revelation. There are reasons to make this leap.

- 1- Our purpose in this section as pointed out earlier as well was not to trace the history of Christian thought regarding revelation by taking all major figures and their writings in detail. We simply wish to sketch a road map which would benefit the wayfarer in understanding how revelation was viewed in the early period and how it was different to or in consonance with what Vatican II had to say about it.
- 2- Historically, by the time the age of the early Christian Fathers was drawing to a close, Christianity or Catholicism to be more precise had established itself both socially and politically. The church and state had entered into a bond which would last for well over a millennium. This relation paved the way for the convening of a number of councils which deliberated upon various aspects of

⁵⁴ See Avery Dulles, *Revelation Theology*, p.39.

Christian doctrine and the power of the state was used to curb any heresies or deviations. It was natural in such circumstances, both at the political and social levels from the vantage point of the church and the state and at the intellectual level from the vantage point of Christian scholars and theologians to agree upon the implementation of a set of official doctrines which would guide both the scholar and the lay alike. In such situations, 'stagnation' of thought becomes a natural virtue and this is what seems to have happened in the history of Christian thought from the fifth to the twelfth centuries. There was thus a period of 'stagnation' in comparison with the richness of thought obtaining in the early centuries.

- 3- It would however, be grossly wrong to imagine that in the seven to eight centuries that lapsed in between the two periods nothing of any serious consequence was said or written regarding revelation. As Latourelle rightly points out, the scholastic writings of St. Thomas Aquinas would ably gather and base upon all the academic richness of the previous centuries and present them with a freshness which continues to this day considering the indelible mark he left upon later Catholic thought.

Having said that, we shall now proceed with St. Thomas Aquinas' notion of revelation.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

In his remarkable work *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Aquinas asks ten questions about 'the Nature and Extent of Sacred Doctrine'. 'Sacred Doctrine' for Aquinas denotes that 'complex of truths that God has revealed to the prophets and the apostles'.⁵⁵ The first question relates to the necessity of sacred doctrine where Aquinas doubts the need for theology in the presence of philosophy. After mentioning a couple of objections, he proceeds to answer with his usual clarity by saying:

It was necessary for man's salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God, besides philosophical science built up by human reason. Firstly, indeed, because man is directed by God, as to an end that surpasses the grasp of his reason... But the end must first be known by men who are able to direct their thoughts and actions to the end. Hence it was necessary for the salvation of man that certain truths which exceed human reason should be made known to him by divine revelation.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Rene Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation including a commentary on the Constitution "Dei Verbum" of Vatican II*, p.168.

⁵⁶ See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province in three volumes (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1947), vol.1, p.1.

It is clear that Aquinas saw revelation primarily as truths (propositions as it would later be called) being revealed by God for the salvation of man. These truths or objects of knowledge are essentially of two kinds: *revelatum* and *revelabile*. *Revelatum*

'is primarily and essentially the knowledge of God which is inaccessible to reason and, consequently, can be known only by way of salvation. The *revelabile* extends further to all knowledge which does not surpass the innate capacity of natural reason, but which God has revealed because it is useful to the work of salvation and because the majority of men, left to themselves, would never come to a knowledge of these truths.'⁵⁷

Although this revelation of God has come to us through several stages, one can discern 'three divisions of time': before the law, under the law, and under grace.

Before the law, Abraham and the other patriarchs were prophetically taught things pertinent to faith in the Godhead...Under the Law prophetic revelation of things pertinent to faith in the Godhead was made in a yet more excellent way than hitherto, because then not only certain special persons or families but the whole people had to be instructed in these matters...Afterwards in the time of grace the mystery of the Trinity was revealed by the Son of God Himself.⁵⁸

Prophecy, therefore is the most essential vehicle for the revelation of God to man. He defines prophecy as "the knowledge given to man supernaturally, of truths which actually surpass the scope of human mind, truths in which the mind is instructed by God for the good of human community". As the prophet seems to be a passive receiver of this truth from God, Aquinas holds that the authenticity of this truth can only be verified by external signs like miracles and prophecies.⁵⁹

However, not all truths have come through prophets. There is an inherent succession and progress in revelation. Revelation tends to get broader with the passage of time from smaller concentric circles to larger ones. Similarly there seems to be a progression in revelation. The deposit of revelation gets larger and larger with the passage of time. So, the prophets of latter times knew more of revelation than prophets of previous times. The closer one gets to the era of Christ the closer one gets to the fullness of revelation. With the advent of Christ, since both time and revelation had reached their fullness, it would not be necessary to reveal any 'new doctrine of faith', rather revelation would come to 'for the direction of human acts'.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Rene Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation including a commentary on the Constitution "Dei Verbum" of Vatican II*, p.160.

⁵⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol.2, pp.1911-1912.

⁵⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol.2, p.1924.

⁶⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2 (Second part of the Second part), question 174, article 6.

Aquinas also writes at great length about the way revelation impacts the psychological framework of human beings, in this case the prophets. Prophets are not merely passive receivers of divine revelation. Rather, once having received divine revelation, they are able to interpret it in their cultural settings, personal experiences and temperament.⁶¹

In the third part of his *Summa* which is a 'Treatise on the Incarnation', Aquinas gives a detailed account of Christ as the Saviour. In conjunction with the writings of most prior theologians and Christian teachings, Aquinas tries to demonstrate how and why Christ's life is an unveiling of one or another aspect of salvation and therefore divine revelation. In his human capacity, Christ can also be viewed as a prophet since he manifests the divine but he far surpasses the prophets on account of his possessing the most direct vision of God. It need only be mentioned in passing here that as God, he it was who revealed to the prophets and apostles.⁶²

Aquinas goes on to explain the relation between revelation, scripture and the church. As we mentioned earlier, according to Aquinas sacred doctrine is the teaching according to revelation, the basis of Christian faith.

For our faith rests upon the revelation made to the apostles and prophets, who wrote the canonical books, and not on the revelations (if any such there are) made to other doctors.⁶³

Where would then, one find the right interpretation of the Christian doctrine? With the Church alone. Aquinas calls the teaching of the Church the 'infallible and Divine rule'. Divine revelation is at times vividly clear but at others it can be ambiguous. This ambiguity can be baffling even for prophets at times, what to speak of the common man. It was therefore essential that an institution, the Church, in this case, would interpret divine revelation based upon the teachings of the sacred scripture which enshrined in itself the revelation made to apostles and prophets. This interpretation of the scripture is called 'divine testimony'.

There are other issues which come under discussion in the theology of revelation in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas such as the relation between faith and revelation. Since they stand without the purview of our study at the moment, we shall not venture to say anything about it now. I would like to end this brief treatment of St. Aquinas' views on revelation with a very interesting quote by Latourelle which in fact highlights the

⁶¹ Ibid., 2-2, questions 171 and 173.

⁶² Rene Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation including a commentary on the Constitution "Dei Verbum" of Vatican II*, pp.167-168.

⁶³ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1-1, question 1, article 8.

importance of St. Thomas Aquinas' impact on Christian thought particularly regarding revelation for the next seven centuries.

In the theologians who follow, we shall not find, on this theme of revelation, any more sweeping perspective than that which lies at the basis of Saint Thomas' thinking. The terminology will be more precise, more technical, but the underlying reflection will have no greater depth.⁶⁴

Having discussed at some length the idea of revelation as it was viewed in the early period of Christian history and then in the colossal figure of St. Thomas Aquinas in the Medieval Ages, we would now like to move on the Council of Trent.

Briefly then, what most Catholics believed revelation to be well up to the end of the Medieval period was as follows; although Christ was revelation *par excellence*, since this revelation had been preserved in the scriptures by inspired evangelists, the scriptures or the Bible in our case, were also considered revelation. As we shall see later on, the understanding and interpretation of the scriptures required particular rules to be laid by Church officials. These rules as well as the rulings, pronunciations and interpretations of the Church regarding various issues, collectively called the Tradition, together with the scriptures was what the Catholic Church understood to be revelation.

THE PROTESTANT CAVEAT

Everything seemed to be going fine with Catholic revelation until 1517, when Martin Luther (1483-1546) set the Protestant ball rolling. Philip Schaff has succinctly summarised for us Luther's problem in his voluminous *History of the Christian Church*

There are three fundamental principles of the Reformation: the supremacy of the Scriptures over tradition, the supremacy of faith over works, and the supremacy of the Christian people over an exclusive priesthood.⁶⁵

Luther held that as the inspired word of God, the Bible was the only infallible judge (*sola scriptura*) for all teachings and dogmas pertaining to Christians in opposition to the Roman Catholic formula of Scripture and Tradition together. Moreover he taught justification by faith alone (*sola fide*).⁶⁶

The Catholic Church reacted vehemently against the Protestant Reformation with the movement which came down in the annals of history as 'Counter Reformation'

⁶⁴ Rene Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation including a commentary on the Constitution "Dei Verbum" of Vatican II*, p172.

⁶⁵ See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), CD-ROM/online edition, Christian Classic Ethereal Library. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/hcc7.ji.i.v.html>, accessed in June, 2010.

⁶⁶ Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church. The Revolt Against the Church: Aquinas to Luther* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979), p.511.

dominating almost the entire sixteenth century. As a first step, the Church insisted on its own authority, which Protestantism had denied. It also maintained the authority of the Scripture, but insisted that the authorized interpreter of Scripture was the Catholic Church. To ensure that the authority and teachings of the Catholics resoundingly echoed in the gradually rising number of Protestant countries, the Church convened a council. It would be remembered as the Council of Trent.

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

The Council of Trent, the 19th ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church, was held at Trent in northern Italy between March 15, 1545, (it did not get underway until December 13, 1545) and 1563. It marked a major turning point in the efforts of the Catholic Church to respond to the challenge of the Protestant Reformation and formed a key part of the Counter-Reformation. The need for such a council had long been perceived by certain church leaders, but initial attempts to organize it were opposed by Francis I of France, who feared it would strengthen the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, and by the popes themselves, who feared a revival of Conciliarism. The council eventually met during three separate periods (1545-47, 1551-52, 1562-63) under the leadership of three different popes (Paul III, Julius III, Pius IV). All of its decrees were formally confirmed by Pope Pius IV in 1564.

As soon as it started, Emperor Charles V and Pope Paul entered into a heated debate about the foremost agenda for the council. The emperor wanted to reconcile with the Protestants while the Pope thought that the dogmas had been undermined and needed to be redefined. The Pope's opinion prevailed.⁶⁷ In the area of religious doctrine, the council refused any concessions to the Protestants and, in the process, crystallized and codified Catholic dogma far more than ever before. It directly opposed Protestantism by reaffirming the existence of seven sacraments, transubstantiation, purgatory, the necessity of the priesthood, and justification by works as well as by faith. Clerical celibacy and monasticism were maintained, and decrees were issued in favour of the efficacy of relics, indulgences, and the veneration of the Virgin Mary and the saints.

Here, we are only concerned with what the Council had to say regarding revelation. In its fourth session on April 08, 1546, the Council passed the 'Decree concerning the Canonical Scripture'. Lengthy though the text is, we shall produce the concerned part in its entirety for its clarity and the impact it would have on later Catholic thought.

⁶⁷ August Franzen and John P. Dolan, *A Concise History of the Church*, translated by Peter Becker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), pp. 315-316.

The holy ecumenical and general Council of Trent [...] has always this purpose in mind that in the Church errors be removed and the purity of the Gospel be preserved. This Gospel was promised of old through the prophets in the Sacred Scriptures; Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, first promulgated it with his own lips; he in turn ordered that it be preached through the apostles to all creatures as the source of all saving truth and rule of conduct. The Council clearly perceives that this truth and rule are contained in the written books and unwritten traditions which have come down to us, having been received by the apostles by the dictation of the Holy Spirit, and have been transmitted as it were from hand to hand. Following then, the example of the orthodox Fathers, it receives and venerates with the same sense of loyalty and reverence all the books of the Old and New Testaments—for the one God is the author of both—together with all the traditions concerning faith and practice, as coming from the mouth of Christ of being inspired by the Holy Spirit and preserved in continuous succession in the Catholic Church.⁶⁸

The Council then proceeded to reiterate its position on the canon of the scripture delineating in detail the books contained in both the Testaments and announcing that the standard version of the scripture would be the 'same ancient Vulgate version which has been preserved by the Church for so many centuries'.

It then went on to establish the authority which could interpret the Scripture in the following words

Furthermore, to restrain irresponsible minds, it decrees that no one, relying on his own prudence, twist Holy Scripture in matters of faith and practice that pertain to the building up of Christian doctrine, according to his own mind, contrary to the meaning that holy mother the Church has held and holds—since it belongs to her to judge the true meaning and interpretation of Holy Scripture—and that no one dare to interpret the Scripture in a way contrary to the unanimous consensus of the Fathers, even though such interpretations not be intended for publication.⁶⁹

The first task of the Council of Trent was to delimit the spheres of Scripture and Tradition in the transmission of Catholic doctrine. Tradition had been used to introduce the 'believer to the doctrines of the faith', while Scripture to test and verify them. But there were doctrines which had been accepted purely on the basis of Tradition such as purgatory, the invocation of saints, and infant baptism.⁷⁰

After a lot of deliberations, it was decided that both the Scripture and the Tradition are to be accorded equal veneration and devotion. It by no means meant that all the books of the Scriptures were equally inspired. But one thing which came out clearly was that

⁶⁸ See J. Neuner, S.J. and J. Dupuis, S.J., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, p. 96.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

⁷⁰ See F.J. Crehan, 'The Bible in the Roman Catholic Church from Trent to the Present Day' in *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, edited by S.L. Greenslade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), vol. 3, pp. 199-237.

both could not be separated.⁷¹ Crehan has made an insightful comment whose significance we shall discuss in more detail later on. He says:

It is true, as some modern theologians have pointed out, that in drafting the decree the Council rejected a form of words that would have canonized the view that the doctrine of the Church was transmitted *partly* in Scripture and *partly* in Tradition. It refrained for the moment from deciding the question whether there were doctrines that had come down through Tradition only, or through Scripture only...⁷²

However that might be, the Council 'in practice' at least clearly gave its verdict that it could accept teachings on the basis of Tradition alone. An example of that is the sacramental character of marriage which came under discussion in the 24th session of the Council.⁷³

Latourelle has made insightful comments on this Tridentine text on revelation. He observes that the text does not mention 'revelation'. Rather it is the *Gospel* which is mentioned throughout. Gospel, of course, is the good news to be pronounced 'to every creature'. This Gospel has come to the Christian community in a 'progressive manner', i.e. through

the prophets in the Sacred Scriptures; Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, first promulgated it with his own lips; he in turn ordered that it be preached through the apostles to all creatures...

The Gospel also known as the 'doctrine of salvation' is contained both in the Scriptures and Tradition both of which in turn are to be accepted with equal devotion and respect.

The one and only Gospel message, the one and only good news of salvation is thus expressed in two distinct forms: written and oral...thus when Scripture does not seem to be sufficiently clear and explicit on some point, the Church can always find, in the tradition which she preserves, the means to make it clear.⁷⁴

The period from the Council of Trent to that of the First Vatican was quite eventful as far as the Catholic Church was concerned. It saw the rise of a couple of intellectual movements which promised to shake the Catholic church to its very foundations; I mean none other than Deism coupled with Rationalism. Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) and John Locke (1632-1704) thought that revelation was redundant for all practical purposes because it could add nothing to what reason had already attained. McBrien has caught the mood of the age quite perceptively. He says:

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 200.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ See Rene Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation including a commentary on the Constitution "Dei Verbum" of Vatican II*, p. 252.

Influenced by the new rationalistic climate of the day, both Catholic and Protestant theologians moved in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the direction of a new and more rigid scholasticism. The post-Tridentine Scholastics...stressed the objective character of revelation. God reveals through legates and intermediaries. Revelation is some static reality which one receives from others. And with increasing attacks on the whole concept of revelation, the defenders of traditional Christian faith become more, not less, inflexible on the issue.⁷⁵

The concept of revelation in Christianity received a new impetus of understanding with the advent of two great intellectual revolutions which were to change the whole fabric of life in the West. The first was the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the second, the revolution in historical methodology. Until then, history had been perceived as a collection of information and historical facts in the Christian world.⁷⁶ The discovery of inscriptions and documents contemporaneous with the various books of the Bible, the acquisition of various ancient languages which were not even heard of a century earlier and the unearthing of a number of archeological sites set an entirely new trend and a new approach to history. That both were linked together and that both fueled the flames of Rationalism is all the more obvious. Now it was possible to compare biblical ideas with those prevalent during the writing of the Bible itself and see the influence of Jews and Christians upon others and vice versa.

Until the nineteenth century it was assumed that the whole Bible was equally true, since the Holy Spirit of God was the real author of the Scriptures in the minutest of details; it was also assumed that the Bible contained the written revelation of God to the world, and that in fact God's revelation of Himself was something which He had communicated to mankind in the form of propositions written in a book. But with the rise of modern Biblical scholarship and the new methods being derived to study the Bible all these facts were brought to question. The assumption that the Holy Spirit was the real author of the whole Bible had made it unnecessary for earlier commentators to pay close attention to the style, historical setting or even the original intention of the human author. Now science was bringing forth historical facts with all its might that clearly repudiated biblical dates and claims of historical soundness. Right from the Genesis of the Old Testament to the Revelations of the New Testament, first history and

⁷⁵ Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, p. 215.

⁷⁶ See Alan Richardson, "The Rise of Modern Biblical Scholarship and Recent Discussion of the Authority of the Bible" in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol.3, pp. 299-338.

then theology was brought to the court of the new historical methodology and probed inside out.

Needless to say, the church couldn't just sit and play the role of a silent spectator. Things were getting out of hand fast, and the church was losing its integrity equally fast. The time was right for convoking a new council to set the balance right and hence the First Vatican Council.

REVELATION IN VATICAN I

In the last chapter, we briefly described the circumstances in which the First Vatican Council was convoked so there is little use in repeating the same here. We shall take a quick look at how this council tackled the issue of revelation.

The constitution *Dei Filius* briefly discusses the issue of revelation and that also against the background of the menace of Rationalism which had gripped the Catholic Church with fear.

Latourelle has vividly captured the mood of the 19th century when Vatican I was held:

...we must remember that the nineteenth century, except for a short period of romantic religious feelings, was almost entirely under the influence of the English deists and the French encyclopedists. The notions of supernatural, revelation mystery, and miracle, in cultivated circles, were called into question, and the claims of Christianity were discussed in the name of historical criticism and philosophy. The entirely new science of comparative history of religions even questions the problem of transcendence...⁷⁷

Under these circumstances it was natural that the Catholic Church focused all its attention upon rescuing its belief system with full force.

Dei Filius contains four chapters which discuss God, revelation, faith and the relationship between faith and reason respectively. We shall limit ourselves to revelation only. Needless to say, the other aspects discussed are related to the issue at hand but do not form part of our discussion for the time being.

Revelation is taken to be knowledge of God which takes an upward (natural) and a downward (supernatural) direction. Upward it moves from creation to God through human reason and man is able to understand the relation of God to the world. In its downward direction it comes from God to man and is thus complete although the first form of knowledge is also legitimate.

⁷⁷ See René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation including a commentary on the Constitution "Dei Verbum" of Vatican II*, p. 256.

By acknowledging the supernatural source of knowledge of God, Vatican I endorsed several of its erstwhile beliefs:

Still it pleased the wisdom and goodness of God to reveal to the human race, by another and supernatural way, both Himself and the eternal decrees of His will; as the apostle says: God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days has spoken to us by His Son.⁷⁸

This introductory text acknowledges:

- 1- The supernatural aspect of revelation
- 2- Since God is the author and cause of this revelation, 'it is a free and gratuitous operation of His will' and is essentially grace, pure and a gift of love.
- 3- The material object of revelation is God and the eternal decrees of his free will.
- 4- The entire human race is the beneficiary of this revelation and salvific grace.

The next issue to be discussed is the content or sources of this revelation. Vatican I reiterates that the content of revelation are the written books and traditions which, "having been received by the apostles from the mouth of Jesus Christ in person, or having been handed down, from hand to hand so to speak, by the apostles themselves, to whom the Holy Spirit had dictated them, have come down to our own day."⁷⁹

Since the word of God is contained in the Scripture and the Tradition, it behoves a Christian to believe in "everthing that is contained in the word of God written or handed down by tradition."⁸⁰

It is obvious from the above that Vatican I simply reiterated Trent's position in more categorical and clearer terms.

REVELATION IN VATICAN II

DEI VERBUM

This section will try to present a brief history of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*). I was hindered by a major handicap from the very start of this section and would like to clear my position at the very outset.

Almost all the original sources for this sort of work are in Latin, a language to which I had no access in my native country. Ideally I should have based the writing of this section on *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando; Series*

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 260.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 262.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

*Prima (antepreparatoria), Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando; Series secunda (praeparatoria) and Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Vaticani II.*⁸¹ Unfortunately that was not to be. I am therefore obliged to base my work on those secondary sources which were written in English language alone.

THE FIRST SCHEMA

It is interesting to note that the schema on Divine Revelation was one of the earliest, in fact the second only, to be brought to the floor of the Vatican for discussion. It was originally introduced for discussion on November 14, 1962, after the schema on the Liturgy had been discussed. However, it proved to be a particularly thorny schema as it was hotly debated from the very beginning and was only approved in the last days, i.e. before the closing of the Council. With four years (more, if the ante-preparatory and preparatory periods of the Council are taken into consideration) of history behind it, it seems obvious that a sound understanding of this schema requires a look at its history as well. The following introductory paragraph from Gregory Baum's article entitled "Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation: History and Interpretation" would vindicate my position. He says:

A Conciliar document must be interpreted in the light of its historical development at the Council. The real meaning of a document becomes clear only when we compare it with the preceding drafts and study the conciliar discussion which produced this development.⁸²

In the first chapter, we saw how the ante-preparatory and preparatory phases of the Council proceeded under the watchful eyes of the Pope himself. It was the Commission on Faith and Morals, also called the Theological Commission which got the task of preparing the schema on 'doctrinal topics'.⁸³ The President of this commission was Cardinal Ottaviani and his secretary was Cardinal Sebastian Tromp. Although sub-commissions had been established to guide the Theological Commission, there were three documents which helped shape the initial formation of the schema. These were:

- 1- The *votum* of the Holy Office submitted on March 10, 1960.
- 2- Synopsis of the Things in the Bishops' Vota that concern Faith and Morals.

⁸¹ See Michael Sean Attridge's, *The Christology of Vatican II in Relation to Article 8 of Dei Verbum*, p.13, f.n.1.

⁸² Gregory Baum, "Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation: History and Interpretation" in *Theological Studies*, 28:1 (1967: March).

⁸³ See Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Struggle for the Council during the Preparation of Vatican II (1960-1962)" in *History of Vatican II: Volume I, Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II Toward a New Era in Catholicism*, edited by Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), p.173.

3- Final Synthesis of the Advice and Suggestions from the Most Reverend Bishops and Prelates of the Whole World for the Future Ecumenical Council.⁸⁴

The Theological Commission prepared proposals for three constitutions; on the church, the deposit of faith and on social and moral matters.⁸⁵ The Pope himself had desired that the issue of revelation be added to the *Quaestiones commissionibus praeparatoris Concilii Oecumenicic Vaticani II positae*.⁸⁶ The schema on revelation *De Fontis revelationis* was then added as a fourth schema to be prepared by the Theological Commission.⁸⁷

What needs to be kept in mind is that the schema on revelation was to be prepared by the Theological Commission under Cardinal Ottaviani. On the other hand, Cardinal Augustin Bea, President of the Secretariat for Christian Unity was also interested in the issue of revelation as it was intrinsically related to the dialogical perspective which this Secretariat was trying to achieve. Bea suggested to Ottaviani on several occasions that both the commissions could collaborate in the preparation of the schema on revelation but his pleas were always refused. We shall see later on that Bea and his team went on to prepare their own schema which played a role in its own way.

The four schemata were then sent to members of the Theological Commission for discussion at its first plenary meeting on 27 October 1960.

The first draft that came out and was finally presented by Garofalo and Ottaviani on November 14, 1962 during the first session of the Council consisted of five chapters:

- 1- On the two-fold sources of Revelation
- 2- On the inspiration, inerrancy and literary composition of the Scripture
- 3- On the Old Testament
- 4- On the New Testament
- 5- On Sacred Scripture in the Church.

Cardinal Ottaviani opened the debate in a rather negative tone stating that "there are a number of schemata in circulation which oppose that which I am about to introduce. But this procedure violates the regulations... The presentation of a schema belongs solely to

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.229. For the Final Synthesis also see the previous chapter, p.38.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid. For the *Quaestiones commissionibus praeparatoris Concilii Oecumenicic Vaticani II positae* see p.40 of the first chapter.

⁸⁷ Ibid. For details regarding the preparation of these schema, the tensions involved and the maneuverings exercised, see ibid., pp.227-262.

the Holy Father; hence this way of doing things is hardly respectful of his prerogatives".⁸⁸

Ottaviani was obviously referring to the documents that had been circulated among the bishops and were authored by Karl Rahner and Schillebeeckx. Included among these was the schema which had been prepared by the Secretariat for Christian Unity called *De Verbo Dei* (On the Word of God).⁸⁹ These schema represented a strong opposition to the stance taken by Cardinal Ottaviani and his team for reasons which we have already discussed in the first chapter.

Garafalo then continued by stating categorically that the objective of the schema was to demonstrate the readiness of the Church to purge the world of all errors by a clear condemnation of errors. As a first response to this presentation Cardinal Liénart stood to oppose the schema by pronouncing his historical words,

This schema does not please me. It is not adequate to the matter it purports to deal with, namely Scripture and tradition. There are not and never have been two *sources* of revelation. There is only one fount of revelation—the Word of God, the good news announced by the prophets and revealed by Christ. The Word of God is the unique *source* of revelation. This schema is a cold and scholastic formula, while revelation is a supreme gift of God—God speaking directly to us. We should be thinking more along the lines of our separated brothers who have such a love and veneration for the Word of God. Our duty now is to cultivate the faith of our people and cease to condemn. Hence I propose this schema be entirely fashioned.⁹⁰

A similar stance was taken by many other cardinals such as those of Cologne, Montreal, Vienna, Utrecht and Malines. But as historians of the Council have pointed out, the two source of revelation did not seem to be 'the real difficulty' for the time being. It was the 'doctrinal' nature of the schema that was hotly debated. The need to highlight the 'pastoral' nature of the Council was emphasized again and again and many cardinals referred back to the opening address of the Pope implying at times in categorical terms that the Theological Commission had done injustice to the Pope's desire to make the Council pastoral.

Cardinal Bea's interventions for instance, included the following:

⁸⁸ See Xavier Rynne, *Letters From Vatican City: Vatican Council II (First Session) Background and Debates* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Company, 1963), p.141-142.

⁸⁹ See Giuseppe Ruggieri, "The First Doctrinal Clash" in *History of Vatican II: Volume II, The Formation of the Council's Identity First Period and Intersession October 1962 – September 1963*, edited by Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), p.234, f.n.10.

⁹⁰ See Xavier Rynne, *Letters From Vatican City: Vatican Council II (First Session) Background and Debates*, p.143.

(a) The Pope has given the Council a pastoral purpose; (b) the Council has already made this purpose its own in its opening "Message" and (c) the need now is consciously to ratify this purpose by rejecting a schema that runs counter to it.⁹¹

Ruggieri makes an insightful comment here, that 'the Council took possession of its purpose in the terms in which *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* had described it'.

The debate on the schema continued until November 20. Eighty-five (85) council Fathers spoke on the schema. Some other issues which came under discussion were related to ecumenism and the two source theory of revelation.⁹² It became evident that little headway was being made so it was decided to bring the debate to a halt. On November 20, it was announced by Cardinal Felici that the Council of Presidents had decided to take a vote on "Should, or should not, the discussion of this schema be continued?" Ruggieri reports that the formulation of the question was changed the next morning to "Should the discussion be interrupted?"⁹³

When the question was announced in the hall next day, there was general confusion. Those in favour of continuing the discussion were supposed to vote *Non Placet* (No) while those in favour were supposed to vote *Placet* (Yes). Many fathers did not understand what they were voting on. Rynne is of the view that the confusion was caused by 'the illogical way in which the question had been framed'. The outcome of the vote was that 2209 fathers voted, 1368 voted for an interruption, 822 for a continuation of the debate while 19 submitted invalid ballots. According to the Rule of Procedure a two third majority was required for the adoption of a proposal and that hadn't been achieved, the debate on the proposal had to continue.

This seemed to be an apparent win for the conservative camp but this success lasted little more than a few hours because the next day an astonishing announcement was made. The Pope had decided to intervene in the proceedings of the Council and bring the debate on the schema to a stop.

Some suggested that his decision was primarily influenced by the thinking of Cardinal Bea and by a meeting that the Pope had the previous evening with the Canadian Bishop, Paul-Emile Léger.⁹⁴ Léger had presented the Pope with a letter that spoke "frankly about the situation." In addition, Léger suggested that the Pope intervene and create a conciliar "mixed" commission (as Bea had already suggested) to oversee rewriting the

⁹¹ See Giuseppe Ruggieri, "The First Doctrinal Clash", p.253. Also see Xavier Rynne, *Letters From Vatican City: Vatican Council II (First Session) Background and Debates*, p.148-149.

⁹² We have discussed this issue earlier. See pp.

⁹³ See Giuseppe Ruggieri, "The First Doctrinal Clash", p.262.

⁹⁴ See Giuseppe Ruggieri, "The First Doctrinal Clash", p.264, f.n. 82.

constitution during the upcoming intersession. This is exactly what the Pope proceeded to do. He referred the matter to a special commission comprised of the members of both the Theological Commission and the Secretariat for Christian Unity. Ottaviani and Bea would co-chair the commission and Sebastian Tromp of the Theological Commission and Johannes Willebrands of the Secretariat for Christian Unity would act as secretaries.

THE SECOND SCHEMA

A second schema was then produced by the "Mixed Commission" which held three meetings between November 25 and December 7, 1962.⁹⁵ The title of this schema was *De divina revelatione* and it had a quite a new structure. It comprised of an introduction and four chapters. However in one of his reports Cardinal Liénart, the relator for the group to keep the newly-formed Conciliar Coordinating Commission informed of the Mixed Commission's progress, said that a "serious difficulty" had arisen during the discussion of chapter on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition.⁹⁶

According to Liénart's report, the heart of the dispute was over the claim that Tradition contains truths that are not found in Scripture - i.e. that Tradition covers a wider scope than Scripture. Those supporting this opinion cited the teachings of the early Christian authors as well as the Councils of Trent and Vatican I. For many others however, this claim was at least problematic if not incorrect. They argued that holding this position was harmful to relations with other Christians and went beyond the definitions of the previous two councils. For the Fathers at Vatican I, it had been sufficient to assert that Scripture and Tradition were "two forms" under which divine revelation comes to us, without comparing the two with each other. When the Mixed Commission resumed its work the following month, on February 23, 1963, the debate continued. Once again the members of the commission disagreed over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition and in particular whether Tradition was broader than Scripture. Most refused this position but a small number argued that Tradition not only played an interpretative role in its relationship with Scripture but also had a "constitutive function". Their understanding of the Council of Trent's position was that Tradition communicated truths that were not contained in the Scripture. The larger group on the other hand argued that the Scripture-Tradition problem was different today than it was at the time

⁹⁵ See Jan Grootaers, "The Drama Continues Between the Acts, The 'Second Preparation' and Its Opponents" in *History of Vatican II: Volume II, The Formation of the Council's Identity First Period and Intercession October 1962 - September 1963*, edited by Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), p.385.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

of the Council of Trent. As disagreement arose and tempers flared, Cardinal Bea was able to settle the rattle by having the issue put to a vote. Of the ballots cast, twenty-nine were opposed to the schema taking a position on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, only eight were in favour of it.⁹⁷

However Ottaviani challenged the vote on the ruse that he was not present and "unleashed a devastating storm". He even went on to challenge Bea's "fidelity to the Catholic faith". He also tried to make the bishops who had been present the week before take an oath on the "two sources of revelation" approach of the first schema. Charue wanted to slam the door on Ottaviani's face when Léger threatened Ottaviani with an appeal to the Coordinating Commission. This seemed to calm the atmosphere for the time. However the meeting ended without any further resolution.

In the next meeting Léger proposed the following formula which would eliminate the problem on hand but satisfy the minority opinion: "Sacred scripture and sacred tradition are related to each other in such a way that neither is external to the other".⁹⁸ After some discussion Bea recommended a vote on this proposed formula. The result was thirty votes in favor and seven against. The formulation had received the two-thirds majority. At the end of the month, Liénart presented this revised schema to the Coordinating Commission where it was approved. The next month the text was printed and distributed to the Council Fathers for discussion. The Mixed Commission would now have to wait to hear from the General Secretary's office to know when this second schema would be presented.

The second draft, entitled "On Divine Revelation" consisted of a prologue and five chapters:

- (1) The Revealed Word of God;
- (2) The Divine Inspiration and Interpretation of Sacred Scripture;
- (3) The Old Testament;
- (4) The New Testament;
- (5) The Use of Scripture in the Church.⁹⁹

For Joseph Ratzinger the second draft had been written with "some skill". The controversial questions of the earlier draft had been avoided and in many respects there

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.387.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.388, f.n. 52.

⁹⁹ See Gregory Baum, OSA, "Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation: History and Interpretation" in *Theological Studies*, 28:1 (March, 1967), p. 55.

was progress. The Preface now presented "an outline of the idea of revelation" with a strong emphasis on salvation history, new ways of speaking about the relationship between Scripture and Tradition were formulated; the problem of inspiration and interpretation were treated "in a relatively open way"; and "some positive things were said about the use of Scripture in the Church".¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, overall, no one was entirely satisfied with the second draft. According to Ratzinger the schema was "inadequate and vague," easily recognized as a "theological compromise", and a "product of resignation".¹⁰¹

Unfortunately, the schema on revelation produced by the Mixed Commission was not presented in the second session in Autumn 1963. In June however, the Catholic world at large lost one of its most lovable popes, John XXIII. Pope John XXIII died in 1963 before the opening of the second session to be succeeded by Pope Paul VI in that same month.

As mentioned, the whole of the second session proceeded without any mention of the issue of revelation. However, on December 4, 1963, at the close of the second session, the newly-elected Pope Paul VI announced that the topic of revelation was still a question to which the Council was awaiting a reply. For many people this was an unexpected event. Some of the Council Fathers were delighted to see the question put back on the agenda. Many others however were deeply concerned about the manner of reaching a solution suitable for achieving the necessary unanimity. In the first session of the Council, the revelation text had divided the assembly. In the intersession, the second text had frustrated many into a sort of indifference towards a revelation schema. Nevertheless the Pope's position was clear; the Council was still awaiting a text on revelation. The work would have to be done.

For Ratzinger, the Pope's request to resume the work on revelation was the right decision. If he had either dropped the topic of revelation altogether, or combined it with the schema on the Church, the Council may have risked "falling victim to a kind of ecclesio-monism" in its texts.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Origin and Background," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Volume III*, edited by Herbert Vorgrimler (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1967), 161. (ed.) (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), volume 3, p.161.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.161.

¹⁰² Ibid., p.162.

THE THIRD SCHEMA

After the Pope's announcement, which seemed to reassure many that there would be a constitution on revelation, new comments began to arrive from the Council Fathers with suggestions for content. These recommendations were then added to those that had already been arriving since July 1963. In total almost 300 fathers sent in their comments, in 224 pages, proposing 2,481 amendments to the existing text.¹⁰³ According to Evangelista Vilanova, some found the language of the second schema imprecise while others found it too academic. Some were delighted at the absence of condemnations in the second draft, others found the text overly condemnatory, while still others were disappointed that the text did not do a better job of pointing out errors. Despite these disagreements the general sense was that the existing schema should be reworked to improve and enrich it.

The Pope's comment on December 4 did not specify when the schema on revelation would be presented—only that the Council was still awaiting the text. On December 28, 1963 the Coordinating Commission decided that the schema should be brought to the Council Fathers in the third session after it had been restudied in light of the comments received.¹⁰⁴ The members of the former Mixed Commission agreed that the responsibility of a revised schema should be left to the Doctrinal Commission. However, *periti* from both the Doctrinal and the Ecumenical Commissions would continue to be consulted. This decision was communicated in writing by the General Secretary of the Council, Felici, to the president of the Theological Commission, Ottaviani, on January 3, 1964. Felici said that the Coordinating Commission wanted to be kept informed of the progress on the revised schema. In addition, the Doctrinal Commission was to follow the working guidelines established by the Mixed Commission.

The Doctrinal Commission, met for the first time on March 3, 1964. Bishop Henriquez suggested that a small subcommittee be created to examine the responses of the Council Fathers.¹⁰⁵ He argued that this would help the members of the Theological Commission revise the text in accordance with the wishes of the Bishops. On March 7 the special sub-commission was established. The group was comprised of seven Council Fathers

¹⁰³ See Evangelista Vilanova, "The Intersession (1963—1964)" in *History of Vatican II, Volume III, The Mature Council, Second Period and Intersession, September 1963-September 1964*, edited by Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), pp.372-73.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.373.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.374.

and nineteen *periti*. The subcommission met on March 11, and divided itself into two further groups - the first group would concentrate on Revelation and Tradition and the second group on Scripture.¹⁰⁶

As both groups presented their views on their part of the problem, it became evidently clear that the issue was not going to be resolved in a hurry and without some ugly scenes surfacing. According to Ratzinger, the main point of contention continued to be the relation between scripture and tradition, more precisely the "material completeness of Scripture".¹⁰⁷

To cut a long story short (there is far greater detail involved here than we can handle for our purpose) the Theological Commission examined the consolidated draft presented to them between June 1-5, 1964. The issue of the "extra material provided by Tradition" again caused a heated debate. Since there was still disagreement and when votes were taken 17 fathers voted for the text and 7 against. Keeping in mind that two thirds majority was required for a text to be approved, it was finally decided that that two *relationes* would be presented to the Plenary Assembly; one representing the majority opinion and the other the minority one.

The schema that was presented to the council was divided into six chapters:

- 1- Revelation Itself
- 2- The Transmission of Divine Revelation
- 3- The Inspiration and Interpretation of Sacred Scripture
- 4- The Old Testament
- 5- The New Testament
- 6- Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church

But this time as Ratzinger recalls, the situation was far better than what had transpired in 1962. Much credit for that according to Ratzinger, goes to Archbishop Florit of Florence whom as we saw earlier was a close aide of Cardinal Ottaviani. However Florit was able to reconcile between the two opposing views with his sagacity and due to the respect that he enjoyed among both the camps. All historians of the council never fail to remind the readers that Florit had his heart with the 'traditionalists', the minority group, but he could also see the significance of the majority point of view and thus had little difficulty in accepting that as well.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.375.

¹⁰⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Origin and Background," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, p.162.

The Bishop of Spalato, Cardinal Franč, presented the minority *relatio*.

With detailed arguments he pleaded for the necessity of explicitly anchoring the primacy of tradition in the text as Catholic teaching, but he admitted that the *schema* did not contain any error...¹⁰⁸

The Third Session got underway on September 14 and the issue of Revelation was discussed between September 30 – October 06. Alberigo tried to capture the general mood of the Council

Between September 30 and October 6 the Council examined the new document on divine revelation prepared by a mixed commission. This did not give rise to a particularly wide debate, in spite of the fact that the minority maintained that it was not in line with the Council of Trent's decree on scripture and tradition. It was instead, an integration and development of that decree, according to the intention of the leading theologians who had collaborated on the creation of the new document (Philips, Ratzinger, Congar, and Rahner). The schema obtained wide approval from the majority, but it would not return before the assembly until 1965.¹⁰⁹

Since the relation of the Scripture to the Tradition forms an essential part of our work, it will be discussed in more detail in a separate section later. At the moment we are only interested in the giving the reader a general view of how the fathers arrived at a consolidated schema and finally approved it.

As mentioned earlier, the debate on Revelation closed on October 6, 1964. There were a few revisions here and there but none of a cardinal nature. Suffice it to say that the draft that was finally approved during the fourth and final session of the Council was almost similar to the third draft. The *modi* presented by the council fathers were incorporated into the schema which was then reviewed first by the subcommission on October 20-21 and then by the Doctrinal Commission on November 10-11. These meetings did not exactly turn out to be smooth sailing. Suggestions were again made to send the schema back to the Mixed Commission while others fought tooth and nail for its orthodoxy. There was little time to send it for a final vote according to Rynne and hence it was postponed to the fourth session.¹¹⁰ Moreover, "...there was still no agreement on the relationship between the words and deeds of God and on whether both were in the same

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.163.

¹⁰⁹ See Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2007), p.70-71. For a more detailed treatment see Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), pp. 305-313 and the excellent article by Hanjo Sauer, "The Doctrinal and the Pastoral: The text on Divine Revelation" in *History of Vatican II, Volume IV, Church as Communion, Third Period and Intercession, September 1964 – September 1965*, edited by Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003), pp.195-231.

¹¹⁰ See Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), p.313.

way constitutive of revelation".¹¹¹ The revised schema was distributed to Council fathers on November 20, 1964 which happened to be the second last day of the third session.

The Catholic world would have to wait for a full year till it would pronounce its final judgement on its understanding of its concept of revelation.

THE FOURTH SCHEMA

Exactly 10 months later i.e. on September 20, 1965, the fourth schema was presented at the 131st General Congregation of the Council. This time again it was Cardinal Florit who presented the *relatio* for Chapters I and II and Cardinal van Dodewaard the *relatio* for the remaining four chapters.

Debate on the schema continued from September 20 – 22. Although the schema was approved, a number of *modi* were received. Rynne with his usual skill of encapsulating events and ideas into fine points penned down three points which were the bone of contention:

- 1- The relation of Scripture to Tradition;
- 2- the question of the inerrancy of the Bible or “truth” of Scripture;
- 3- the historical nature of Gospels.¹¹²

The Doctrinal Commission examined the *modi* diligently in meetings held on October, 1st, 4th and 6th. Rynne adds

Approximately about this time the pope [Paul] began to be besieged by various Father complaining that the Subcommission and the Commission had not paid sufficient attention to their opinions.¹¹³

Exasperated by the plethora of complaints Pope Paul sent a letter to the Doctrinal Commission highlighting the above three points and requesting them to clarify their stance on them “with a view to reaching a better consensus of opinion”.¹¹⁴

The Doctrinal Commission met on October 19th to consider the pope’s proposals and made minor amendments.

THE FIFTH AND FINAL SCHEMA

The text was finally presented and voted on by the Council on October 29th, at the 155th General Congregation of the Council. Cardinal Florit addressed the Council Fathers and introduced his *relatio*. He mentioned the numerous *modi* that had been submitted. Each

¹¹¹ See Hanjo Sauer, “The Doctrinal and the Pastoral: The text on Divine Revelation”, *Ibid.*, p.230-231.

¹¹² See Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), p.536.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.537.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

modus he said had been judged with care and attention with an eye to improving the schema. He acknowledged that a great number of the *modi* submitted had been rejected, but also that many had been received and incorporated into the text.¹¹⁵ When voting took place, of the 2115 fathers who voted, 2081 voted *placet*, 27, *non-placet*, and 7 votes were considered invalid.

The schema was finally put to vote in the 8th Public Session of the Council on November 18, 1965. The results achieved were as follows: 2350 voters, 2344 *placet*, and 6 *non-placet*!

Ratzinger wrote that the final vote “provided an amicable conclusion for an important part of the Council’s history.” He continued that the text showed “traces of its difficult history” nonetheless it was a great achievement for the Church. He concluded “with regard to its total achievement, one can say unhesitatingly the labour of the four-year controversy was not in vain”.¹¹⁶

OUTLINE OF THE DOCUMENT *DEI VERBUM*

The document ‘*Dei Verbum*’ in its final shape consists of a Preface introducing the theme of revelation and 6 chapters (sections) of varying lengths comprising of 26 articles or clauses. While the first five are of a more or less doctrinal nature, the last one hovers around how the document is pastorally molded.

PREFACE

The document derives its name from the first Latin words of the text, namely, *Dei Verbum*. The preface, article one of the document, is relatively short but four points of interest are immediately apparent:

- 1- The opening phrase of the Preface ‘Hearing the word of God with reverence and proclaiming it with faith’ was only added in the final text, i.e. Text G. It clearly depicted the direction that the Church was going to take. Instead of cocooning itself around itself, it was going to act as a vehicle for proclaiming the word of God to the world thus living up to the dreams of John XXIII.
- 2- The document takes its cue from the following statement of John in his first letter:

¹¹⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Origin and Background,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, p.164.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.165.

[We] proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1: 2-3).

Strangely, Ronald D. Witherup in his *Scripture: Dei Verbum* has claimed that the preface makes 'explicit mention' of the trinity, i.e. the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit by quoting this verse, yet that does not seem to be the case.¹¹⁷ Undoubtedly trinity stands at the foundation of the Christian belief, yet the verse only mentions the Father and the Son.

- 3- The document is also a continuation of the teachings of the two previous councils hence the words "following in the footsteps of the Council of Trent and of the First Vatican Council".¹¹⁸ In this way, the historical continuation of this particular council and its documents is solicited as well as the fact that Vatican II is an authentication of the previous two councils while the previous two councils are to be understood and elaborated on the basis of the teachings of Vatican II. As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger points out, this was probably done to appease the 'conservative' camp which would have wanted to see this document as reflecting its desire to protect traditional doctrine. This also suggests perhaps to the relief of the 'liberal' camp 'the relation of this text to its predecessors [was] a perfect example of dogmatic development...'¹¹⁹, an accursed idea to the conservatives.
- 4- The preface ends on a pastoral note which as mentioned so many times earlier, was the hallmark of John XXIII's papacy. The three cornerstones of Catholic revelation are faith, hope and love each of which is respectively dependent upon the previous. Thus, it is through faith that one is hopeful of salvation and the

¹¹⁷ See Ronald D. Witherup, *Scripture: Dei Verbum* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006), p.33.

¹¹⁸ See Dogmatic Constitution On Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* Solemnly Promulgated By His Holiness Pope Paul VI On November 18, 1965 (1).

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

Although there are several printed translations of these documents, I thought of using the soft copy of this document which can be accessed from the Vatican's official website which is perhaps more authoritative than other printed material. All future mention from this document would be made in the following manner: *Dei Verbum* (1) or (2, 4); the numbers indicate the article or clause number.

¹¹⁹ See The Preface of the "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation" in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Herbert Vorgrimler (ed.) (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), volume 3, p. 169. Commentaries on various chapters of this constitution were written by Joseph Ratzinger, Alois Grillmeier and Béda Rigaux. The original work was entitled *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil, Dokumente und Kommentare* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967). Translated into English by William Glen-Doepel, Hilda Graef, John Michael Jakubiak, and Simon and Erika Young.

fellowship of the Father and the Son. Once this hope is strongly instilled in ones conscience, he/she is moved to carry this message of salvation and fellowship to others in love of them and their respective salvation. Needless to say, the whole concept of revelation in Christianity, much like with all great religious traditions, is very closely tied to the concept of salvation.

CHAPTER 1: REVELATION ITSELF

The first chapter proceeds through articles 2-6. Its main focus is the importance and need of revelation and its nature. It also gives a brief history of the progression of salvation through history. The following are some of the more significant issues involved in this section of the document. I need to clarify that I am not going to proceed in the same order as the document does. Personally I find the arrangement of ideas and paragraphs slightly incoherent. The chronology of this section seems to be the nature of revelation, its historical progression through history, what it means in Christianity and finally its need and significance. I would have started with defining revelation, its need and significance and then gone to expound its nature in Catholic thought interspersed with its historical progression.

However that might be, revelation is when “the invisible God out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends and lives among them so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself”.¹²⁰ This fellowship is required because man has fallen into disgrace after eating from the forbidden tree. In this state of fallenness and disgrace, it is not easy for man to know his lord once again. Although, man with the power of his reason has the ability to recognize God and his designs with certainty, and hence one would venture to question the need for revelation, it is through revelation alone that “those religious truths which are by their nature accessible to human reason can be known by all men with ease, with solid certitude and with no trace of error, even in this present state of the human race”.¹²¹ It was also “through divine revelation, [that] God chose to show forth and communicate Himself and the eternal decisions of His will regarding the salvation of men. That is to say, He chose to share with them those divine treasures which totally transcend the understanding of the human mind”.

It was in consideration of this existential position of man (that he needed to be saved after having committed the Original Sin), that God through His mercy and love sent prophets among whom was Abraham. God appointed Abraham to make him a great

¹²⁰ Dei Verbum

¹²¹ Dei Verbum

nation. After Abraham “through the patriarchs, and after them through Moses and the prophets, He taught this people to acknowledge Himself the one living and true God, provident father and just judge, and to wait for the Savior promised by Him, and in this manner prepared the way for the Gospel down through the centuries.”¹²²

It is at this point that the revelation of Christ becomes necessary. The importance of Christ is in the fact that he represents the fullness of revelation. While each prophet also brought revelation, it is only in Christ that the revelation of God reaches its fullness since Christ is God himself. “We announce to you the eternal life which dwelt with the Father and was made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we announce to you, so that you may have fellowship with us and our common fellowship be with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ”.¹²³

Also, “By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation”.¹²⁴

It is difficult to say why God waited for several centuries—from the time of Adam’s descent until Christ was revealed—to actually reveal Christ and therefore a new dispensation through which mankind could attain salvation at the particular point in time. However, it needs to be reiterated that for Christians, Christ is the fullness of revelation.

CHAPTER 2: HANDING ON DIVINE REVELATION

This section comprises of articles 7-10. It tries to explain how the process of revelation takes place.

The section begins by reiterating the Christian truth that Christ is the fullness of revelation. But Christ also demanded that his teachings be spread far and wide so that as much of humanity as possible could attain to salvation by the Good News of his coming. He therefore, commissions his Apostles to carry on the work of preaching what he had taught them. Not only that “[t]his Gospel had been promised in former times through the prophets, and Christ Himself had fulfilled it and promulgated it with His lips”.¹²⁵ The apostles fulfill the mission of Christ by carrying his message to the world in four ways:

¹²² Dei Verbum

¹²³ Dei Verbum

¹²⁴ Dei Verbum

¹²⁵ Dei Verbum (7).

- 1- In oral fashion – reporting to others what Christ had said and done.
- 2- By example – living the message of Christ
- 3- By “what they had learned through the prompting of the Holy Spirit”.
- 4- By recording in writing the message of salvation under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, meaning thereby the sacred scriptures.¹²⁶

In addition to these four basic steps, the Apostles ensured that they deliver the teachings of Christ to their successors the bishops along with the authority to teach and carry it further. It is here that the sacred tradition is actually born, although we shall have more to say about this in the pages to follow. Article 7 ends by indicating that the sacred tradition and the sacred scripture together are the “mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God...”¹²⁷

In article 8, the expansion of the apostolic preaching is explained and the importance of holding fast to the traditions learnt “either by word of mouth or by letter” is emphasized. One can’t miss noting the conscious effort on the part of the writers of this constitution to highlight the importance of tradition. It is said that tradition “develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit”, “there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down” which happens through the contemplation and study of the believers whose characteristics are clearly defined. The church is thus constantly moving “toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her”¹²⁸

In the last paragraph, once again it is the tradition which defines the canon of the sacred books and the sacred writings are ‘profoundly understood’ in the tradition.

Article 9 seems to be an insertion to balance the tip in favour of sacred scripture after so much has been said about the sacred tradition especially the fact that sacred tradition defines the canon of the sacred scripture. The tension that was implicit in the preceding paragraphs comes out loud and clear in this article. It is contended that both the scripture and tradition are connected as both flow from the ‘same divine wellspring’ and then ‘in a certain way’ (which the Church does not sound too sure about) ‘merge into a unity’. All this ‘For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid. (8).

to their successors in its full purity...¹²⁹ As if this was doing injustice to the sacred tradition, it is added almost by way of correction, that 'it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence'.¹³⁰

Article 10, while reiterating the significance of both the scripture and tradition, adds to our knowledge that together the two form a 'deposit', meaning thereby perhaps 'one sacred deposit of the Word of God'¹³¹ or the 'one deposit of faith'.

The next paragraph goes on to give us an inkling of who is actually authorized to interpret 'the word of God, whether written or handed on'. It is obviously the living teaching office of the Church which exercises this authority 'in the name of Jesus Christ'. But lest one is prompted to make the rash judgment that the teaching office of the Church (traditionally known as the magisterium) is 'higher' than the scripture or tradition, almost by way of correction, it is added that 'the teaching office is not above the word of God (should one venture to posit that the 'word of God' here means the collective teachings of the scripture and tradition) is , but serves it...and 'with the help of the Holy Spirit...draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed'.¹³²

By the time one gets to the last paragraph of article 10 and is still trying to unravel the mysterious connection between the sacred scripture and the sacred tradition, one is confronted with yet another revelation. 'It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.¹³³ The tension that must have prevailed during the discussion of this very thorny issue is quite apparent here. The 'teaching authority of the Church' is brought at par with scripture and tradition after it was said that the teaching office of the church was not above it.

¹²⁹ Ibid. (9).

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ See Ronald D. Witherup, *Scripture: Dei Verbum*, p.36.

¹³² *Dei Verbum* (10).

¹³³ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3: SACRED SCRIPTURE, ITS INSPIRATION AND DIVINE INTERPRETATION

In this small section, there are three articles (11-13). Its main point of discussion is divine inspiration and how the sacred scriptures are to be treated as divine while having been written physically by human authors.

So, while particular human beings really authored various parts of the Old and New Testaments, since it was done under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God must also be considered as their author. The production of these texts was only possible after God chose such noble souls to transmit His word, which they did using their powers and skills with God ‘acting in them and through them’ to compose only that which they had been consigned to write. This necessarily means that the scriptures are the word of God and therefore without any fault and likewise portray the right path to salvation.

But this is immediately followed by a word of caution in the next paragraph. It is true that God has spoken in the sacred scriptures, yet it was through ‘men in human fashion’. Therefore, “the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words”.¹³⁴ As a result, all interpreters should keep in mind the ‘literary forms’, usage of words and expressions and linguistic conventions prevalent at the time of writing particular pieces. Only when understood in the light of the aforementioned usages and circumstances, would the interpretation of the word of God be correct.

But that in itself is not enough. There is an intrinsic unity in the scriptures and any interpretation which rips this unity is bound to do more harm than good to the scripture. It is here that the role of tradition comes out strong. Moreover, since no one is better suited to understand these complexities than the church itself, the final judgment regarding any matter religious, goes back to the church as interpreting scripture is ‘subject finally to the judgment of the Church’.

Article 13 highlights God’s benevolence and gentleness in that He let His esteemed words be clothed in the frailty of human language. More important perhaps is the last sentence of this article which tries to create this balance between the divine authorship and human authorship of the scriptures. It reads, ‘For the words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as the word of the eternal

¹³⁴ Ibid. (12).

Father, when He took to Himself the flesh of human weakness, was in every way made like men'.¹³⁵

This sentence is a clear depiction of the mysterious relationship between the human and divine in the person of Jesus Christ. For just as there is mysteriousness in the incarnation of God in the human person of Christ, similarly, there is a mysterious relationship between the word of God and the human word with respect to the scripture.¹³⁶ It also provides for an ingenious mechanism to bridge the increasing differences arising out of modern biblical studies which more often than not end up reducing scripture to a conglomerate of historically contradicting views and a collection of myths and fables and the belief of a great many Christians that the Bible is the infallible word of God. We shall have more to say about this in the following pages.

CHAPTER 4: THE OLD TESTAMENT

This section which comprises of articles 14-16 is brief and descriptive. It adds nothing new to the traditional Catholic perspective on the manner in which the Old Testament was viewed even prior to Vatican II.

After reiterating that God had planned salvation for the whole of humanity, it goes on to describe how God initially chose Israel as His mouth piece after concluding covenants with Abraham and Moses. Israel was supposed to carry the message of God to all nations. The Old Testament in short, is the story of Israel's encounter with God and it has been told by "the sacred authors, recounted and explained by them, [and] is found as the true word of God in the books of the Old Testament: these books, therefore, written under divine inspiration, remain permanently valuable".¹³⁷

Somehow, this seems to be an initial plan only because there are things in the books of the Old Testament 'which are incomplete and temporary' and therefore need to be completed. The completion would come in the form of the revelation of Christ. It is this idea which the Old Testament is trying to make implicitly or in a 'hidden' fashion. Article 15 says it clearly, 'The principal purpose to which the plan of the old covenant was directed was to prepare for the coming of Christ, the redeemer of all and of the messianic kingdom, to announce this coming by prophecy'.¹³⁸ But since 'these...books,...give expression to a lively sense of God, contain a store of sublime

¹³⁵ Ibid. (13).

¹³⁶ See Ronald D. Witherup, *Scripture: Dei Verbum*, p.37.

¹³⁷ *Dei Verbum* (14).

¹³⁸ *Dei Verbum* (15).

teachings about God, sound wisdom about human life, and a wonderful treasury of prayers, and in them the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way[,] Christians should receive them with reverence'.¹³⁹

Article 16 is a reassertion of the complementarity of the Old and the New Testaments so 'wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New'.¹⁴⁰

CHAPTER 5: THE NEW TESTAMENT

Here is another section implicitly fraught with the tense discussions that must have gone into the writing of this section; questions relating to the authorship and authenticity of the New Testament books, particularly of the four gospels and the apostolic character of their authors would have been debated hotly. The section spans over articles 17-20.

Article 17 dilates upon the fullness of Christ's revelation which came in the 'fullness of time'. This mystery had not been manifested to other generations as it was now revealed to His holy Apostles and prophets in the Holy Spirit (see Eph. 3:4-6, Greek text), so that they might preach the Gospel, stir up faith in Jesus, Christ and Lord, and gather together the Church. Now the writings of the New Testament stand as a perpetual and divine witness to these realities'.¹⁴¹

Articles 18 is a reassertion of the apostolic nature of the books of the New Testament, especially the four Gospels which clearly reflect the teachings that 'the Apostles preached in fulfillment of the commission of Christ, afterwards they themselves and apostolic men, under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, handed on to us in writing'.¹⁴²

It is in the next article (Article 19) that the tension becomes evident. The two commissions that were drafting this constitution were the Theological Commission and the Secretariat for the Unity of Christians. In common parlance, both represented the old guard and the liberals respectively. As mentioned earlier, while the liberals would usually assign substantial importance to the results of critical biblical methods, the old guards were averse to all such developments and viewed the Bible as the truly infallible word of God. The article can clearly be divided into two distinct parts. Part one beginning with 'Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy held, and continues to hold, that the four Gospels just named, whose historical character the

¹³⁹ Dei Verbum (15).

¹⁴⁰ Dei Verbum (16).

¹⁴¹ Dei Verbum (17).

¹⁴² Dei Verbum (18).

Church unhesitatingly asserts,...' reiterates the traditional standpoint of the church. The second part reads as follows:

'The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels, selecting some things from the many which had been handed on by word of mouth or in writing, reducing some of them to a synthesis, explaining some things in view of the situation of their churches and preserving the form of proclamation but always in such fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus. For their intention in writing was that either from their own memory and recollections, or from the witness of those who "themselves from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word" we might know "the truth" concerning those matters about which we have been instructed (see Luke 1:2-4').'¹⁴³

As Ronald D. Witherup points out, three layers of tradition must be acknowledged here, namely, oral, written and edited.¹⁴⁴ What needs to be noted here is:

1. The council affirms that the authors received the word and deeds of Christ in two physical forms: in writing and by word of mouth. Also, when they wrote, they would write 'from their own memory and recollections' or 'from the witness of those who "themselves from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word"'.
2. The authors were selective in what they wrote implying that there was much ('selecting some things from the many') that was not recorded. Needless to say, selection is itself a process of editing.
3. 'Some things' were explained 'in view of the situation of their churches and preserving the form of proclamation' which could very much have been different.
4. The one common thread, however, was that 'they told us the honest truth about Jesus' perhaps meaning thereby that even if some inconsistencies were to creep in, no one could suspect their purity of intention and sense of honesty.

The least that these points clarify is the fact that what the authors wrote might not always be historically sound.

CHAPTER 6: SACRED SCRIPTURES IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

This section is almost entirely devoted to the pastoral influence of this constitution. It comprises of articles 21-26 and clearly adds quite a few newer insights into the churches relation with various Christian communities, including the 'separated brethren'.

Article 21 extols the sacred scripture along with the sacred tradition as the supreme rule of faith. Although there is nothing new in this statement as it occurs differently in earlier

¹⁴³ Dei Verbum (19).

¹⁴⁴ See Ronald D. Witherup, *Scripture: Dei Verbum*, p.39.

articles, yet it needs to be reiterated as the Catholic Church proceeds cautiously to open up its doors to other dispensations. Nothing stands outside the pale of sacred scripture and sacred tradition.

Article 22 is almost certainly the fulfillment of the dreams of and acknowledgment of the influence of the Biblical Movement which with unremitting devotedness worked to place the Bible over and before everything that was Christian. It starts by 'easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful'. It then goes on to espouse, albeit in subtle terms, the Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, adding in between the lines, 'and she [the Church] has always given a place of honor to other Eastern translations'. The last sentence of the article also represents the careful stance of the Council as it extends a hand of cautious cooperation to the separated brethren, albeit, under the watchful eyes of Church authorities to work on translations of the Bible acceptable to both.

The next article continues to welcome, with the same caution, exegetes of the Bible and other biblical scholars to continue doing their work 'with a constant renewal of vigor' in explaining the sacred writings. But all this should be done under the 'watchful care of the sacred teaching office of the Church' and 'following the mind of the Church'.

Article 24 highlights the importance of sacred scripture and sacred tradition in the study of sacred theology for 'the study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology'.

Article 25 encourages the priests, deacons and catechists to be 'hold fast to the Sacred Scriptures through diligent sacred reading and careful study' for 'ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ'. This relation with the sacred scripture can be strengthened through the liturgy, devotional reading, instructions as might be suitable and prayers. Furthermore, translations with 'adequate explanations' ought to be prepared for other Christians while for non-Christians editions of Sacred Scripture with notes and 'adapted to their [respective] situation[s]' should be made ready and distributed in known ways.

The final article of the constitution stresses the need to spread the word of God 'which lasts forever' so that it may fill the hearts of men more and more.

This quite briefly is what the Constitution on Divine Revelation has to say. Several aspects of the Constitution can be highlighted and further clarified, yet no issue takes precedence over the ongoing and legitimate debate on the mutual relation of the Scripture and the Tradition with the role of the Holy Spirit in making this relation work.

This requires that we first make sense of who the Holy Spirit is and how it works and then go on to see how both Scripture and Tradition are related to it. Our next chapter would be precisely about that.

CHAPTER THREE

UNDERSTANDING REVELATION: THE HOLY SPIRIT, TRADITION AND SCRIPTURE

We shall start with the Holy Spirit and then go on to see how Catholics have viewed Tradition and its relation to the Scripture.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

No issue in Christian theology is as undeveloped as the issue of the Holy Spirit (studies on the Holy Spirit are properly called pneumatology). St. Augustine complained of this in his *De fide et symbolo*:

Many books have been written by scholarly and spiritual men on the Father and the Son...The Holy Spirit has, on the other hand, not yet been studied with as much care and by so many great and learned commentators on the scriptures that it is easy to understand his special character and know why we cannot call him either Son or Father, but only Holy Spirit.¹

Almost a millennium and a half later, interest in the Holy Spirit has remained as crude as it was during St. Augustine's times.² Christology on the other hand, has received its share of studies at the hands of theologians and scholars who have also subject it to historical criticism.

Historical method has uncovered information of theological relevance about Jesus, about his words, deeds, cultural context, and the traditions handed down about him. The irony is that in Catholicism investigations concerning the "Son of God" are entrusted to the guidance and inspiration of the third member of the Trinity, The Holy Spirit—the One who remains largely unknown.

Pope Paul VI in fact noted at the end of Vatican II that "the Christology and especially the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council should be followed by a new study and a new cult of the Holy Spirit, as an indispensable complement of the conciliar teaching."³ I will be studying certain Council documents to study the role of the Holy Spirit in a bid to understand how revelation may be understood and possibly how the

¹ See Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the "Economy"*, translated by David Smith (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983), vol. 1, p. 77.

² See James Patout Burns and Gerald M. Fagin, *The Holy Spirit* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984), p. 11.

³ See Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the "Economy"*, vol. 1, pp. 172-173.

Tradition aspect of revelation is associated with it. But before that I will very briefly explore how pneumatology developed and was understood in the Catholic tradition.

PNEUMATOLOGY PRIOR TO VATICAN COUNCIL II

Throughout the history of the Church, the Holy Spirit has been the acknowledged source of the Church's vitality and a theme of theological exploration. Nevertheless, as we have already noted,

no systematic theology of the Spirit has emerged in the Christian tradition to complement the theology of Christ. Reflection on the Spirit has been done in the context of the theology of the Trinity and the theology of grace, but no separate treatise on the Spirit was developed as part of classical theology.⁴

Among the most common reasons given for this lacuna in Christian theology are:

1. the fact that the Spirit leads the believer to the Father and the Son, and therefore, is never the center of revelation. Accordingly, the Father reveals the Son and the Son makes the Father known, while the Spirit instills faith, empowers prayer, enlightens the mind, inspires and prompts the believer and, hence, can only be known in the inner life of the Christian.
2. Scripture presents both the Father and the Son as persons who speak with and listen to human beings. The Spirit enables conversation between God and the human person, but does not seem to speak apart from any of the participants in the conversation.
3. Profoundly influenced by Augustine's theology, the Western Church has emphasized the unity of the Persons of the Trinity resulting in a deemphasis in particular of the distinctive role and mission of the Holy Spirit.⁵

Regardless of St. Paul's strong affirmation in the Church's earliest beginnings of the Trinitarian nature of the Christian faith, his depiction of the believer as one who possesses the Spirit, and his conception of church as the Body of Christ produced and brought to life by the Spirit, the teachings on the Holy Spirit in Christianity have developed very slowly. The Scripture provides a minimal sense of the Spirit's function in the process of salvation, and even lesser about the nature of the Holy Spirit.

During the Apostolic period when doctrines had not developed enough, it was not unusual for the *Pneuma* and the *Logos* to be identified in some way or for the Spirit to be called the Son of God; or for the Word, the Spirit, and the Wisdom of God to be

⁴ See James Patout Burns and Gerald M. Fagin, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 11.

⁵ See James Patout Burns and Gerald M. Fagin, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 12. Also see Hans Kung, *The Church* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), pp. 257- 258.

linked. Yves Congar cites examples from the *Shepherd of Hermas* written by Justin Martyr and others who demonstrate a “surprising confusion” in their writings regarding the understanding of the Holy Spirit.⁶

As a rule, for these early Christians the Spirit was simply one of the agents of the One God. They spoke of the Father as the agent of Creation, the Son as the agent of salvation, and the Holy Spirit as associated with the work of the Son in the economy of salvation?

This relatively undifferentiated perception of the Spirit is evident in some of the texts of individuals like Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch. Clement, for example, perceives the Holy Spirit as an agent of Christ who spoke and continues to speak through the Scripture, in this case through the words of the Psalm:

For this is how Christ addresses us through his Holy Spirit, “Come, my children, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Who is there that desires life, and loves to see good days? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from uttering deceit. Refrain from evil and do good. Seek peace and follow after it.”

Psalms. 34: 11-14⁷

For Ignatius the Holy Spirit is “God’s voice” speaking through Ignatius himself: “The Spirit is not misled, seeing it comes from God...When I was with you I cried out, raising my voice—it was God’s voice...”⁸

It needs to be acknowledged that this brief summary of the earliest developments of the doctrine on the Holy Spirit cannot address all the important elements of that history. However, a number of significant individuals and events many of who and which will receive no mention here contributed to the course of Christian doctrine on the Holy Spirit as St. Irenaeus did, for example, by his expressions of faith in ‘the Holy Spirit of God’ in whom Jesus died and rose again. His understanding of the role of the Spirit is in the “sequential” operation of the Trinity: Creation and revelation have their beginning in the Father, are carried out by the Son and completed by the Spirit. Irenaeus believed that the Holy Spirit gave knowledge and inspiration to the apostles to write the gospels, and

⁶ See Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the “Economy”*, vol. 1, p. 73.

⁷ See Clement of Rome, “Epistle to the Corinthians,” *Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 1, *Early Christian Fathers*, translated and edited by Cyril C. Richardson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), chapter 22, p. 54.

⁸ Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Philadelphians*, “*Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 1, *Early Christian Fathers*, chapter 7, p. 109-110.

inspired understanding and faith in those who hear and believe the gospel, thereby creating and vitalizing the Church.⁹

Tertullian is another example of one who, even though his theology was ultimately considered unacceptable, contributed immensely to the vocabulary and concepts in the Catholic Church's confession of faith, as in the baptismal formula which addresses the "tres personae" of God.¹⁰

By the 4th century the Church was beginning to turn its theological reflection toward the activity of the Holy Spirit as distinctive from the redemptive work of the Son. This focus of attention on the Spirit began largely as the result of Arianism which, from a logical development of its understanding of the Son of God, tended to explain the Spirit as created by the Son whom the Arians believed to be subordinate to the Father. In 325 CE the Council of Nicea tentatively resolved the question of the divinity of Christ and condemned the Arian teaching on the Spirit. This Council simply reiterated the modest statement, "We believe in the Holy Spirit," already expressed in the Apostles' Creed of the Church.¹¹

Uncertainty about the Spirit continued, furnishing the seedbed for Subordinationist interpretations of the Holy Spirit. These teachings, promoted chiefly by Bishop Macedonius of Constantinople, Bishop Maratonius of Nicomedia, and the Pneumatomachi toward the end of the 4th century, compelled the Church to identify more clearly those functions which are peculiar to Holy Spirit. Up to this point the Spirit's personal existence was largely undefined; the Holy Spirit was not distinguished from the "power" that imbues a prophet or the "disposition of soul" of a believer. Out of this ambiguity Macedonius and his followers evolved a teaching that the Spirit is an instrument of God created to act in the world and in human beings.¹²

This notion drew reactions from Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Nazianzen, who not only showed the teaching to be heretical, but in so doing framed what has become the Church's traditional pneumatological position. They asserted that the Holy Spirit shares the same divinity as the Father and the Son in the

⁹ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the "Economy"*, vol. 1, p. 74. Also see James Patout Burns and Gerald M. Fagin, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 31-42.

¹⁰ See James Patout Burns and Gerald M. Fagin, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 51-52.

¹¹ Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 30th edition of *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, translated by Roy J. Deferrari (St. Louis: Herder and Herder, 1957), p. 54.

¹² James Patout Burns and Gerald M. Fagin, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 18.

unity of the same substance.¹³ “In the tradition of Basil and Athanasius” the Council of Constantinople officially condemned the Subordinationist notions of the Holy Spirit and affirmed the Spirit’s true divinity.¹⁴ The credal confession of the Spirit’s divinity and distinctness adopted by the Council of Constantinople in 381 CE and by the local Council of Rome in 382 CE is familiar, for the most part, to learned Christians to this day.

We believe in one God the Father almighty...in one Lord Jesus Christ...And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the holy Prophets...(*The Exposition of the 150 Fathers Gathered at Constantinople*).¹⁵

Although the affirmation of the Spirit as worthy of the same honour and adoration as the Father and the Son confounded the Pneumatomachi, Athanasius and Basil avoided calling the Spirit explicitly God for two reasons according to Congar who says: First, in order to remain absolutely faithful to the terms of Scripture; and second, “better to adapt oneself to the weakness of those whom one is combating and to make it easy for them to be converted by not providing an opportunity for a new cavil.”

By the close of the 4th century some key developments toward an understanding of the Holy Spirit were taking shape in Christianity. They can be summarized as follows:

1. The Spirit sent by Christ built up the Church by guiding believers to proper understanding of the teachings of Jesus.
2. The Spirit sent by Christ is acknowledged as the source of the Church’s power to sanctify i.e. to forgive sins, to baptize, to consecrate, to ordain, to empower and to discipline.
3. The Spirit is the recognized source of charismatic gifts and strengthening of virtue demonstrated by martyrs and other heroic Christians who undertook moral combat.
4. The blurred notion of the Spirit as somehow associated with the Word of God and impersonal powers that spoke prophetically in the Old Testament, inspired the preaching of the apostles and the writing of the gospels, gradually focused to reveal the nature of the Holy Spirit as divine Person.

¹³ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the “Economy”*, vol. 1, p. 74.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 74-75.

¹⁵ Henry Denziner, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, Ibid., paragraphs 85 and 86.

5. The Spirit shares in the divine operation in unity with the Son by the fact that they both derive from the Father.
6. The Spirit is distinct from the Son and the Father in the manner of origin, that is, by procession, but the Spirit is one in nature with the Father and Son.
7. The Holy Spirit's creative power is responsible for the incarnation of Jesus.
8. The Spirit is the bond between the Father and the Son. In Epiphanius' terms, the Spirit is teacher, sanctifier and bond of the Trinity.¹⁶

At the beginning of the 5th century St. Augustine, convinced that the whole Trinitarian mystery required deeper and broader explication, undertook the twenty-year task of writing his *De Trinitate*. Scattered throughout this work and his other writings are his ideas on the Holy Spirit which, according to Yves Congar, present "an original doctrine of the third Person and the part played by that Person in our lives."¹⁷ Augustine's doctrine on the Spirit includes the following affirmations:

1. the Holy Spirit is what is common to the Father and the Son—their shared holiness, love and unity in the Spirit established by the bond of peace;
2. the Holy Spirit is the "Spirit and Love of the first two Persons" and is therefore said to proceed from them both;
3. the Spirit is the "Gift" given as the principle of unity among believers and with God—in other words, the Spirit is given to create and sustain the Church.¹⁸

Brian Gaybba offers this synopsis:

Unity and love—these are the recurring themes in Augustine's theology of the Spirit. One could say that this theology is but the detailed and consistent application of the idea that love unites and, by uniting, transforms all it unites.¹⁹

Augustine's understanding of the Holy Spirit is the basis of his ecclesiology as well, for he saw the Church as possessing the dual nature of *communio sacramentorum* (the work of Christ) and *societas sanctorum* (the work of the Holy Spirit). The Spirit dwells in the Church and is the principle of its unity.²⁰ In Congar's words:

Augustine calls this the heart of his teaching about the Church *ecclesia in sanctis, unitas, caritas, Pax*. He also calls it *Columba*, since its principle is the Holy Spirit,

¹⁶ James Patout Burns and Gerald M. Fagin, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 151-152. The General Council in Rome in 382 CE confirmed the "Tome of Pope Damasus" which appended twenty four anathemas to the creed against various heretics.

¹⁷ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the "Economy"*, vol. 1, p. 77.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 77-80.

¹⁹ Brian Gaybba, *The Spirit of Love: Theology of the Holy Spirit* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), p. 66.

²⁰ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the "Economy"*, vol. 1, p. 80 and 84.

who performs in the Church that function that is carried out in the body by the soul.²¹

Augustine emphasized the function of the Spirit as unifier based on the work of the Spirit in the Church, and he asserted that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as a single principle. Cyril of Alexandria also taught that the Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son, but he presented this theology in the pattern of the Eastern Churches. He stressed the procession of the Spirit from the Father through the Son. The difference in articulation of this mystery demonstrates the differing ecclesiologies between the Latin and the Greek Churches, a difference which continues to be a source of tension in Catholic Christendom.

In fact, the differing pneumatologies of St. Augustine and Cyril foreshadowed the next notable development in the Church's doctrine on the Holy Spirit. It began in 589 CE when the Church in Spain (Toledo) added the *filioque* to the Nicene—Constantinopolitan Creed, and grew into controversy as the papacy came under pressure from the emperors (Charlemagne and Henry II) to make it an official part of the Catholic Church's creed. Originally intending only to clarify the words of the Creed, the Spanish Church had inserted "and the Son" into the text. This was later construed by the Eastern Church as an "addition"²² and therefore a violation of the decision at the Council of Ephesus which had declared: "The holy synod enacted that it was lawful for no one to put forward, that is to write or compose, another faith than defined by the holy Fathers congregated in the Holy Spirit at Nicaea."²³

To cut a long story short, this led to a long and heated debate on the significance of this wording. John Zizioulas, a strong supporter of dialogue between the Catholic and Eastern Churches suggests that this debate led the Catholic Church to allow Christology to dominate Pneumatology.

Medieval and modern pneumatology returned to the theological considerations of the Spirit's role in salvation as questions related to grace arose. In the Catholic Church this theology continued the theme of unity: it interpreted the sanctifying function of the

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

²² Brian Gaybba, *The Spirit of Love: Theology of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 73-74. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, in 867 CE attacked the 'Filioque Clause' on these points: 1) It is a Western innovation; 2) It is biblically unverifiable; 3) It splits divinity into two principles; 4) It either cancels the distinction between the Father and Son (confusing the hypostasis), or the Spirit must be its own source. "Whatever is common to two divine persons is common to all three." Photius' argument remains an immense influence to this day in the Greek interpretation of the Filioque.

²³ Henry Denziner, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 30th edition of *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, paragraph 265.

Spirit as drawing believers into the communion of the Trinity. United personally and dynamically with the Church and its individual members, the Holy Spirit completes the saving work of Christ.²⁴ According to medieval theology the Church and the Holy Spirit are linked as body and soul.²⁵ The Holy Spirit is the Church's vital principle, the power that impels the people of God toward the fulfillment of sacred history or tradition. Because of this deep-rooted belief the Church experienced profound trauma in the Reformation.

Protestants were perceived as striking at the fundamental belief that the Spirit guides the Church in the development of its historical life by rejecting "tradition." In so doing they were seen by many at the time as calling the whole concept of Church into question.²⁶

The radical questioning by Reformers of the Church's faithfulness in its teaching and life effected defensive reactions and a multiplication of statements about "the unfailing faithfulness of the Church's Tradition because of the presence of the Holy Spirit who was promised to the Church by the Lord."²⁷ In self-defense the Church took a firm grip on this guarantee, convinced that "to admit that the Church is capable of error is to impute failure on the part of the Spirit."²⁸ The period following the Reformation and the Council of Trent is marked by the Church's endeavours to justify theologically "all the normative decisions taken since the composition of the New Testament by the authority of the Church."²⁹ These efforts resulted in the Catholic Church "putting the magisterium in the place of the Holy Spirit," thus focusing the Church's self-understanding in the direction of what was termed as "an ecclesiological monophysitism." Congar thus explains:

This [Post-reformation movement] was the beginning of a developing process that can be described as an affirmation of the part played by the Church and its authority and therefore, in the nineteenth century at least, a pervading sense of the primacy of the magisterium of the Church...The magisterium itself refers to the Holy Spirit as the guarantee of its teachings and decisions, including, for example,

²⁴ Michael Schmaus, "Holy Spirit" in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, Karl Rahner (et al.) (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 648.

²⁵ See Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (London: Burns & Oates, 1963), p. 170.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 170-171. Also see Stephan Kuttner's insightful remark in "The Reform of the Church and the Council of Trent," in *The General Council*, edited by William L. McDonald (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1962), pp. 100-101 where he says, "The tragedy is, first, that on the Protestant side *reformation* came to mean not only eradication of corrupt abuses, but abolition of the fundamental structure of the mystical body itself."

²⁷ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the "Economy"*, vol. 1, p. 152.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 164, 173. Interestingly as Congar points out this statement was originally made by Tertullian over 18 centuries ago.

²⁹ See Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, p. 154.

the definitions of the Mariological dogmas of 1854 and 1950... This also accounts for the emergence of such doubtful formulae defining the magisterium as the *fons sive dei* and others such as *Ecclesia sibi ipsi est fons*.³⁰

Consequently, the Holy Spirit was too often forgotten. Congar calls attention to a number of examples which he says 'are not difficult to find'. Karl Adam, for example, in his book, *The Spirit of Catholicism* published January 1929 (*Imprimatur* 31 December 1928), states:

The structure of Catholic faith may be summarized in a single sentence: I find God, through Christ, in His Church: I experience the living God through Christ realizing Himself in His Church. So we see that the certitude of Catholic faith rests on the sacred triad: God, Christ, Church.³¹

Another example of this trend appears in Pope Pius XII's Encyclical *Mystici Corporis* in which he employs the same Augustinian text that Pope Leo XIII used in an ontological way in his Encyclical (1897), *Divinum illud munus*, and which the Medieval Church and Augustine himself understood functionally as follows:

Let it suffice to state that, as Christ is the Head of the Church, so is the Holy Ghost her soul. What the soul is in our body, that is the Holy Ghost in Christ's body, the Church. This being so, no further and fuller 'manifestation and revelation of the divine Spirit' may be imagined or expected; for that which now takes place in the Church is the most perfect possible...³²

The interpretation Pope Leo gave to Augustine's words indicate that the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church; this goes beyond Augustine's meaning and even that of the Medieval theologians – that the Spirit does for the Church what the soul does for the human body. Carrying the interpretation a step further, Pope Pius XII seems to assign the role of the Holy Spirit to the Magisterium thereby attributing "absolute value to the acts and structures of the Church."³³

This tendency prevailed up to the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, some of those who were waiting at the doorstep for the Council to convene reflected on the reigning attitudes. Lorenz Jaeger, Archbishop of Paderborn, for one, ponders a lecture delivered in August 1960 by Cardinal Montini who said that:

the pope's decision to call a Council amounted to a refutation of the opinion, hitherto seemingly not unjustified, that Councils are, as it were, merely tolerated by the popes. The opinion too that the proclamation of papal infallibility at the

³⁰ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the "Economy"*, vol. 1, p. 153.

³¹ Ibid., quoting Karl Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1929), p. 46.

³² Pope Leo XIII, "Encyclical Letter *Divinum Illud*", in *The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII* (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1903), p. 430.

³³ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the "Economy"*, vol. 1, p. 154.

first Vatican Council would bring about the end of Councils cannot now be sustained.³⁴

Thus far we have seen how the idea of the Holy Spirit was viewed until Vatican Council II. We shall try to bring out some newer dimensions of the theology of the Holy Spirit in Vatican II during our discussion on its relation to Scripture and Tradition.

'TRADITION'

The concept of Tradition has always been present in Catholic theology as a central theme employed for explanation and interpretation of its belief and practice. However, an explicit theology of Tradition remained undeveloped until the nineteenth century. Among some Catholic theologians Tradition was viewed almost solely as one of two sources of divine revelation, as we have pointed out earlier, which functioned under the authority of the teaching magisterium of the Church.

Only with the understanding of history as it developed in the nineteenth century did theology have to deal in a more comprehensive way with the question of tradition. Investigation of the total process of the history of the transmission of the Christian Tradition brought the key elements of the old debate, Scripture, Tradition, and the Church, into a new context; and gave it a new focus. Both Protestant and Catholic theology were forced into a reassessment of tradition which involved critical-historical interpretation of Scripture, development of the doctrine, the process of revelation, and the locus and function of authority in the Christian community.³⁵ After more than a century and a half of study, it seems that a fully developed theology of tradition has yet to be written.

TRADITION IN THE COUNCIL OF TRENTE

The Council of Trent can be considered the beginning of a serious theological investigation of tradition although Trent doesn't seem to have been concerned with the question directly as such. Then, Tradition was considered as truths and practices whose source were the Apostles. Moreover, Trent did not attempt to define the relationship

³⁴ Lorenz Jaeger, *The Ecumenical Council, the Church and Christendom* (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons, 1961), p. 85.

³⁵ For statements of the problem of tradition in some streams of recent Protestant thought, see Gerhard Ebeling, *The Word of God and Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968); Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970); see the exhaustive bibliography in Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (London: Burns & Oates, 1963), p. 459.

between Scripture and Tradition although later theologians would often fall back upon this Council to determine how they are related. This is what Trent had to say:

The Holy Council...having ever before its eyes the removal of error and the preservation of the Gospel in its purity in the Church - the Gospel which, promised beforehand by the prophets in holy Scripture, our Lord Jesus Christ first promulgated by his own mouth and then ordered to be preached by his apostles "to every creature" as being the source of all salutary truth and moral life; realizing, too, that this same truth and code of morals is contained in written books and in unwritten traditions which, received by the apostles from Christ's own mouth or at the dictation of the Holy Spirit, have come to us, delivered to us as it were by hand; this same Council, following the example of the orthodox Fathers, reverently receives with like devotion and veneration all the Books of the Old and New Testament alike...as well as traditions concerning both faith and morals, as given us by Christ by word of mouth or dictated by the Holy Spirit and preserved in the Catholic Church by unbroken succession.³⁶

Earlier drafts had used the terms *partim in libris scriptis, partim in sine scripto traditionibus*, i.e. the Gospel was to be found in and handed down partly in Scripture and partly in unwritten traditions. This was later changed to *in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus*, i.e. that the truths of revelation are contained partially in Scripture and partially in Tradition.³⁷

With respect to the relation between Scripture and Tradition, Revelation could thus be understood in the following ways:

1. partially in Scripture and partially in tradition, implying a constitutive tradition, i.e., that there are elements of revelation necessary for salvation contained in tradition that are not even implicitly mentioned in Scripture;
2. wholly in Scripture and wholly in tradition, implying that the total Gospel is in each but that each communicates it in a different form and that each needs the other for full understanding;³⁸
3. wholly in tradition and partially in Scripture, implying that total revelation is in tradition and that part of its expression in writing is in Scripture, still granting however a unique role to Scripture among the many expressions of tradition.

³⁶ J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, edited by Jacques Dupuis (New York: Alba House, 1998), p. 96.

³⁷ Gregory Baum, "Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation: History and Interpretation," in *Theological Studies*, XXVIII (1967), pp. 51-52; Gabriel Moran expresses the same position in *Scripture and Tradition* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), p. 48. Also see Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1964), p. 150.

³⁸ See Congar, *Meaning of Tradition*, p. 43.

The fourth possibility 'wholly in Scripture and partially in Tradition' obviously does not arise since Scripture is categorically the product of Tradition.

Several Catholic theologians deliberated on the theology of Tradition many of whose writings and thoughts are in fact reflected in the Constitution *Dei Verbum*. We shall jump straight to *Dei Verbum* to see what it has to say about Tradition.

DEI VERBUM ON TRADITION

The protracted history of the document and the many drafts of its texts are evidence enough of the efforts the theologians and Catholics in general had to put in to incorporate the developments of the last hundred years in the areas of tradition, scripture and revelation as we saw in the second chapter of this work. Of special significance for this work is Chapter Two of the Constitution, "The Transmission of Revelation."³⁹

MEANING OF TRADITION⁴⁰

The second chapter of the Constitution deals with the concept of tradition more explicitly than others. Paragraph 7 is based closely on Trent and yet suggests the influence of more contemporary developments in several of its themes.⁴¹ Whereas Trent speaks of Jesus "promulgating" the Gospel, Vatican II refers in addition, to Jesus "fulfilling" or "bringing to completion" the Gospel. The vocabulary shifts from the legal to that of communication of saving action. A reaffirmation is given to the Gospel as the one source of revelation. Four sources are listed for what the Apostles had received with the commission to hand on:

- 1) the words of Christ;
- 2) life with Christ;
- 3) what Christ did; and
- 4) what they learned through the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Revelation, therefore, is not only the word that Christ preached, but the whole of the living experience of his person, embracing what is said and what is unsaid. "The prompting of the Holy Spirit" is a concept open to theological interpretation. Remembrance and understanding of elements of revelation that were not brought to

³⁹ See Joseph Ratzinger, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Origin and Background," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Volume III*, edited by Herbert Vorgrimler (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1967), 161. (ed.) (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), volume 3, p.161.

⁴⁰ For this section, I am heavily indebted to Sister Margaret Earley's so far unpublished thesis entitled "The Significance of Richard Niebuhr's Theory of Revelation for a contemporary catholic reassessment of the Problem of Tradition" at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Winsconsin, 1973.

⁴¹ Ibid.

verbal expression in the original experience of Jesus Christ could, by the action of the Spirit, come to be understood by the Apostles.

There were four ways in which the apostles fulfilled their commission:

- 1) by oral preaching;
- 2) by example;
- 3) by ordinances; and
- 4) by committing the message of salvation to writing, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit.

The Council thus avoided the problem of the "written...unwritten" traditions of Trent.

The foundation of tradition is linked with apostolic succession, but the text does not go into any detail at this point. The historical continuity of the faith in the community of believers remains an essential element in tradition.

Throughout this document, "tradition" is used only in the singular, contrary to Trent which referred only to "traditions." However, Vatican II never clearly defines its use of "tradition" and is ambiguous with respect to tradition considered as process and as content and with respect to objective and subjective tradition.

Paragraph 8, the key paragraph of the Constitution on the subject of tradition, appeared for the first time in one of the last drafts of the text. Here the dynamic and organic idea of tradition finds expression in the document. The influence of the Tübingen School, through the work of Congar on the Commission, is evident.

What the Apostles handed on "includes everything which contributes to the holiness of life and the increase in faith of the People of God." The Church, in turn, by three channels, teaching, life, and worship, hands on all that it is and all that it believes. Tradition is therefore identified with the being and faith of the Church. It is something more than doctrine and it is passed on by other means in addition to that of teaching or instruction. Further, it is communicated by the total life of the Christian, not just by explicit acts of faith and worship.

Here for the first time the concept of tradition as a growing, developing reality enters into an official document of the Church: "This tradition which comes from the apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts, through the intimate understanding of spiritual things they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal

succession the gift of truth. For, as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her."

What specifically is organic growth in the understanding of the original deposit of faith is a question which the Council leaves open. Significantly, that which is increasingly understood is not only "words" but also "realities" which have been handed down. The document does not elaborate on the meaning of these realities or the means by which they are passed on, but their inclusion leaves the statement open to future development. They are obviously that which can be distinguished from words.

The role of the laity referred to here, particularly growth through their inner understanding based on spiritual experience, marks a breakthrough of significant proportions, indicating that the Church is no longer under the threat that nineteenth century theories of immanence posed for it, and it is now free to seriously consider the function of spiritual experience in the communication of revelation.

The pneumatological character of the idea of tradition, important for the understanding of tradition as present event and necessary too for theological consideration of continuity in the Church, predominates the discussion. Through the Spirit, the living voice of the Gospel is present in the Church and, through the Church, in the world. That the Spirit "leads unto all truth," and that "the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth," are indications of the Council's awareness of a future orientation to tradition.

TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC POSITIONS

TRADITIONAL VIEWPOINTS

René Latourelle whose *Theology of Revelation* we most adequately and extensively used in our previous chapters is representative of those Catholic theologians who attempt a twentieth century theology of revelation based on Vatican II and anti-Protestant polemic. His general stance is that of being on guard against the threat which comes from Protestantism, especially in its emphasis on the thinking subject in revelation.⁴²

Revelation "is not a reality always in becoming, bound up with the development of human consciousness, but a deposit of supernatural truths, entrusted to the guardianship

⁴² See René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation including a commentary on the Constitution "Dei Verbum" of Vatican II* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1966), p. 248.

of the Church and completed from the times of the apostles.”⁴³ The history of revelation is akin to successive interventions of God in human history which becomes intelligible as revelation when accompanied by the word which elaborates on the meaning of the divine activity. The process of revelation comprises of the following elements: 1) a historical event; 2) the prophet’s understanding of the event as revelation; and 3) the prophet’s word, presenting the event and its meaning as objects of divine testimony.⁴⁴ Although Latourelle does not see revelation as a system of abstract propositions concerning God, rather as incorporated in events of history, his theory of the word in the Church essentially leads him to conclude that revelation is doctrine. The full implications of historicity, e.g., relativism, are avoided by having recourse to the “divinity” of the doctrine and the fact that “revelation takes place in conditions such that it seems that God himself foresaw and resolved these difficulties.”⁴⁵

Latourelle’s theory of revelation is as expounded in his *Theology of Revelation* does not allow him to view *Dei Verbum* in a profoundly new manner. The Scripture-tradition problem persists; Vatican II avoided it but could not conclude it. In his commentary on the constitution, he is barely concerned with the ‘positive role of the laity in tradition’ rather, holds the traditional view that interpretation belongs only to the magisterium. The function of the laity for him is purely passive; they draw from the magisterium their life.⁴⁶ He emphasizes that the living tradition of the Church expressed in different forms from one age to another does not claim to enrich the treasure tradition received from the Apostles; the “movement of the Church towards fullness,” is interpreted as the Church never ceasing to offer the fullness of divine truth as a possession it already had in its fullness.⁴⁷ While most commentators acknowledge that Vatican II avoids affirming that there are any revealed truths transmitted by tradition alone, Latourelle, in his interpretation of the last sentence of Paragraph 8 of the decree, “it is through tradition that the canon of inspired books is known to us in its fullness,” understands that on this point the Council recognizes that the objective content of Tradition surpasses that of Scripture.⁴⁸

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 281-282.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 349.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 354.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 482.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 477 and 483.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 478. This concept is qualified on p. 479: “The Council has deliberately avoided the problem (not yet theologically resolved) of the material content of Tradition and Scripture. Does Tradition enjoy a more extensive object content than Scripture?... Apart from the question of inspired books, the Council

In light of newer theological insights, of new problems and questions formulated in a different mode than in the past, and in view of some incoherence as well as the presence of old doctrinal controversies together with indications of new orientations in *Dei Verbum*, as delineated above, one finds it rather difficult to agree with Latourelle's assessment of the possibilities it offers for a future Catholic theology of revelation and tradition: "The Constitution furnishes the solid basis for a dogmatic treatise on revelation. All the essential points are touched upon...The text does not neglect a single one of the aspects of this complex reality."⁴⁹

It must have been a similar tone of thought that got the better of J. Mackey in his *The Modern Theology of Tradition* when he went on to say: "It is substantially the suggestion of Heinrich Bacht that, ever since the time that Franzelin and Scheeben began to write, all the elements required for an understanding of the nature of Tradition (such as is now possible) have been analyzed by one theologian or another. It is now a question of synthesis."⁵⁰

Drawing upon Scheeben's theories of tradition, Mackey attempts that synthesis. He is chiefly concerned to correct the nineteenth century theory which he attributes to Franzelin, of the identification of tradition with the teaching magisterium of the Church. He looks for a fuller notion of tradition by trying to broaden the understanding of the teaching role of the magisterium in relation to its mission and charism and by seeking to establish the authority of other bodies in the Church. Only the magisterium has the authoritative mission and charism of infallibility. The faithful participate in tradition as believers, and, in that sense, also share in infallibility.

The teaching of the Magisterium is Tradition, a guaranteed handing on of revealed truth, before ever we take into consideration the fact that its infallibility is of the charismatic type which belongs only to men with a divine mission and that its teaching is authoritative as no other teaching in the Church is. Once so much is admitted, it is seen that other organs in the Church teach or profess doctrine that is guaranteed or infallible without being authoritative: and the infallibility in belief has its part to play now in Tradition.⁵¹

The tradition received by the Apostles was the final and complete revelation, so that their tradition was constitutive. By it a completed body of truth was deposited in the

thought it inopportune to add any other determination regarding the quantitative object of Tradition and Scripture."

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 485.

⁵⁰ J. P. Mackey, *The Modern Theology of Tradition* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), pp. ix and 141. Once again Sister Margaret Earley's views have come as quite helpful.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 202.

Church. The Scriptures were attributed to the Holy Spirit by a special activity which marks them off, so that it is the oral deposit and not the written deposit which belongs to tradition. With respect to the relation between the faith of the community and the magisterium, he claims, "the community of faith was never a norm for the Magisterium but in the apostolic age it was not even a datum to be examined, to be known. It was at most a negative influence."⁵² He does hold that the teaching of the magisterium is received actively by different organs in the Church. The faithful receive and profess the teaching "usually in more mundane ways such as the teaching of children and the practice and piety of daily living...The faith of the whole Church is infallible."⁵³ The magisterium consults the Fathers and the theologians, and inquires about the faith of the universal Church. Its own teaching is carried forward by these organs. It is by this interplay that he describes development and integrity in tradition.

Unfortunately, in the treatise of Mackey, the struggle with the interrelation of Scripture, tradition, and magisterium stands unresolved. His later work, *Tradition and Change in the Church*, in which he calls for a philosophy of tradition and change, emphasizes the essential community element in tradition.⁵⁴ He acknowledges that the promise held for the theology of tradition in the writings of the theologians of the Tübingen School, of Moehler, and of Newman, offers more hope for a contemporary theory of tradition. This later, and perhaps more mature work of Mackey, seems to indicate that he should more correctly be classified with those theologians who are looking at tradition in the light of more current questions and developments. His suggestions and references however need to be more fully studied.

GOING DEEPER IN THE SCRIPTURE TRADITION ISSUE

It is evident from the above that one of the thorniest problems in the understanding of revelation is to describe how Scripture relates to the magisterial Tradition. We said earlier that this problem became critical after the Protestant Reformation. Protestants adopted a doctrine of "*sola scriptura*", by which was generally meant that the Bible alone provides authoritative teaching for Christian life. The Catholic Church, in reaction to this stance, emphasized the magisterial teaching of the church itself as valid authoritative instruction for Christian life, in addition to Sacred Scripture. We have

⁵² Ibid., p. 203.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 204.

⁵⁴ See J. P. Mackey, *Tradition and Change in the Church* (Dublin: Gill and Son, 1968), pp. 139-140.

already noted that *Dei Verbum* did not entirely resolve the question of how Scripture and Tradition are interrelated. Thus, it is an area of ongoing discussion.

To get at this question we need to discuss three related topics: the authority of Scripture, what is meant by Tradition, and the contemporary debate about the interrelationship of the two.

AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

All Christians claim the Bible to be authoritative because they hold it to be the inspired Word of God. The Bible is unlike any other literature. Its inspiration quality is vouchsafed by the Bible itself. The key passage is found in Second Timothy:

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3: 16-17)

This passage asserts that God is the source of the Scriptures' meaning, and they provide sound guidance on how to live a righteous life. Moreover, God's Spirit – the Holy Spirit – is the guarantor of the truth and authenticity of the Bible.

Dei Verbum affirmed this perspective several times:

For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit... (DV, 9)

For holy mother Church... holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself. (DV, 11)

Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation. (DV, 11)

These passages from *Dei Verbum* form a unified stance with regard to the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

How do Catholics generally understand God as the "author" of the Bible? The church equally asserts that human authors composed the Scriptures "in human fashion" (DV, 12), thus requiring interpreters to become aware of the various literary forms and genres represented in the Bible that stem from human origin. Yet inspiration means that the Scriptures contain not merely a human message, but a divine one.

Historically, inspiration has been understood in multiple ways. There are various theories of inspiration, summarized succinctly in the following lines.⁵⁵

1. Strict verbal inspiration: Each word of the Bible is inspired; emphasis on the literal reading of Scripture; inspiration connected with inerrancy of the Bible; can apply either to the "original autographs" of the Bible or to translations;
2. Limited verbal inspiration: The Scriptures are verbally inspired but in the limited sense of the historical knowledge and cultural context of the biblical authors;
3. Inspiration of the content: What is inspired is the meaning or content of each passage of the Bible rather than the words themselves;
4. Inspiration of the human authors: The biblical authors were directly inspired by God but chose human words to express their religious experience;
5. Inspiration of the early Christian community: Acknowledging the lengthy and complex process by which the Scriptures came into being over centuries, inspiration is imputed to the early Christian community, which ultimately led to the creation of the canon.

Each of these theories has advantages and disadvantages. Prior to the twentieth century, most Christians, including Catholics, accepted the first theory of strict verbal inspiration. They thought that inspiration was inherently connected to the notion of inerrancy, meaning that the Bible could contain no errors whatsoever, whether religious, historical, or scientific. Strict biblical fundamentalists still espouse this theory.

In fact, the Catholic position even in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was essentially the same, as reflected in the following quotation from Leo XIII's famous encyclical, *Providentissimus Deus*:

For all the books in their entirety, which the Church receives as sacred and canonical, with all their parts, have been written under the dictation of the Holy Spirit. Now it is utterly impossible that divine inspiration could give rise to any error; it not only by its very nature excludes all error, but excludes and rejects it with the same necessity by which it is impossible that God, the highest Truth, be the author of any error whatsoever.

It is futile to argue that the Holy Spirit took human beings as his instruments in writing, implying that some error could slip in, not indeed from the principal author, but from the inspired writers. For by his supernatural power he stimulated and moved them to write, and so assisted them while they were writing, that they properly conceived in their mind, wished to write down faithfully, and expressed

⁵⁵ See Richard Gaillardetz, *By What Authority? A Primer on Scripture, the Magisterium, and the Sense of the Faithful* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), pp. 15-40; and Paul J. Achtemeier, *Inspiration and Authority: Nature and Function of Christian Scripture* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999).

aptly with infallible truth all those things, and only those things, which he himself ordered; other he could not himself be the author of the whole of Sacred Scripture.⁵⁶

Such a statement expresses the same position as that of biblical fundamentalists today. One major problem with this view of inspiration and inerrancy, however, is the inability to decide which text is the inspired one. There are no original texts in existence. Rather, there are thousands of manuscript traditions in the original languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Latin). Which manuscript tradition is authoritative? The current editions of the Hebrew Bible, the Greek New Testament, and the Latin Vulgate are all based on scholarly decisions about which families of manuscripts seem to be the most authentic. This theory raises another question: Does this biblical inspiration apply to translations and not simply to the "originals"? Is the King James Version of the Bible (1611, with subsequent revisions), revered by fundamentalists, the only inspired translation, and, if so, why? These and similar questions make this view of inspiration highly problematic, and it no longer reflects the Catholic stance on inspiration.

The second theory, limited verbal inspiration, is more attuned to a Catholic approach. Even some patristic authors proposed that God accommodated the limitations of the human authors so that the "Word" could be communicated in an understandable fashion. This theory allows for an acknowledgment of the human dimension of the divine text. The biblical text consequently reflects the cultural and linguistic limitations of the authors.

While the third and fourth theories have some potential from a Catholic standpoint, they also have limitations. It is quite difficult if not impossible to ascertain either the definitive meaning of texts or the intention of the human authors, and, in either case, the meaning of the words involved is still the critical issue. Many contemporary scholars who are experts in "literary criticism" emphasize that we can never know an ancient author's intentions. Moreover, once a text comes into its existence, it has a life of its own. Regardless of the author's intentions, later readers or generations of readers will elicit meanings from the text that were never in the author's mind but which can legitimately emerge from interpretations of the text.

The fifth theory, proposed by more modern authors of both Protestant and Catholic persuasion, attempts to accommodate the lengthy process of the birth of the biblical

⁵⁶ J. Neuner, S.J. and J. Dupuis, S.J., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, p. 102.

tradition in terms of oral, written, and edited stages, such as espoused by the Pontifical Biblical Commission's (henceforth PBC) document, *Sancta Mater Ecclesia*. This theory proposes that the real locus of biblical inspiration is not in the Bible itself or in the actual words but in the early communities that preserved these sacred writings and eventually bound them into a restricted collection, the sacred canon, a sure measure or norm for Christian living.

Dei Verbum does not adopt anyone theory of inspiration nor does the Catechism (CCC, 105), which primarily relies on the constitution. The critical passage in *Dei Verbum* is found in article 11:

Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation. (DV, 11)

Some interpreters of the council today insist that this passage essentially affirms the strict verbal inspiration of Scripture, with its concomitant notion of inerrancy, understood literally. Others maintain that this is a misreading of the passage. In fact, the council fathers rejected using the word "inerrancy" because of its association with biblical fundamentalism. Instead they used "without error" and went on to explain what this expression applies to: "that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation." This seems crucial. The lack of error pertains not to every dot and dash of Scripture but to that essential truth necessary for the salvation of Christians. This seems to qualify the type of inspiration found in the Bible. Inspiration, then perhaps does not concern historical or scientific content but religious content, specifically, moral and doctrinal truths essential to salvation.

In his commentary on this section of the constitution, Cardinal Bea pointed out that the council fathers did not intend to propose a limited notion of inerrancy. That is to say, they did not mean to divide inerrancy into opposing categories of faith versus science or history. He wrote,

The basic idea of the absolute truth of the Scriptures is always the same, although it may be differently expressed. The Constitution expresses most forcefully the notion that Scripture absolutely guarantees the faithful transmission of God's revelation⁵⁷

He goes on to defend his personal interpretation that the constitution does not limit inspiration to faith and morals. Yet he does affirm that the important expression in the

⁵⁷ See Augustin Bea, *The Word of God and Mankind* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, Ltd., 1967), p. 187.

constitution concerns the truths essential “for our salvation.” In the end, there continues to be a struggle about how best to understand this notion of inspiration in a manner that is true to the final form of the constitution but also reflects the intense debates that led to the compromised wording. My impression is that the Catholic position as reflected in *Dei Verbum* affirms biblical inspiration wholly but without resolving in a large measure, how it operates or how best to explain it in detail. The topic would obviously keep future Catholic theologians engaged for sometime to come.

TRADITION

Many people think of “tradition” as customs, routine behaviours, or attitudes that one knew when growing up or have been passed on in a family from one generation to another. In fact many Catholics conceive of Tradition and Scripture as a two drawer cabinet holding all the “truths” of divine revelation. One drawer (Scripture) contains the truths of the Bible and all Christians share in this drawer. The second drawer refers to another set of truths not explicitly found in the Bible. This drawer is tradition and it is thought to be in the exclusive possession of the Catholic Church.⁵⁸ The capitalization of the word indicates that, in the sense in which it is used by theologians or in church documents, it does not denote simply “traditions” that accumulate over time. The word “Tradition” means the entire body of teaching and practice in the Judeo-Christian tradition, which is a record of God’s covenantal relationship with his chosen people, right down to the beginnings of the church expressed through the apostolic traditions recounted in the Bible and beyond.

This is indeed a very large, all-encompassing notion. It includes thousands of years of the history of salvation and of the relationship between God and all creation, most specifically with human beings, who are created in God’s own image (Genesis 1-2). The biblical sense of the word “tradition”, as mentioned earlier as well, denotes both a process of handing on truth from one generation to another and the content of that truth. For example, St. Paul speaks of handing on traditions about the Eucharist (1 Cor. 11:23-26) and the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:3-11). These are not merely minor rituals but vitally important remembrances. The process of handing on these truths was as important as the message they contained.

⁵⁸ See Richard Gaillardetz, *By What Authority? A Primer on Scripture, the Magisterium, and the Sense of the Faithful*, p. 41.

In a pre-Vatican II setting, Tradition came to denote primarily a body of authoritative teachings, apart from Scripture, that contained the truths of the Catholic faith. When the popes of the nineteenth century began to issue “encyclical letters,” which were intended as authoritative teachings in their own right, this practice reinforced the content-oriented notion of Tradition. In contrast, *Dei Verbum* seems to be proposing a more ‘dynamic’ understanding of Tradition.

Therefore the Apostles, handing on what they themselves had received, warn the faithful to hold fast to the traditions which they have learned either by word of mouth or by letter (see 2 Thess. 2: 15), and to fight in defense of the faith handed on once and for all (see Jude 1 :3). Now what was handed on by the Apostles includes everything which contributes toward the holiness of life and increase in faith of the peoples of God; and so the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes.

This tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. *For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down.* This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Luke, 2: 19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her. (DV, 8)

The italicized words express the dynamism of the church’s Tradition as it proceeds through the ages. These words are reminiscent of Pope John XXIII’s notion at the beginning of the council that the expression of the truths of the faith is different from the truths themselves. Every era must wrestle with how best to communicate the truth contained in the Tradition of the church in ways that make it understandable and more attractive to people.

Cardinal Bea, in his thorough commentary on *Dei Verbum*, explains this concept in a helpful manner. After acknowledging the seemingly paradoxical expression of “developing tradition,” he states: “The development of tradition consists of an ever growing understanding of its object, in its entirety.” It is not a question of a totally new revelation that comes into existence in this developing tradition. Rather, the comprehension and depth of awareness of God’s self-revelation can deepen over time.

RELATING SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

After the Reformation, the division between Scripture and Tradition became more solidified. Protestants thus emphasized one source of divine revelation (Scripture),

while Catholics emphasized two interrelated expressions of one source (Scripture and Tradition).

Just as Vatican II rejected the propositional view of revelation, so it rejected a proposal to affirm two separate sources of revelation. The pertinent section of *Dei Verbum* (article 9) was, in fact, much debated. When the council fathers rejected the first schema's attempt to delineate two sources of revelation, the real challenge became how to express the interrelationship of Scripture and Tradition. This is a part of the constitution that many find unsatisfying, because it does not offer a clear resolution to the question (DV, 9 and 10).

Again, Cardinal Bea's explanation is helpful. He points out that "the document does not say that the sacred writings are understood only in light of tradition?" Nor does the constitution say "...that tradition is necessary for the deeper understanding of scripture." Tradition can help bring greater clarity to the interpretation of Scripture because the sum total of Tradition (i.e., devotion, liturgical practice, meditation, study, and so on) helps focus on the meaning of the text in different eras of the church's history. The meaning of the Scriptures, then, is not self-evident. It is not immediately transparent to any casual interpreter. Careful exegesis is required to ascertain, first, the literal sense of the words, and then second, deeper meanings that are contained therein. The church promotes this exercise of interpretation in the context of its whole living Tradition.

As mentioned several times earlier, it should be remembered that it was the Tradition of the church that helped bring the canon of Sacred Scripture into being. There is, in a sense, a back-and-forth relationship between Scripture and Tradition. On the one hand, Scripture is a special gift from God, through the Holy Spirit, that instructs Christians and reveals God's intentions. But the Bible did not just descend miraculously from heaven. It grew from the experience of Christian ancestors in faith. On the other hand, the church itself determined, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the extent of the Scriptures. Scripture and Tradition thus involve a dialectical relationship. The church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, defined the extent of the canon and determined which books were acceptable and which were not. This was a long and complex process that went on for centuries. It did not reach a definitive conclusion until the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, when the limits of the canon were formally confirmed. Commenting on this hazy relationship, Cardinal Bea notes that the council fathers left the formulation rather broad for the following reason:

The Council wished to emphasize the fundamental importance of tradition, without however deciding the question which Catholics still debate on the so-called 'sufficiency of Holy Scripture', whether, that is to say, all revealed truths are at least implicitly contained in the written word of God, or whether on the contrary, some of them are received by the Church from oral tradition alone.⁵⁹

This is to say that the mysterious interrelationship between Scripture and Tradition is not resolved in the constitution, and scholars continue to debate the issue. What is clear, however, is that Scripture and Tradition continue to inform one another. There is a back-and-forth, a give-and-take kind of relationship. After all, *Dei Verbum* strongly cautioned that the church is the servant- not the master-of the Scriptures: "This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it..." (DV, 10). But there is also the function of the entire Tradition of the church to help guide ones understanding of Scripture through the ages, beginning with but not restricted to the apostolic preaching. This dialectic is not likely to be entirely clarified, and this I believe is the loop from where confusion sets into various aspects of Christian theology. We will come back to this later. However to clarify the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, the following diagram by Witherup comes in quite handy.⁶⁰

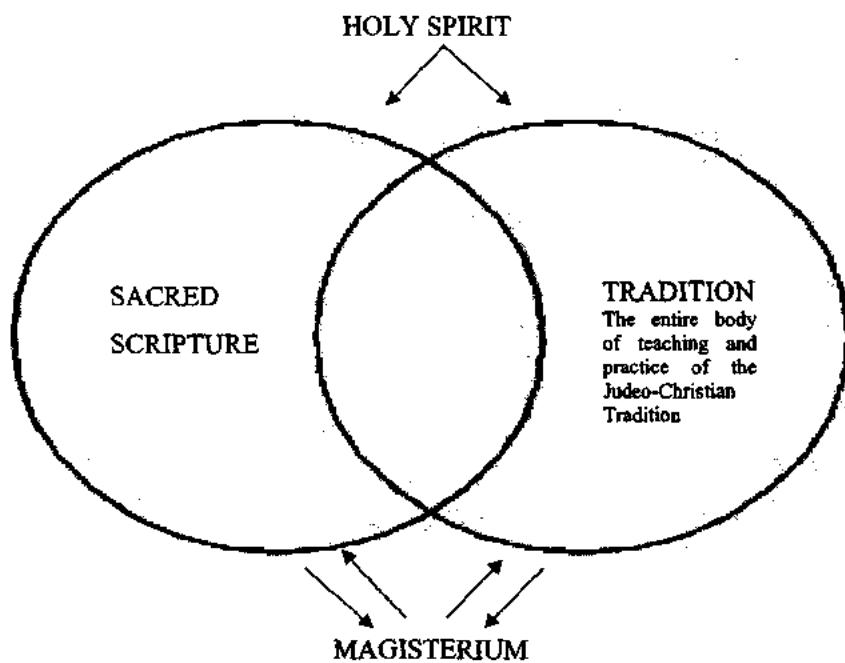


Diagram 1: Relationship of Scripture and Tradition

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 158.

⁶⁰ Ronald D. Witherup, *Scripture: Dei Verbum* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006), p.98.

In the diagram one can see that, while Scripture and Tradition are distinctive entities, they overlap. The Holy Spirit is equally active in both of these spheres because, in reality, they constitute one divine source of revelation. The magisterium, seemingly a third entity, has its own distinctive role to play. In some ways, the magisterium stands apart from the Tradition of the church, yet it is also an essential part of the Tradition. *Dei Verbum* notes that the magisterium's exclusive role is to ensure, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the authentic interpretation of the Word of God. But the "living teaching office of the Church" is also the bearer of the Tradition of the church. Ultimately, then, the magisterium helps to interpret both Scripture and Tradition authentically, "in the name of Jesus Christ" (arrows pointing upward). Yet *Dei Verbum* equally stresses that the magisterium does not stand above the Word of God but serves it (arrows pointing downward). The magisterium itself can be corrected by insights from Scripture and Tradition. God directs the efficacy of all three entities under the Holy Spirit (arrows pointing downward). The constitution concludes its discussion of this complex relationship with the following summary:

It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls (DV, 10).

There is, of course, a problem that some would see with this scenario. They would note that the magisterium's role has seemingly grown so much that there seems to be little control over it, despite the constitution's insistence that it is "not above the Word of God, but serves it" (DV, 10). Some council fathers foresaw this problem and expressed uneasiness with it, even during the discussions of article 10. They felt that *Dei Verbum* did not say enough about the role of the Word in supervising the teaching office of the church itself.

Christopher Butler, for example, at an ecumenical conference held in 1966 to examine the teachings of Vatican II, voiced his concern with these words:

It is all very well for us to say and believe that the magisterium is subject to Holy Scripture. But is there anybody who is in a position to tell the magisterium: Look, you are not practicing your subjection to Scripture in your teaching.⁶¹

⁶¹ See John H. Miller (ed.), *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1966), p. 89.

Such sentiments harmonize well with concerns expressed by some theologians and others in recent years that the teaching office of the church has grown more authoritarian. They believe that the magisterium needs once more to root itself in the teaching of *Dei Verbum*, but one has to admit that the constitution is not as clear on the subject as one might like. There is essentially a paradox here. John R. Donahue summarizes it well in these words:

Thus the teaching office is simultaneously the servant of the Word and its authentic interpreter; the whole Church determines the development of tradition, but is subordinate to the teaching authority.⁶²

In the next and last chapter we shall consider how this concept both richly refreshing as far as the Catholic world is concerned yet fraught with loops and pitholes has impacted on the way 'others' are perceived in the Catholic tradition.

⁶² John R. Donahue, "Between Jerusalem and Athens," in *Hermes and Athena: Biblical Exegesis and Philosophical Theology*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Thomas P. Flint (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1993), p. 291.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CATHOLIC VIEW OF OTHER RELIGIONS

So far we have discussed the Catholic concept of revelation, its development to the Second Vatican Council and after it and the new currents of thought the Council projected pertaining to the issue of revelation. In the current chapter, we shall take a brief view of the Catholic view of other religions focusing our attention upon the last couple of centuries.¹ The reason being that up until the 18th century the Catholic church had persevered with a more or less persistent stance towards other religions which summarized well in the Latin axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*. It was after the First Vatican Council that the church started caving in under social pressure and started looking seriously outside of its own boundaries and hence we see a number of Catholic theologians trying to tow the line of religious pluralism and making efforts to update the Church, at times surreptitiously at others by openly challenging its authority and the ability to come to terms with the existential presence of other religions alongside it.

CATHOLIC VIEW OF OTHER RELIGIONS PRIOR TO VATICAN II

As mentioned earlier in this work, Christianity rose from Jewish soil and found itself exhibiting Jewish ideas and attitudes very early in its history. Just as Christian revelation was based upon and influenced by its Jewish conception, similarly, the Jewish attitude toward other religions must have influenced the Christian attitude to a certain degree. To begin with we can start from the Holy Bible itself as it is the mainstay of religious thought for both Jews and Christians. Numerous books and articles have taken up this issue in great detail so I am going to leave out the details and

¹ For a good study of the Christian approach to other religions see the following works: E.L. Allen, *Christianity Among the Religions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961); Hendrik Kraemer, *Religion and the Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957 and London: Lutterworth Press, 1956); Owen C. Thomas (ed.), *Attitudes Toward Other Religions: Some Christian Interpretations* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969). For a 'hardliner' traditional view of the Catholic view of other religions, see H. Van Straelen, *The Catholic Encounter with World Religions* (London: Burns and Oates, 1965). The best work however, to my knowledge which ingeniously incorporates both the 'hardliner' view as well as contemporary progressive views from a Catholic perspective is Jacques Dupuis', *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* mentioned earlier. Dupuis in his bibliography makes mention of several important works in his book of which I would only relate those in English.

P. Rossano, "The Bible and Non-Christian Religions" in *Bulletin*, 1967 4/2/1: 18-28. Also "Is There Authentic Revelation outside the Judeo-Christian Revelation?" in *Bulletin* (Secretariat for Non-Christians), 1968, 8/3/2: 84-87. See also "Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism in Roman Catholic Perspective" in *Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism*, ed. G.H. Anderson and T.F. Stransky (New York: Orbis Books, 1981), pp.96-110.

For another Catholic treatment of the issue on hand, see also Francis Sullivan, *Salvation outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992).

concentrate on presenting for the reader an extremely summarised view of the issue on hand.

IN THE HOLY BIBLE: THE OLD TESTAMENT²

Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller in their work *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* have made a surprising revelation regarding the Judeo-Christian view of other religions towards the end of their book. This is what they have to say:

A staggering question for the contemporary church is that of Christianity's relationship to non-Christian religions other than Judaism.³

While trying to comment and at the same time answer this question, they say:

No comprehensive solution to this issue can be found in the Bible, but it does offer some leads.⁴

They further add:

...[In Christianity] as was the case with Judaism, explicit evaluations of other religions tended to be negative. The Gentiles suffered from "ignorance" and were considered to be caught in a life of idolatry and futility...in no instance was a religious "system" other than Judaism or Christianity considered to have any validity.⁵

However, one can detect strings of what various scholars have termed a more 'positive' attitude towards other religions in some passages of the Bible. The most striking terminology used by the Holy Bible especially the Old Testament with regard to the relationship of God to His creation and more particularly with man, seems to be 'covenant'. This covenant God made with all his creation including the heavens and the earth. The Bible explicitly tells us about this covenant:

The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: "Thus says the Lord: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time...
(Jeremiah 33:19-20)

Similarly, God made a covenant with man:

The Lord created man out of earth, and turned him back to it again. He gave them few days, a limited time, but granted them authority over the things upon the earth. He endowed them with strength like his own, and made them in his own image...He made for them tongue and eyes; he gave them ears and a mind for thinking. He filled them with knowledge and understanding, and showed them good and evil...He bestowed knowledge upon them, and allotted to them the law

² I am greatly indebted to Dupuis' *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* for this section.

³ Donald Senior & Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (London: SCM Press, 1983), p.345.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

of life. He established with them an eternal covenant, and showed them his judgments.

(Sirach 17:1-12)

Although the Bible does not talk about any covenant between God and Adam, the fact that Adam was the first man prompts one to say that Adam was the foremost character depicted in the last quoted passage.

God next established a covenant with Noah and the sign of this covenant was the bow (Genesis 9: 8-17). It was virtually a renewal of the first covenant because this covenant is not only with Noah rather, with "every living creature that is with you, for all future generations".

The third covenant was that made with Moses. This of course, revolved around the chosenness of Israel and the people of God.

And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel:...Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation..." (Exodus 19:3-6)

The fourth covenant was that between God and man through Christ which we have already dealt with in detail in the previous chapter.

After having understood that God entered into various covenants with man, it needs to be seen how the Gentile population fared in this covenant. Dupuis mentions several 'pagan saints' (meaning thereby 'individuals who lived outside the dispensation of God's chosen people') who did not belong to Israel but were acknowledged to have lived righteously. Among these he enumerates Abel, Enoch and Noah. These saints achieved the pleasure of God owing to their faith. This clearly indicates that salvation in the eyes of God was not restricted to Israel alone. However, they lived before God entered into a covenant with Israel.

Even after the covenant with Israel, the Bible portrays foreigners, i.e. to Israel, as having achieved the pleasure of God and salvation. Dupuis enumerates Job, the Queen of Saba, Lot and Melchizedek among these.

Every now and then one comes across phrases in the Old Testament which depict a benevolent and loving God who is genuinely concerned about all His creatures. The following lines from Wisdom are a clear indication of this:

Thou lovest all things that exist,
and has loathing for none of the things
which thou hast made,

for thou wouldst not have made anything
if thou hadst hated it.
How would anything have endured
if thou hadst not willed it?
Or how would anything not called forth by thee
have been preserved?
Thou sparest all things, for they are thine,
O Lord who lovest the living.
For thy immortal Spirit is in all things.

Wisdom 11:24-12:1

IN THE HOLY BIBLE: THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament, contrary to popular understanding, has much to offer regarding the engagement of Christians with non-Christians. In this regard of course, the example of Christ himself is most significant which is why in the lines to follow, we shall trace the various stand points that Christ and after him his apostles take while dealing with or talking about non-Christians.

It needs to be clarified at the outset that Jesus on more than one occasion remarked that he had been sent 'to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'. (Matthew 15:24). Similarly when he sent his disciples to preach to others, he warned them in clear terms:

Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (Matthew 10:5-6)

Yet throughout the Gospel narrative, we come across several instances when Jesus himself cured non-Jews thus contradicting his statement with his action.

There is the story of the grateful Samaritan quoted in Luke. Jesus was going to Jerusalem and passed a place between Samaria and Galilee, where he met ten lepers who requested him to heal them which he promptly did.

Then one of them, when he say that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then said Jesus, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; you faith has made you well." (Luke 17:15-19)

There is also the story of the Good Samaritan once again in Luke 10: 29-37 and the healing incident of the centurion's servant at Capernaum. What Christ said to the centurion is particularly revealing. After healing the servant, he told his disciples:

Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the

kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. (Matthew 8: 10-12)

And addressing the centurion, he remarked:

Go be it done for you as you have believed (Matthew 8: 13)

We shall take two more examples from among the two foremost disciples of Christ to illustrate that the attitude of the early apostles was quite in line with that of Christ's.

The first incident is that which took place in Caesarea when Peter addressed a centurion Cornelius, who was known to be a devout man. He said:

Truly, I perceive that god shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. (Acts 10: 34-36)

Shortly afterwards, as Peter continued his address,

...the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God (Acts 10: 44-46)

The next example is that of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, from his Letter to the Romans and the Acts. Needless to say, this letter is considered a classic one for its discussion of the Christian stance toward other religions. Addressing the Romans, Paul warns them of the wrath of God which has befallen them for not recognizing God although God has shown Himself in the nature around them.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they [the Romans] are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. (Romans 1: 19-21)

But the Jews fared no better. The law that was revealed to the Greeks in nature, the same law was revealed to the Jews in the Torah which they failed to recognize and uphold.

You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." (Romans 2: 23-24)

Moreover,

There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek (Romans 2: 9-10)

These texts suggest that early Christianity had at least room to create some space for the 'other'. However, as we know from history that for the most part of its history

Christianity viewed ‘others’ quite negatively, we shall only consider one Christian luminary St. Origen who quite early in Christian history laid what might be rightly termed as the implicit foundations for a more positive view of the ‘other’ after which until the 20th century, the Church with remarkable consistency stuck to its age old axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*.

ST. ORIGEN

St. Origen of Alexandria (185 – 254) AD was one of the foremost theologians of Christianity yet hardly recognized. He threw himself into controversy by believing in ideas which the church considered heretic. He was excommunicated by the Council of Constantinople in 453AD long after his death and later declared a heretic after a whole century by the second Council of Constantinople in 553AD. One of the charges against him was that he believed in the transmigration of souls and their pre-existence as well. What concerns us here is his belief regarding universal salvation.

Before we investigate the question of the universal scope of salvation, we must briefly look into Origen’s soteriology. On this point, Origen unquestionably follows the traditional “apostolic teaching” of the incarnation and atoning death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.⁶ He says:

Outside this house, that is, outside the Church, no one is saved [*Extra Ecclesiam, Nemo Salvatur*]. If anyone goes outside, he is responsible for his own death.⁷

Those outside of the church, Origen clearly states, will be destroyed. Only those protected by the blood of Christ within the symbolic house of the church will be saved. In the first place, then, Origen restricts the means and context of salvation to Christ and his church.

Noah’s ark, for Origen, allegorically signifies the Church: “This people, therefore, which is saved in the Church, is compared to all those whether men or animals which are saved in the ark.”⁸ The exclusivism he expresses in these passages does not necessarily preclude universal salvation, since Origen is said to posit the salvation of all

⁶ See Scheck, *Origen and the Doctrine of Justification: The Legacy of Origen’s Commentary on Romans* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), pp. 38-40.

⁷ See Origen, *Homilies on Joshua*, translated by B.J. Bruce, edited by C. White (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2002), vol. 3, p. 81. Quoted by Mark Stephen Murray Scott in *Cosmic Theodicy: Origen on the Problem of Evil*, Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University, 2008.

⁸ See Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, translated by R.E. Heine (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), vol. 2, p. 3. Quoted by Ibid.

souls through Christ, thus bringing all beings within the “house” or “ark” of the Church, leaving only their sinfulness “outside.”

In his preface to *De Principiis*, Origen classifies the doctrine of “eternal fire” as a basic and fixed teaching of the Church meaning thereby that there will be folks who will reside in eternal fire till eternity thus implying that the concept of salvation for all is meaningless.⁹

There are however writings of Origen from modern scholars who have ‘manifestly’ inferred that he talks about the salvation of other religions thus bestowing upon them some sort of legitimacy.¹⁰

In several significant passages Origen implicitly affirms the salvation of all, at least as a theoretical possibility. While he may not publicly be teaching universalism, it seems to follow as a logical corollary of his doctrine of creation and eschatology.

The most suggestive passages come from *De Principiis*. While certain theological truths have been revealed and fixed by the “apostolic teaching” of the church,¹¹ others remain open. As we mentioned above, Origen classifies the doctrine of hell as an official church teaching. But, at the same time, he leaves open the possibility of the end of hell, since the church has no formal position on that point:

But what existed before this world, or what will exist after it, has not yet been made known openly to the many, for no clear statement on the point is set forth in the Church teaching.¹²

In the absence of formal declarations, Origen feels free to speculate on the possibilities inherent in Christian theological principles. On the one hand, he situates himself within the church and submits to established church doctrine. On the other hand, he engages in

⁹ See Origen’s Preface of *De Principiis*, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.vi.v.i.html>, accessed in November, 2008.

¹⁰ See H. Kraft, *Early Christian Thinkers: An Introduction to Clement of Alexandria and Origen* (New York City, New York: Association Press, 1964), p. 47ff. He was and is still respected as an authority on several dogmatic matters, especially Christological questions. See Kraft, *Early Christian Thinkers*, p. 74, and Karl Baus, *History of the Church Vol. I: From the Apostolic Community to Constantine*, Hubert Jedin and John Dolan, eds. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1986), p. 239. Karl Baus, a respected church historian described Origen as, “the greatest of the Alexandrian teachers and the most important theologian of Eastern Christianity” (Baus, *History of the Church*, 234). Analyzing the inclusive salvation approach of Origen, Faye says, “Accordingly, Origen declares that for some ‘Christ and Christ crucified’ sufficed. Let them believe in him and they will be saved. Others must have more sublime revelations; when the moment comes, they will no longer need Christ purely as a redeemer; they will go straight to the Father. Consequently redemption takes for granted a method, which differs according to the various categories of individuals” (See Faye, *Origen and His Works*, 133).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

speculations that go beyond the Church's official teaching, ensuring that it does not contradict it in principle.

Origen often hints at the logical possibility of universal salvation rather than explicitly teaching it, such as when he says that

it would certainly not have been logical that beings once created by God for the enjoyment of life should utterly perish.¹³

Similarly, Origen argues that since all creatures share in the incorruptible "intellectual light" of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they must also share in this incorruptibility.¹⁴ Otherwise, God's goodness would end with the destruction of his creation, thus limiting its duration and perfection:

[I]t follows logically and of necessity that every existence which has a share in that eternal nature must itself also remain forever incorruptible and eternal, in order that the eternity of the divine goodness may be revealed in this additional fact, that they who obtain its blessings are eternal too.¹⁵

Universalism, then, is the logical corollary of divine goodness, which expresses itself in the creation of souls and the ultimate salvation of souls, even after they have fallen into sin. Divine goodness, then, functions as the theological underpinning of both the soul's pre-existence (since there must have been something over which God demonstrates his goodness) and salvation.

We can find texts outside of *De Principiis* that echo these sentiments as well. In *Contra Celsum* Origen emphasizes the cosmic scope of salvation. On the surface, Celsus suggests, it seems that God does not intervene to save humanity from itself. Why does God allow evil to go unchecked? Rising to the defense of providence, Origen argues that God does not leave humanity to perish by its own devices. God knows the plight of humanity, he argues, and he sends "ministers" to correct people and to curb evil. God sent Moses and the prophets to instruct humanity, but God's greatest emissary was Jesus:

But greater than all these was the reformation brought about by Jesus, who did not want to cure only those in one corner of the world, but as far as possible to heal people everywhere. For he came as 'savior of all men' [1 Tim. 4:10].¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.vi.v.ii.html>, accessed in November 2008.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

In a fragment included in the text of *De Principiis*, Origen is purported to have explicitly affirmed universal salvation:

There is a resurrection of the dead, and there is punishment, but not everlasting. For when the body is punished the soul is gradually purified, and so is restored to its ancient rank.¹⁷

According to this text, Origen explicitly affirms the salvation of the wicked and demons:

For all wicked men, and for daemons, too, punishment has an end, and both wicked men and daemons shall be restored to their former rank.¹⁸

It seems Origen reserves these higher truths of the faith for an elite audience, so it seems highly doubtful that he would freely express it without reservation or qualification in *De Principiis*.

Having seen a stance from a traditionally peripheral but in contemporary times very powerful and impactful theologian, it is time to move on to describe again quite briefly, how the Catholic Church took an official position on the axiomatic *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (Outside the Church no salvation).

EXTRA ECCLEISAM NULLA SALUS

This saying or position is usually ascribed to St. Cyprian (circa. 200 – 258). Before embracing Christianity, he was known as an orator, but after his conversion sometime during the Middle Ages, he was made the bishop of Carthage and later died as a martyr for refusing to sacrifice in the name of the Emperor.

This axiom occurs repeatedly in his writings. He writes:

Let them not think that the way of salvation exists for them, if they have refused to obey the bishops or priests....The proud and insolent are killed with the sword of the Spirit, when they are cast out from the Church. For they cannot live outside, since there is only one house of God, and there can be no salvation for anyone except in the Church.¹⁹

Dupuis however is of the view that it seems from the context of Cyprian's writings that he was writing about heretics and schismatics. Dupuis quotes Francis Sullivan to drive home the point that had this been a blanket statement, Cyprian would have said something to his effect about the pagans as well. Yet that does not seem to be the case:

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Quoted in Jacques Dupuis', *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 88.

There is no instance in the writings in which Cyprian explicitly applied his saying: No salvation outside the Church, to the majority of people who were still pagans in his day. We know that he judged Christian heretics and schismatics guilty of their separation from the Church. Did he also judge all pagans guilty of their failure to accept the Christian Gospel and enter the Church? We do not know.²⁰

It seems that it was only later that the Catholic Church made this axiom its official stance and started applying it to Jews and pagans alike. Later on stalwarts like St. Ambrose, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine himself made this part of their official teachings as well.

The next great name that is mentioned in connection with this axiom is Fulgentius of Ruspe (468 – 533), a follower of St. Augustine. He writes:

Most firmly hold and by no means doubt, that not only all pagans, but also all Jews, and all heretics and schismatics who die outside the Catholic Church, will go to the eternal fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels.²¹

Since then, several papal bulls and council documents have approved of this stance and in fact – for historical reasons well beyond our scope for the time being – got more stringent and suffocating finally leading to the promulgation of the teaching on papal infallibility. As late as 1949, Pope Pius XII had to condemn the Jesuit Father Leonard Feeney, the Archbishop of Boston, USA for holding on to the axiom in its rigid form. His letter to the Archbishop read:

The *infallible* dictum which teaches us that outside the Church there is no salvation, is among the truths that the Church has always and will always teach. But this *dogma* is to be understood as the Church itself understands it. For the Savior did not leave it to private judgment to explain what is contained in the deposit of faith, but to the doctrinal authority of the Church.²²

L.M. Bermejo in his *Church Conciliarity and Communion* had this to say regarding the Church's developing stance on the axiom:

The history of the *extra ecclesiam* shows conclusively that ecclesial reception is not always irreversible. The Magisterium of the Church...upheld the axiom in the rigorist sense of Cyprian from 1208 to 1854...A position which was clearly untenable...sooner or later was bound to be changed....The change, the transition from reception to non-reception did come, but it was certainly slow in coming.²³

We shall see later how this teaching was kept intact but its sense and connotation modified to make the Catholic stance a bit more palatable. In the lines to follow we

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 92.

²² Ibid., p. 127.

²³ See L.M. Bermejo, *Church Conciliarity and Communion* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1990), pp. 242-243.

shall jump straight to the 19th century and see what sort of attitudes were displayed after the Church came into grips with modernist trends.

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM: AN OVERVIEW FROM THE 19TH CENTURY TO THE 21ST CENTURY

This section offers a purview of some papal and church documents (from the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century) that addressed the idea of religious pluralism especially from the point of view of universal salvation. For reasons which we will discuss later, Christianity in its Catholic and Protestant shades rather unfortunately almost always seems to lump together religious pluralism and its view of the 'other' with the issue of salvation. This review spans through what may be considered historically a recent theological development of the concept of universal salvation in the teaching of the Catholic Church. It begins with highlighting the rather negative position of the Church on the question of salvation of non-Catholics but especially of non-Christians and culminates at the dawn of Vatican II when the Church remarkably acknowledged not only that non-Christians can be saved but also that non-Christian religions have values that are indicative of God acting through them in the lives of their adherents. The post-Vatican II documents of the Church that are reviewed in this chapter (with the exception of the document *Dominus Iesus*, which appeared to be critical of any concept of universal salvation that is understood to put Catholicism on the same pedestal as other faith traditions) generally address the concept of universal salvation through the promotion of interreligious dialogue.

NINETEENTH CENTURY PAPAL DOCUMENTS

The nineteenth century presents a Church which was deeply challenged by theological, social, political, economic, and philosophical ideologies and upheavals. Challenges that shook the very foundation of the Church's dogma of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. The term that encapsulates the most extreme of the challenges is Religious Indifferentism.²⁴ Religious indifferentism was an idea that grew partly from rationalists and deist philosophers Francis Bacon and René Descartes in particular, as well as from some historical critical scholars of the nineteenth century. It held that all religions are equally truthful and valuable.²⁵ It was a concept largely used to either attack organized religion or "to challenge the notion of a uniquely privileged divine revelation, religion, or

²⁴ See our Introduction.

²⁵ See Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought Vol. III — From the Protestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), p. 335.

church.”²⁶ As mentioned earlier it was vehemently and persistently condemned by 19th century popes because they saw it as a religious aberration that had its origin in the societal impact that the philosophies of naturalism and rationalism had for three centuries.

The nineteenth century Western world was inundated with many social, cultural, political, economic, and religious shockwaves.²⁷ The church defiantly faced what Pope Pius IX described as “the deadly virus of indifferentism and unbelief.”²⁸ It is therefore not surprising, as Gonzalez concludes, “the nineteenth century was – even more than the sixteenth – the most conservative century in the history of Roman Catholicism.”²⁹ I shall only take a few papal reactions into consideration; these include Pius VII, Leo XII, Pius VIII, Gregory XVI, and Leo XIII.

PIUS VII (1808 - 1823)

Religious indifferentism was still in its formative stages during the papacy of Pius VII. Ecclesiastical historians credit the immediate formation of religious indifferentism to the indirect influence of Félicité Lamennais’ three-volume French work *Essai sur l’indifférence en matière de religion*.³⁰ David Schultenover traces the history of Lamennais from fanatically being pro-papal and ecclesial authority to the reverse after he left the Church. As Schultenover argues even his pro-ecclesial works elicited very strong anti-ecclesial response from the Gallicans and modernists. Friedrich Heyer has demonstrated the correlation of Lamennais’ initiative with the birth of liberal Catholicism in France, which with the support of a liberal priest Lacordaire advocated for freedom of religion by the separation of Church and state, freedom of education, freedom of the press, freedom of association, electoral freedom, and regional freedom.³¹ Pius VII’s major focus in his pontificate was Church and State relationship. The power of Napoleon was sweeping through Europe and threatening the political and religious independence of the Papal States and the Church in France. Despite all the turmoil that

²⁶ See Michael J. Schuck, *That They Be One: The Social Teaching of the Papal Encyclicals 1740-1989* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1991), p. 15.

²⁷ Ibid., 347.

²⁸ See Pius IX, “*Apostolicae Nastrae Caritatis*” (On Prayers for Peace, August 1, 1854, n. 1) in *The Papal Encyclicals 1740-1878*. Claudia Carlen, ed. (USA: A Consortium Book, McGrath Publishing Company, 1981), p. 331.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 410.

³⁰ See Michael J. Schuck, *That They Be One*, p. 15. Also see David G. Schultenover, *A View From Rome: On the Eve of the Modernist Crisis* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993), p. 25ff and the excellent work by Friedrich Heyer, *The Catholic Church from 1648 to 1870*, translated by D.W.D. Shaw (London: Adam & Charles Black Ltd., 1969), pp. 135-138.

³¹ See Friedrich Heyer, *The Catholic Church from 1648 to 1870*, p. 137.

Pius VII and the Church faced, he was admired by many. In the words of a papal historiographer, "The pope (Pius VII) had won the admiration of the world by his heroic resistance to Napoleon and by his magnanimous charity to the emperor in his defeat and exile."³² In his inaugural encyclical Pius VII had laid out his rejection of what he called dangerous books and ideologies that threaten to damage the life of the Church:

We cannot overlook, keep silent or act sluggishly. For unless this great license of thinking, speaking, writing, and reading is repressed, it will appear that the strategy and armies of wise kings and generals have relieved us for but a short time from this evil which has crushed us for so long.³³

These books and writings formed the intellectual and ideological foundation of religious indifferentism as future developments would demonstrate. Later pontificates would have to face the social and religious consequences of these developments as they vigorously condemned the threat of religious indifferentism.

POPE LEO XII (1823-1829)

Among the things Leo XII's pontificate focused on were the restoration of religion and condemnation of indifferentism in religious matters.³⁴ He is therefore recorded as the first to explicitly reject religious indifferentism.³⁵ In his *Ubi Primum* (May 05, 1824) he summarizes the philosophy, method, and mission of religious indifferentism thus:

A certain sect, which you surely know, has unjustly arrogated to itself the name of philosophy, and has aroused from the ashes the disorderly ranks of practically every error. Under the gentle appearance of piety and liberality this sect professes what they call tolerance or indifferentism. It preaches that not only in civil affairs, which is not Our concern here, but also in religion, God has given every individual a wide freedom to embrace and adopt without danger to his salvation whatever sect or opinion appeals to him on the basis of his private judgment.³⁶

Leo XII went on to point out that the danger of this philosophy lay in its assumption "that everyone is on the right road". Consequently, he invoked the age long exclusive dictum of the church "no salvation outside the Church".³⁷

³² See Claudia Carlen, ed. *The Papal Encyclicals 1740-1878*, p. 188.

³³ See Pius VII, "Diu Satis" (On a Return to Gospel Principles, n.16, May 15, 1800) in *The Papal Encyclicals 1740-1878*, Claudia Carlen, ed., pp. 191-192.

³⁴ See Claudia Carlen, ed. *The Papal Encyclicals 1740-1878*, p. 198.

³⁵ See Michael J. Schuck, *That They Be One*, p. 15.

³⁶ See Leo XII, "Ubi Primum" (On His Assuming the Pontificate, n.12, May 05, 1824) in *The Papal Encyclicals 1740-1878*, Claudia Carlen, ed., p. 201. It needs to be added that in this same encyclical Leo XII also condemned the existing Bible Society for promoting the translation of the Bible in the vernacular and making copies of such translations, easily available to ordinary people. Part of the concern of the Church was the danger of a wide promotion of individual interpretation of the Bible and the fear that the translations may be inaccurate, since they were not ordered and approved by the Magisterium.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

POPE PIUS VIII (1829-1830)

By the time Pius VIII was elected, liberal Catholicism had become a strong and disturbing philosophy. Even though he was considered moderately liberal his encyclical, *Traditi Humilitati* (May 24, 1829) was firmly against religious indifferentism. Conversely, it was during his short reign that the seed leading to the founding of the Oxford Movement³⁸ was sowed in England. In France, Pius VIII was noted to have neither condemned nor approved the programme of Catholic liberalism led by Lamennais and his group.³⁹

In his rejection of religious indifferentism Pius VIII categorized the idea as a heresy. Writing in his *Traditi Humilitati* he noted:

Among these heresies belongs that foul contrivance of the sophists of this age who do not admit any difference among the different professions of faith and who think that the portal of eternal salvation is [sic] open for all from any religion.⁴⁰

His condemnation of this philosophy was even more fiery:

This is certainly a monstrous impiety which assigns the same praise and the mark of the just and upright man to truth and to error, to virtue and to vice, to goodness and to turpitude. Indeed this deadly idea concerning the lack of difference among religions is refuted even by the light of natural reason.⁴¹

POPE GREGORY XVI (1831-1846)

Gregory XVI waged a number of wars against the enemies of the Church, especially those who were perceived to be philosophers of religious indifferentism and proponents of the freedom of conscience. He identified Lamennais, his works, and his followers as vicious enemies of the Church and directed significant parts of his encyclicals *Mirari Vos* (August 15, 1832)⁴² and *Singulari Nos* (June 25, 1834)⁴³ against them. Against indifferentism in his *Mirari Vos*, he writes:

We consider another abundant source of the evils with which the Church is afflicted at present: *indifferentism*. This perverse opinion is spread on all sides by

³⁸ A movement committed to counter the growth and influence of liberalism and evangelicism in the Anglican Church. This movement began in 1833 from Oxford, England with the goal of returning the Anglican Church to its traditional Christian roots against those seeking for more emphasis on the authority of the individual above that of the community. See Justo L. Gonzalez. *A History of Christian Thought Vol. III — From the Protestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century*, pp. 385-386.

³⁹ See Carlen, ed. *The Papal Encyclicals 1740-1878*, p. 220.

⁴⁰ See Pius VIII, "Traditi Humilitati" (On His Program for the Pontificate, n. 4, May 24, 1829) in *The Papal Encyclicals 1740-1878*, Claudia Carlen, ed., p. 222.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² See Gregory XVI, "Mirari Vos" (On Liberalism and Religious Indifferentism, n. 13 and 14, August 15, 1832) in *The Papal Encyclicals 1740-1878*, Claudia Carlen, ed., pp. 235-241.

⁴³ See Gregory XVI, "Singulari Nos" (On The Errors of Lammenais, June 25, 1834) in *The Papal Encyclicals 1740-1878*, Claudia Carlen, ed., pp. 249-251.

the fraud of the wicked who claim that it is possible to obtain the eternal salvation of the soul by the profession of any kind of religion, as long as morality is maintained.⁴⁴

Further on, this encyclical not only condemned freedom of conscience but also associated the idea as a by-product of the philosophy of religious indifferentism. In the words of the encyclical: "This shameful font of indifferentism gives rise to that absurd and erroneous proposition which claims that liberty of conscience must be maintained for everyone."⁴⁵

What stands out in Gregory XVI's condemnation of religious indifferentism—a point about which previous papal condemnation of this philosophy, had been silent—is that this ideology is viewed as both advocating freedom of conscience of all people as well as suggesting that the standard measure for who merits eternal salvation is moral uprightness rather than what religious people subscribe to. Gregory XVI and subsequent papal encyclicals of the nineteenth century on this question will argue that upright morality (the kind that leads to eternal salvation) comes from the Catholic Church alone. Therefore since those other religions are intrinsically erroneous, they cannot produce fruits leading to eternal salvation.

POPE LEO XIII (1873-1903)

Leo XIII's pontificate did not focus on indifferentism with the same force and intensity as his predecessors. It would appear, in the evaluation of the pope, either that religious indifferentism was not of top priority at the time or that he chose to be more philosophical and analytical than polemical about his approach to it. In his encyclical *Octobri mense*, he laments that "many should be indifferent to all forms of religion, and should finally become estranged from faith."⁴⁶ He questions the rationality of a society that is guided by the principles of naturalism, rationalism, and indifferentism.⁴⁷ And he expresses disappointment that those principles have been applied by the State thus, denying the Church her pre-eminent role as spiritual guide of the society.⁴⁸ The significance of Leo XIII's concern with the social, religious, and political development is succinctly expressed in these words:

⁴⁴ See Gregory XVI, "Mirari Vos", pp. 237-238.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 238.

⁴⁶ See Leo XIII, "Octobri Mense" (On The Rosary, n. 2, September 22, 1891) in Claudia Carlen, ed. *The Papal Encyclicals 1878-1903*, p. 272.

⁴⁷ See Leo XIII, "Immortale Dei" (On the Christian Constitution of States, ns. 24 and 26, November 1, 1885) in Claudia Carlen, ed. *The Papal Encyclicals 1878-1903*, pp. 112-113.

⁴⁸ Ibid., n. 27, p. 113.

The authority of God is passed over in silence, just as if there were no God; or as if He cared nothing for human society; or as if men, whether in their individual capacity or bound together in social relations, owed nothing to God; or as if there could be a government of which the whole origin and power and authority did not reside in God Himself.⁴⁹

Leo XIII tried to align the Church for more effective leadership in the twentieth century. Carlen complimented Leo XIII's pontificate thus: "His encyclicals, apostolic letters, and *motu proprio*s, especially with reference to the teaching of the Church on social, economic and political questions, aimed at the restoration of the social order in the light of the teaching and under the direction of the Church."⁵⁰ In his encyclical *Immortale Dei*, Leo XIII reaffirmed what his predecessors had taught, namely that the Church has divine mandate to be the primary and exclusive guide for all people to eternal salvation.⁵¹ In the same encyclical he rejected the notion of a secular and pluralistic society, while upholding the application of the freedom of conscience only for truth and not for error.⁵²

BRIEF SURVEY OF MAGISTERIAL, VATICAN II, AND POST VATICAN II DOCUMENTS ON NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

This section will present a brief review of important ecclesial documents that address the question of religious pluralism and dialogue with non-Christian religions at Vatican II. However, it is important to identify the foundation of this groundbreaking approach. It is true that there has been centuries of ecumenical dialogue between Roman Catholics and Orthodox and between Roman Catholics and other Christian denominations. Part of the justification for the dialogue or ecumenical interactions with these Christian denominations has either been based on the strong hope of eventual reunion of all Christians⁵³ or because all belong to the Christ fold.⁵⁴ While it is also true that Pope Paul VI's *Ecclesiam Suam*, was the first papal document not only to address the

⁴⁹ See Leo XIII, "Immortale Dei", n. 25, p. 112.

⁵⁰ See Claudia Carlen, ed. *The Papal Encyclicals 1878-1903*, p. 4.

⁵¹ See Leo XIII, "Immortale Dei" (On the Christian Constitution of States, ns. 7-12, November 1, 1885) in Claudia Carlen, ed. *The Papal Encyclicals 1878-1903*, pp. 109-110.

⁵² Ibid. and Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought Vol. III — From the Protestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century*, p. 410.

⁵³ Among Catholics there is still a commitment to pray for the unity of all Christians. The special general petition on Good Friday liturgy has that as one of the very important petitions of the Universal Church. See 'The Sacramentary, The Roman Missal, revised by decree of the Second Vatican Council and published by Authority of Pope Paul VI (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1985), p. 153.

⁵⁴ See Paul VI, "The Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam*," in *The Pope Speaks*, vol. 10, No. 3 (1965), n. 109.

question of dialogue with non-Christian religions but also seek to promote it, it is indeed a truism that the real ground breaking document that lit up this desire for inter-religious dialogue came from John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris*.

Pacem in Terris was considered revolutionary, not only in its courageous advocacy for peace in the world, but also and more importantly for the insightful and unequivocal establishment of the indispensable correlation of peace with human rights. Pope John XXIII summarized his position in these words: "peace will be but an empty-sounding word unless it is founded on the order which this present document has outlined in confident hope: an order founded on truth, built according to justice, vivified and integrated by charity, and put into practice in freedom"⁵⁵ Therefore for the first time in the history of the Roman Catholic Church a pontiff was confident and comfortable enough to approve all of the fundamental human rights of the UN Charter of 1945, which included the freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, and freedom of association. This historic and revolutionary pronouncement set a standard to be followed and deepened by *Ecclesiam Suam* and Vatican II documents like *Gaudium et Spes*, *Dignitatis Humanae*, *Ad Gentes*, *Lumen Gentium*, and *Nostra Aetate*.

MAGISTERIAL DOCUMENT: *ECCLESIA M SUAM* (AUGUST 6, 1964)⁵⁶

This was the first encyclical of Paul VI's pontificate and it was focused on the Church and her mission to the society. This focus was spelled out at the very beginning of the encyclical:

The aim of this encyclical will be to demonstrate with increasing clarity how vital it is for the world, and how greatly desired by the Catholic Church, that the two should meet together, and get to know and love one another.⁵⁷

In this encyclical Paul VI identified dialogue as one of the three main projects of his pontificate.⁵⁸

This dialogue initiative is universally inclusive, implying that it is an exercise that the Church seeks to engage the world and all people in it.⁵⁹ He came up with four concentric circles as the categories of this dialogue.⁶⁰ He called the first circle the

⁵⁵ See John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris—Encyclical Letter of Pope John XXIII*, April 11, 1963 (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference) n. 167.

⁵⁶ See Paul VI, "The Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam*," in *The Pope Speaks*, pp. 253-292.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, n.3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, nos. 12-14.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 93.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, nos. 96ff.

category of mankind (*human nature*).⁶¹ This comprises the entire human race, accommodating atheists, communists, and all people from different schools of thoughts that do not necessarily reflect any religious persuasion. The second circle is made up of "worshippers of the one God,"⁶² which comprises all people of non-Christian religions: Muslims, Jews, African Traditional Worshippers, Hindus, Buddhists, Jansenists, Taoists, etc. In the third circle are non-Catholic Christians. The last circle embraces all Catholics hence calling for dialogue among all Catholics.

Paul VI made an effort to be as purposeful and articulate as he could. He laid out clearly what the goal, method, and pattern of this dialogue ought to be. It wouldn't be wrong to say that perhaps *Ecclesiam Suam* serves as a first roadmap for all Catholics who embark on the initiative of dialogue.

Paul VI qualifies this dialogue initiative as "a dialogue of salvation,"⁶³ after arguing that the best way to engage the world today is by dialogue. He infers that the mission of the Church in the world is to extend the salvific mission of Christ to all people. Therefore, he concluded, "Our purpose is to win souls, not to settle questions definitively."⁶⁴ Further on, he identifies the inducement that leads the Church into seeking dialogue thus: "Our inducement, therefore, to enter into this dialogue must be nothing other than a love which is ardent and sincere."⁶⁵ He wrote:

The dialogue of salvation did not depend on the merits of those with whom it was initiated, nor on the results it would be likely to achieve. "They that are whole need not the physician." Neither, therefore, should we set limits to our dialogue or seek in it our own advantage.⁶⁶

The method for offering this gift of salvation would be peaceful, non-coercive, and respectful of people's inalienable human rights.⁶⁷ This peaceful and respectful approach will also

be adapted to the intelligences of those to whom it is addressed, and it must take account of the circumstances. Dialogue with children is not the same as dialogue with adults, nor is dialogue with Christians the same as dialogue with non-believers.⁶⁸

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, nos. 97ff.

⁶² *Ibid.*, nos. 107ff.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, n. 70.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 66.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 73.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 74.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 75.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 78.

The encyclical makes it clear that it is not going to demand conversion of partners in dialogue as a prerequisite for engaging them in dialogue.

Paul VI listed the required characteristics for this dialogue initiative as: clarity, meekness, confidence, and prudence. Asserting the need for meekness as an integral characteristic for dialogue he argues:

It would indeed be a disgrace if our dialogue were marked by arrogance, the use of bared words or offensive bitterness. What gives it (dialogue) its authority is the fact that it affirms the truth, shares with others the gifts of charity, is itself an example of virtue, avoids peremptory language, makes no demands. It is peaceful, has no use for extreme methods, is patient under contradiction and inclines towards generosity.⁶⁹

Addressing the modes of this dialogue, Paul VI said it comes in different forms and chooses appropriate means. But most importantly:

It is unencumbered by prejudice. It does not hold fast to forms of expression which have lost their meaning and can no longer stir men's minds.⁷⁰

The encyclical also addressed the crucial questions that the dialogue of salvation raises. These questions seek to explore how to best approach dialogue in a diverse and complex world and the limits and challenges the Church faces in seeking to dialogue with the world and its people. The encyclical shifts attention to exploring the preliminary condition that will lead to successful dialogue. Here he admonishes everyone about to engage in dialogue: "take great care to listen not only to what men say, but more especially to what they have in their hearts to say. Only then will we understand them and respect them, and even, as far as possible, agree with them."⁷¹ He goes on to identify what may be called the key approach to dialogue for Christians; "Dialogue thrives on friendship, and most especially on service."⁷²

Before concluding the encyclical, Paul VI wisely highlighted the caveats in this initiative. These are what he called the 'dangers of dialogue'. At this juncture he warns against "watering down or whittling away of the truth."⁷³ Dialogue should not become the reason to lose the strength and commitment to one's faith. Consequently, he also warns against irenicism and syncretism, which are likely pitfalls on the path of dialogue.

⁶⁹ Ibid., n. 81 (2).

⁷⁰ Ibid., n. 85.

⁷¹ Ibid., n. 87.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ See Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, n. 88.

VATICAN II DOCUMENT: *NOSTRA AETATE*

This section will briefly review the document *Nosstra Aetate* which addresses the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions. Giuseppe Alberigo alluded to the paradigmatic shift of *Nosstra Aetate*,

In spite of the tensions that it had raised and imperfections that remained in it, it signaled an important shift in the Catholic attitude toward other religions in general.⁷⁴

The goal of this review is to highlight the watershed shift in the theological assumption of the Catholic Church regarding not only the salvation of people of non-Christian faith traditions, but also the religious value of their faith traditions.⁷⁵ Identifying this significant theological development, part of the editor's note on the article of Johannes Cardinal Willebrands reads,

What emerged on 28 October 1965 was the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, in which for the first time in history a General Council acknowledged the search for the absolute by non-Christian races and peoples, and honored the truth and holiness in other religions as the work of the one-living God. It was the first time also that the Church had publicly recognized the universal presence of grace and its activity in the many religions of mankind.⁷⁶

As Willebrands acknowledged, *Nosstra Aetate* was originally meant to address the need for a new and positive direction in the relationship between Christianity and Judaism, while the relationship with other non-Christian religions was to be treated separately. The end product however was quite different as the declaration quite explicitly extended to cover all non-Christian religions.

A brief preview of the history of the Declaration would be helpful here. As pointed out earlier, it was originally introduced to address the relationship between the Christian church and the Jewish people. Jews had since long been viewed as murderers of Christ; throughout the Medieval period and more strongly thereafter, this perception lead to anti-Semitism. *Nosstra Aetate* was supposed to set this record straight and more or less vindicate the Jews of this heinous allegation.

During the middle sessions of the Council, the Declaration was expanded to include its present discussion on the great religious traditions of the world. This intervention came from the large number of African and Asian bishops, whose attendance gave the

⁷⁴ See Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, p.105.

⁷⁵ Gerald O' Collins, *Living Vatican II: The 21st Council for the 21st Century* (New York/Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006), p. 127.

⁷⁶ See Willebrands, "Christians and Jews: A New Vision," in *Vatican II Revisited by those who were There*, by Alberic Stacpoole (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Winston Press, Inc., 1986), p.220.

Council its great ecumenical perspective, and whose questions concerned how the church related to the African and Asian religions of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. We have seen how Pope Paul VI, who had expressed special interest in dialogue with other religions in his first encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, gave his wholehearted support to this expansion of the text.

Before its final promulgation the Declaration met with considerable opposition. The conservatives saw the entire text as a retreat from traditional Catholic teaching, a retreat which confirmed for them that a Jewish conspiracy was at work within the Council; the Arab world (Christian Arabs of course) viewed the document in political terms as a tacit approval of the Jewish persecution and expulsion of one million Arabs from Palestine; and Orthodox Christians from the Middle East feared Arab reprisal in light of the document's condemnation of Christian antipathy for the Jews. Nevertheless, the Council Fathers voted seven to one for its final passage.

The document opened by acknowledging the common foundation of every religion, namely the human attempts to respond to the metaphysical, moral, and spiritual questions of all humanity, some of which are:

What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is upright behavior, and what is sinful? Where does suffering originate, and what end does it serve? How can genuine happiness be found? What happens at death? What is judgment? What reward follows death? And finally, what is the ultimate mystery, beyond human explanation, which embraces our entire existence, from which we take our origin and towards which we tend?⁷⁷

The document confirmed that human nature throughout history has continued to seek the divine as a supernatural being and who has power over all. And that

other religions which are found throughout the world attempt in their own ways to calm the hearts of men by outlining a program of life covering doctrine, moral precepts, and sacred rites.⁷⁸

Referring to Paul's speech in the Areopagus (Acts 17:26), the Declaration states that people everywhere find their one ultimate source of life in the one and only God. Calling upon several biblical texts the Declaration emphasizes that God's providential design is to bring not just a select few, but all to salvation. That salvation is briefly envisioned as a walking in the eternal light of the Divine One radiating in the heavenly city as apocalyptically described in Rv. 21:23.

⁷⁷ See *Nostra Aetate*, n. 1.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 2.

The religions of the world come under consideration as being the locus where people have asked and sought answers to the great common questions of their humanity about life's origin, purpose, destiny, and path to happiness or salvation (article 2). Throughout history, the religions have articulated the religious perception of a mystery or power or divinity, sometimes even a "Supreme Father", surrounding human experience, and have proposed "ways" to respond to that religious experience through story, ritual, and moral codes of life. In the widest possible terms Hinduism is also said to "contemplate the divine mystery" through myths, philosophy, meditation and ascetical practices, and Buddhism to teach a path toward enlightenment or freedom from the "radical insufficiency" of the world.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims and must ever proclaim Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), in whom men find the fullness of religious life, and in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-19).⁷⁹

Respect is the attitude that ought to mark Catholic Christian dealings with people and their religious traditions because there is the possibility for truth and holiness to be found everywhere. That nothing true and holy is rejected does not seem to be a disguised form of indifferentism, but the Catholic affirmation that

whoever proclaims a religious truth has received his thought and word from the Holy Spirit. Whenever goodness is taught and lived God is well pleased. Whoever conquers selfishness can only do so because his victory had already been achieved on Golgatha.⁸⁰

The biblical basis for this seeming inclusivism in article 2 is found in reference to texts from John and Paul. Christ is the one truth (Jn. 14:6) and as truth he is like a light which radiates over all (cf. Jn 1:9). He is the fulfilment of truth, especially the fulfilment of religious truth, and the answer to the great questions of humanity. His truth is also good news, the good news that God has forgiven and reconciled the world to God through Him (2 Cor 5:19). The posture of God toward God's creatures, despite their individual differences and failings, is revealed in Christ to be one of inclusive forgiveness and

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ See John Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions: Introduction and Commentary," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. III, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, trans. Simon and Erika Young and Hilda Graef (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), pp. 1-136. See p. 90-91.

reconciliation. On the biblical grounds that Christ is the one radiating and reconciling truth, *Nostra Aetate* endeavours to offer a positive evaluation of the non-Christian religions:

The non-Christian religions, too, have a certain measure of sanctifying power, they are near to salvation because they share unconsciously in the grace of Christ which is ever active in the Church...Whether they know it or not, all have been offered a share in the divine life, all are infinitely loved and have their being only in the love of God. The traces of God are everywhere, and we must open our eyes to them.⁸¹

Because respect is to be the attitude toward non-Christian religions, “dialogue and collaboration” to “promote the spiritual and moral goods” found in them is to be the mode of action for the church in relation to non-Christian religions. This is particularly true in dealing with the Muslims, which shares much with Christianity, including belief in one God, reverence for biblical prophets, Jesus and Mary, hope for a day of judgment, and worship through prayer, fasting, almsgiving and moral living (article 3). Article 4 takes up at length the issue of Jewish-Christian relations within this inclusivist perspective, drawing on numerous biblical texts and images. The emphasis continues on those positive elements which Christianity and Judaism hold in common. The beginnings of Christian faith are discovered in the divine call to Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. The peoples of the “Ancient Covenant” are those to whom the revelation of the Hebrew bible was given and cherished. In the explicit imagery of Rom. II: 17-24, they were and are the “good olive tree” of covenantal relationship with God which continues to have vitality and give sustenance. Onto their roots and trunk the “wild olive branches of the Gentiles” have been grafted. In light of Eph. 2: 14-16, which treats of the peace and unity accomplished by Christ, the Declaration reaffirms the theme that the divine mission of Christ is to bring about the reconciliation of all peoples, in this case Jew and Gentile.

The Council Fathers stand alongside Paul in Rom. II: 28-29 and assert that God has not reclaimed the divine gifts to the Jewish people like covenantal relationship or revelation of Torah, nor has God revoked such calls as those to spiritual fidelity and moral integrity. They exhort the church to remember the words of Paul about the Jews, his own kinfolk, who are gifted with “the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises” (Rom. 9: 4). Jesus himself was Jewish. He was

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 92.

born, raised, lived, and died as a faithful Jewish man. Jewish was the ethnic origin of Mary, his mother and the early disciples and apostles. Although the Declaration recalls the negative Jewish response in that Jesus was not always recognized in faith – a reference to Lk. 19: 44, and that the spread of the Gospel was even actively opposed – another reference to Rom. II: 28, the fundamental position of the church remains generally an inclusive one, namely that “the Jews still remain most dear to God because of their fathers, for He does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues.” The Council Fathers also stand with Paul in Romans II and the revered tradition of the Hebrew bible, quoting from Zeph. 3: 9, and referring to Is. 66: 23 and Ps. 65: 4, in hope and prayer for the great day in God’s promised future when all people will be united with God and each other in a common voice of worship. In short, Jews and Christians together could and should look forward in patient expectation for the coming of God’s kingdom in peace and fellowship.

Like the attitude toward the world religions in general, so too is the church’s attitude toward Judaism for the future to be one of respect that is expressed in mutual understanding and dialogue. This respect includes the dropping of any charges against Jews living at present for the passion of Jesus in the past. The Declaration recognizes with Jn. 19: 6 that some Jewish religious authorities may have been involved with the Roman political powers to bring Jesus to his death, but “what happened in His passion cannot be blamed upon all the Jews then living, without distinction, nor upon the Jews of today,” and that Jesus underwent his death freely as a sign and cause of God’s embracing love and saving grace. Respect requires the repudiation of anti-Semitism and all forms of prejudice and persecution against the Jews.

Finally, the Declaration recalls the insight of 1 Jn. 4 that one cannot claim to love the God one has not seen and hate the man or woman one can see (article 5).

We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in God’s image. Man’s relation to God the Father and man’s relation to his fellow-men are so dependent on each other that the Scripture says, “he who does not love, does not know God” (1 Jn. 4:8).⁸²

The attitude of respect for religions extends to a rejection of all forms of prejudice and persecution against any people because of religion. The closing hope of the Council Fathers is expressed in the biblical vision of 1 Pt. 2: 12, Rom. 12: 18, and Mt. 4: 45, that the Christian faithful may offer the fellowship and peace they enjoy in Christ to all, so

⁸² See *Nosstra Aetate*, n. 5.

that all who issue from the common origin of the eternal Creator might truly enjoy their rightful joy as being the children of God.

Based on the facts evident in the document and highlighted in this brief review, it is perhaps again safe to say that *Nostra Aetate* presents a veritable roadmap toward effective interreligious dialogue and a firm theological assumption of a *de jure* religious pluralism for the Church and all Christians.

VATICAN II DOCUMENT: *LUMEN GENTIUM*

This constitution begins with the notion of the Church as a people to whom God communicates Himself in love. Its focus is on the hierarchy of the church and the priestly role of bishops collectively, i.e. the collegiality of bishops, instead of the powers conferred on them through appointment. It also raises the traditional question of the necessity of the church for salvation. In a direct statement on the subject in article 14, the Council teaches, on the basis of tradition and scripture,

that the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation. For Christ, made present to us in His body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation. In explicit terms He Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism (Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:5) and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through baptism as through a door men enter the Church.⁸³

Two biblical arguments are made here. The first is the affirmation that Christ is the one mediator of salvation, which implicitly refers to the familiar texts of 1 Tm. 2:5 and Jn. 14:6. Because Christ is necessary for salvation, so now the church also becomes necessary, because the church is, in a nuanced sense of both biblical and traditional thought, and especially in Catholic ecclesiology, the very Body of Christ and the continuation of the Incarnation.

The second argument explicitly refers to the texts of Mk. 16:16 and Jn. 3:5, where two evangelists record the command of Jesus concerning the necessity of faith and baptism. The argument is that the saving faith relationship with God includes and is expressed in a relationship with Christ and a relationship with the community of faith, which is initiated and turned into a sacrament in baptism. Traditional theology had discussed some form of baptism as necessary for salvation, either explicit baptism of water or

⁸³ See Robert J. Graham, "Introduction to the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, translations ed. Very Rev. Msgr. Joseph Gallagher (New York: America Press, 1966), p. 32.

implicit baptism of desire for those removed from the possibility of membership in the church.

Various texts through the documents speak of the church as sacrament, sign or instrument of the reconciliation or salvation of the one mediator, Jesus Christ, who strengthens the church with the Holy Spirit to continue his saving work until the reign of God comes to final consummation.

Lumen Gentium also takes up the rather difficult question of whether the grace of salvation exists outside the visible boundaries of the Christian church. Article 9 seems to suggest a strong yes:

At all times and among every people, God has given welcome to whosoever fears Him and does what is right (Acts 10:35).

In Acts 10 Peter is depicted as beginning the mission to the Gentiles by the baptism of the Roman Cornelius through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Peter expresses his amazement at God's mercy and impartiality in selecting Cornelius, one who had not yet heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and offering to him the grace of salvation. God's loving acceptance which follows upon the divine grace freely offered is not confined to the time after Christ or to those who have received the proclamation of Christ.

Article 16 resolves the question in a more or less inclusivist manner. Starting first with a consideration of the relationship to the Jews, the basic affirmation remains that of Paul in Rom. 9 and 11, that the Jews who were gifted and called by God, and from whom Jesus the Messiah was born, continue to remain in God's affection:

Finally, those who have not yet received the gospel are related in various ways to the People of God. In the first place there is the people to whom the covenants and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh (see Rom. 9:4-5). On account of their fathers, this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues (see Rom. II: 28-29).

God's grace and presence is also extended to those who are searching for the holy or the divine: "Nor is God Himself far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and every other gift (see Acts 17:25-28), and who as Savior wills that all men be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). The next paragraph summarizes how the divine salvific will is effective so that those beyond the hearing of the Gospel can be saved:

Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the

dictates of conscience. Nor does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life, thanks to His grace.⁸⁴

Here is a faint reminder of Jesus' words in Mt. 7: 21, "None of those who cry out, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of God but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven," words which declare that salvation is in response to the grace or will of God. To be saved one must live God's will, to "know" it in that way.

Because the will of God is known and lived by those outside the boundaries of the church, there is goodness and truth to be found there too. *Lumen Gentium* regards such qualities as preparation for the authentic hearing and receiving of the true gospel of Christ. Like *Nostra Aetate*, *Lumen Gentium* acknowledges that only Christ is the one whose light enlightens all with his goodness and truth, and whose gospel fulfills the human search for salvation and the divine. The goodness and truth found among non-Christians - and that would seem to imply that these are found somewhat in their religions and religious expressions - fall short of the fullness of means of salvation which is found in Christ's true church.⁸⁵

Lumen Gentium then goes on to address the negative response frequently given to God's grace and will: "But rather often men, deceived by the Evil One, have become caught up in futile reasoning and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, serving the creature rather than the Creator (see Rom. 1: 21, 25)." The reference to Rom. 1, a harsh reminder of Paul's attack on the idolatry of his day that he believed would be subjected to the punishing wrath of God, seems to dampen the prevailing inclusivism of article 16. A strong dose of realism that error and sin still prevail, and that many live and die without the hope that springs from faith in the living God, counters the optimism that only a while ago seemed to accompany the truth that divine saving grace is available for all. So the Council Fathers exhort the church with the words of Jesus from Mark to continue the missionary task of proclaiming Christ's gospel to the world: "Consequently, to promote the glory of God and procure the salvation of all such men, and mindful of the command of the Lord, 'Preach the gospel to every creature' (Mk. 16:16), the Church painstakingly fosters her missionary work."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁸⁵ The Council Fathers regard the true church of Christ as subsisting in the Roman Catholic Church. See *Lumen Gentium*, article 8 and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, article 3.

⁸⁶ See Robert J. Graham, "Introduction to the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, p. 35.

To summarize, the Second Vatican Council recognized the possibility of salvation outside the church, as the resulting interaction of God's free initiative with human free cooperation, while stopping short of explicitly admitting revelatory or salvific significance to the religions of the world. The Council seems to be exemplifying the inclusivist model that all can be saved, even if they do not know Christ explicitly, because God's salvific grace and presence are universally available. Wherever truth and goodness are to be found, in the lives of non-Christians and in their religious expressions, there is found something of the way and the truth which is Christ, God's one way, truth and life, who includes all, whether explicitly or implicitly.

The Council's inclusivist tendencies are supported by references to the divine salvific will and the one mediatory role of Christ in 1 Tm. 2: 4-5, Johannine images of Christ as light and truth, the Pauline notion of Christ's ministry as universal reconciliation, and the speeches in Acts by Peter and Paul which emphasize God's free and unfettered initiative. Difficult texts like Acts 4:12 are interpreted within this inclusivist approach by recalling that God, in infinite divine wisdom and mercy, provides the opportunity for those who have not had an authentic encounter with the gospel to respond to saving grace.

The Council is also cautious to avoid indifferentism or relativism. Christ is the one mediator of salvation, whose death and resurrection effects reconciliation with God. The church, which is the body of Christ and the sacrament of salvation, must continue to faithfully proclaim his gospel to the ends of the earth as he himself commanded. The church has been gifted with the fullness of the means of salvation, and regards whatever goodness and truth that "are found outside the visible boundaries of the church as rays of the one truth of Christ and preparation for his gospel. For the church, the mission remains one of preaching the truth of Christ crucified and risen, in service to all of humanity.

POST-VATICAN II DOCUMENTS

The proactive approach of Paul VI to the issue of interreligious dialogue was not limited to his encyclical on dialogue. In 1964, a few months before he published *Ecclesiam Suam*, he instituted a special department of the Roman Curia for relationship with non-Christians religions. It was then known as the Secretariat for Non-Christians. It was renamed in 1988 as the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID). One is wont to say that since the publishing of *Ecclesiam Suam* the Catholic Church seems to

be pursuing a policy of openness towards other religions and certainly wants to appear to be pursuing interreligious dialogue issues with a sense of mission and commitment at least from the Catholic point of view.⁸⁷ A number of official publications have come out to further address the question of other religions. Three such documents will be briefly reviewed, namely: "The Attitude of the Catholic Church towards the Followers of Other Religious Traditions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission" (1984), *Dominus Iesus* and *A Common Word* (2008).

THE ATTITUDE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TOWARDS THE FOLLOWERS OF OTHER RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS: REFLECTIONS AND ORIENTATIONS ON DIALOGUE AND MISSION

This document was the first from the Secretariat for non-Christians after the Second Vatican Council.⁸⁸ The document which came out after the secretariat's plenary session focused essentially on appraising and expanding the understanding of other religions in the light of the spirit of *Ecclesiam Suam* and the Second Vatican Council and more importantly in the light of *Nostra Aetate*. Consequently, it broadly defines dialogue as "not only discussion, but also includes all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment."⁸⁹ From a more affective domain it defines dialogues as "a manner of acting, an attitude and a spirit which guides one's conduct. It implies concern, respect, and hospitality toward the other. It leaves room for the other person's identity, his modes of expression, and his values."⁹⁰ It might be concluded that this document approaches the Church's involvement in dialogue from the points of view of these two definitions of dialogue. It acknowledges the understanding of dialogue as integral to the Church's mission to the world and humanity, while also welcoming input from theologians and other Christian Churches, especially 'the World Council of Churches'.⁹¹

The document is clearly attentive to three main subjects: Mission, Dialogue, and Dialogue and Mission. It identifies the mission of the Church as founded on love in

⁸⁷ See John Paul II, "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Ecclesia in Asia," n. 29. 6 Nov. 1999. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia_en.html. Accessed in Oct. 2008.

⁸⁸ This document was published on June 10, 1984, 20 years after *Ecclesiam Suam*. It is, so to speak a product of the plenary session of the Secretariat for Non-Christians.

⁸⁹ Secretariat for Non-Christians, "The Church and other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission" *The Pope Speaks: The Church Documents Quarterly*, vol. 29, No. 1, p. 253.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

imitation of God who is love.⁹² Quoting from the text of *Ad Gentes*, the document affirms that the unique goals of the missionary activity of the Church are:

the evangelization and foundation of the Church among peoples or groups in which it has not yet taken root⁹³

as well as working for the extension of the values of the kingdom of God among all people.⁹⁴ It enumerates the principal elements of the Church's mission responsibilities: simple presence and living witness of the Christian life; commitment to the service of all people; liturgy and prayer; interreligious dialogue; and announcement and catechesis.⁹⁵

The document affirms with *Dignitatis Humanae* of the Second Vatican Council that these elements of mission need to be promoted by deep respect for the freedom of all people.⁹⁶ Besides guaranteeing and promoting freedom of religion, the document also calls on Christians "to love and respect all that is good in the culture and the religious commitment of the other."⁹⁷ This segment of the document concludes "that Christian Mission can never be separated from love and respect for others is proof for Christians of the place of dialogue within that mission."⁹⁸

Addressing the subject of dialogue, the document traces its foundation anthropologically and theologically. From the anthropological perspective "a person discovers that he (she) does not possess the truth in a perfect and total way but can walk together with others towards that goal."⁹⁹ From the theological perspective, the document firmly identifies the root of dialogue in a Trinitarian theological imperative "the Trinitarian mystery, Christian revelation allows us to glimpse in God a life of communion and interchange."¹⁰⁰

The document proceeds to identify four forms or levels of dialogue: living dialogically in ones daily life; deeds and collaborations with others for humanitarian, social, economic, and political goals toward emancipation and advancement of people; dialogue of specialists toward confronting, deepening, and enriching diverse religious heritage; and the commitment of active adherents to sharing their religious experiences

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 254-258.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 255. Also see Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, n. 6.

⁹⁴ Secretariat for Non-Christians, "The Church and other Religions," p. 255.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 255-256.

⁹⁶ See, *Dignitatis Humanae*, nos. 3, 4, and 14.

⁹⁷ See Secretariat for Non-Christians, "The Church and other Religions," p. 258.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

of prayer, contemplation, faith and duty, and searching for the Absolute, thus the dialogue of religious experience.¹⁰¹

On the subject of “Dialogue and Mission,” the document limits its attention to two issues, namely mission and conversion and dialogue as means of building God’s reign. Addressing the question of mission and conversion, the document acknowledges that one of the expected end results of mission is conversion. The document’s functional understanding of conversion stems from biblical language and Christian tradition. Consequently, the document defines conversion as, “the humble and penitent return of the heart to God in the desire to submit one’s life more generously to Him.”¹⁰² The document makes it clear that everyone is invited to this conversion. It acknowledges however, that in the course of this process of moving over to God (conversion), “the decision may be made to leave one’s previous spiritual or religious situation in order to direct oneself toward another.”¹⁰³ The document submits that this “crossing over” or change to a new spiritual or religious domain must respect the ultimate law of conscience, “because ‘no one must be constrained to act against his (her) conscience, nor ought he (she) to be impeded in acting according to his (her) conscience, especially in religious matters’”¹⁰⁴ This is so because “the principal agent of conversion is not man (or woman) but the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰⁵

The second issue in the subject of “Dialogue and Mission” is that of using dialogue to build the kingdom of God. The document affirms that one of the Church’s fundamental obligations is to establish and sustain the reign of God among all people. This understanding of her mission and obligation to humanity explains why the Church identifies herself as “the universal sacrament of salvation.”¹⁰⁶ The document explains that the Church seeks to work and collaborate with everyone toward fulfilling the role of building God’s reign. This work of collaboration, the document reasons, is most effective through open dialogue. It further argues: “such dialogue, conducted with appropriate discretion and leading to truth by way of love alone, excludes nobody.”¹⁰⁷ This statement therefore supports every efforts of the Church to engage in dialogue with all “who respect high-minded human values,” including agnostics and atheists. It

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 260-262.

¹⁰² Secretariat for Non-Christians, “The Church and other Religions,” p. 262.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. See also *Dignitatis Humanae*, 11. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Secretariat for Non-Christians, “The Church and other Religions,” p. 262.

¹⁰⁶ See, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 48.

¹⁰⁷ Secretariat for Non-Christians, “The Church and other Religions,” p. 263.

therefore, seems safe to conclude that the Church is obviously trying to apply a widely inclusive outreach for dialogue and an extensive goal (Kingdom of God) is the end she seeks to achieve.

***Dominus Iesus* on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church¹⁰⁸**

This document was published on August 6, 2000 by the pontifical office of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, then headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the current Pope Benedict XIV. The document commences with laying the *raison d'être* for its enactment and publication:

in the course of the centuries, the Church has proclaimed and witnessed with fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus. At the close of the second millennium, however, this mission is still far from complete. For that reason, Saint Paul's words are now more relevant than ever: "Preaching the Gospel is not a reason for me to boast; it is a necessity laid on me: woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). This explains the Magisterium's particular attention to giving reasons for and supporting the evangelizing mission of the Church, above all in connection with the religious traditions of the world.¹⁰⁹

The declaration proceeds to juxtapose the mindset of many pre-Second Vatican Council documents and thoughts of some Church Fathers with some of the thoughts of the Second Vatican Council and post-Second Vatican Council papal and ecclesial documents which addressed the subjects of the role the Church in the world and the universal salvific impact of redemption in Christ. The declaration itself acknowledges that it "takes up what has been taught in previous magisterial documents, in order to reiterate certain truths that are part of the Church's faith."¹¹⁰ *Dominus Iesus* makes it clear that the reason for this reminder and revalidation of the Church's position is in response to the strong currents of relativism, which fails not only to acknowledge the unicity of the salvific work of Christ but also to condemn the erroneous teachings apparent in non-Christian religions.¹¹¹ The declaration observes:

The Church's constant missionary proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only *de facto* but also *de jure* (or in principle). As a consequence, it is held that certain truths have been superseded; for example, the definitive and complete character of the

¹⁰⁸ See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus* on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-jesus_en.html, accessed 15/10/2007.

¹⁰⁹ See Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, n. 2.

¹¹⁰ See Declaration, *Dominus Iesus*, n. 3.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, nos. 4-5.

revelation of Jesus Christ, the nature of Christian faith as compared with that of belief in other religions, the inspired nature of the books of Sacred Scripture, the personal unity between the Eternal Word and Jesus of Nazareth, the unity of the economy of the Incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit, the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ, the universal salvific mediation of the Church, the inseparability – while recognizing the distinction – of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church, and subsistence of the one Church of Christ in the Catholic Church.¹¹²

Religious pluralism is seen as synonymous with religious relativism or (to use a term familiar to the Church from the nineteenth century) religious indifferentism. The declaration goes on to assert the doctrine of the “completeness” and “definitiveness” of the revelation of Jesus Christ, arguing to the effect that in the human Jesus, God’s salvific ways are completely and definitively fulfilled.¹¹³ The declaration goes on to argue that although “the words, deeds, and entire historical event of Jesus,” possess limited human realities, he still remained “the divine Person of the Incarnate Word, ‘true God and true man’”¹¹⁴

Dominus Iesus calls for “the obedience of faith” as the right response to the revealed truth from God in Jesus Christ, as well as invites all those concerned to make a distinction between “theological faith and belief in the other religions.”¹¹⁵ The difference between faith and belief in the other religions is explained in the following manner:

faith is the acceptance in grace of revealed truth...belief, in the other religions, is that sum of experience and thought that constitutes the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration, which man in his search for truth has conceived and acted upon in his relationship to God and the Absolute.¹¹⁶

Other religions are described as “religious experience still in search of the absolute truth and still lacking assent to God who reveals himself.”¹¹⁷

The declaration equally firmly asserted the sacred and inspired value and unicity of Sacred Scriptures (Old and New Testaments). It also makes it clear that the Bible should not be compared on equal grounds with the holy books of other religions. For according to *Dominus Iesus*, “the sacred books of other religions, which in actual fact direct and

¹¹² Ibid., n. 5.

¹¹³ Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, n. 5.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., n. 6.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., n. 7.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

nourish the existence of their followers, receive from the mystery of Christ the elements of goodness and grace which they contain.”¹¹⁸

Dominus Iesus vehemently rejects theologies of double Logos, an economy of the eternal Word that is valid outside the Church, or hypothesis of an economy of the Holy Spirit. According to the declaration some theologians have resorted to these theologies to justify their claim for the universality of Christian salvation and religious pluralism.¹¹⁹ It concludes its rejection of these theologies in these words:

the action of the Spirit is not outside or parallel to the action of Christ. There is only one salvific economy of the One and Triune God, realized in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, actualized with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, and extended in its salvific value to all humanity and to the entire universe: “No one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit.”¹²⁰

It picks up again on the subject of the unicity and universality of the salvific mystery of Jesus Christ with strong emphasis on the sole mediation of Christ. This subject is certainly one of the two major hubs around which other issues raised by this declaration are tied. It states, rather strongly, “It must therefore be firmly believed as a truth of Catholic faith that the universal salvific will of the One and Triune God is offered and accomplished once for all in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God.”¹²¹ Interestingly, *Dominus Iesus* confirms the words of the Second Vatican Council which states, “the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude, but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a participation in this one source.”¹²² In this case, the declaration was willing to let down its guard to concede that “The content of this participated mediation should be explored more deeply.”¹²³

Again *Dominus Iesus* returns to the subject of the unicity and unity of the Church. It paraphrases a standard Tridentine dogma of the Church viz: “in connection with the unicity and universality of the salvific mediation of Jesus Christ, the unicity of the Church founded by him must be firmly believed as a truth of Catholic faith.”¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 8.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, nos. 9-12.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 12.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, n. 14. The emphasis in bold is from the text itself.

¹²² *Ibid.*, and see Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, n. 4.

¹²³ Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, n. 14.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 16.

Therefore, "just as there is one Christ, so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ: 'a single Catholic and apostolic Church'"¹²⁵

Dominus Iesus identifies two categories of Christian Churches that are outside the Catholic Church: those who have apostolic succession and valid Eucharist but are not in communion with Rome, as one group and those who have not preserved valid Episcopate and genuine Eucharistic mystery as the other. It identifies those in the first group as particular churches and acknowledges that the Church of Christ is present and operative in them. Those in the second it identifies as "not Churches in the proper sense."¹²⁶ However it recognizes the baptism of those baptized in these communities, because "by Baptism, (they are) incorporated in Christ and thus are in a certain communion, albeit imperfect, with the Church."¹²⁷

Quoting from another Second Vatican Council document, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *Dominus Iesus* concludes rather paradoxically on the above subject saying:

these separated Churches and communities as such, though we believe they suffer from defects, have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.¹²⁸

Dominus Iesus, moves on to address the question of the Church and its relationship to the Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Christ.¹²⁹ Applying the idea and words of *Lumen Gentium*, the declaration concludes that the Church being a sacrament is a sign of God and God's kingdom.¹³⁰ Consequently, since the Church is made up of people "gathered by the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,"¹³¹ she invariably is "the

¹²⁵ Ibid. The quote in this reference is originally from the papal bull *Unam Sanctam* of Pope Boniface VIII, who used the bull to assert the superiority of the ecclesiastical authority over that of the temporal leaders, precisely the king of France (Philip IV) at the time. Part of the bull reads, "We declare, state, define, and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff" This was preceded by the following words, "if the earthly power errs, it shall be judged by the spiritual power, if a lesser spiritual power errs it shall be judged by its superior, but if the supreme spiritual power errs it can be judged only by God not by man, as the apostle witnesses." See Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050-1300* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 189.

¹²⁶ Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, n. 17.

¹²⁷ Ibid., n. 17.

¹²⁸ Ibid. See also *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 3.

¹²⁹ Ibid., n. 18 and *Lumen Gentium*, n. 5.

¹³⁰ Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, n. 5 and see also *Lumen Gentium*, n. 1.

¹³¹ See Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, n. 5.

kingdom of Christ already present in mystery”¹³² as well as “constitutes its seed and beginning.”¹³³

It further acknowledges that there can be various theological explanations of the terms kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God, and kingdom of Christ. However it holds that none of the theological explanations should negate or deny the intimate link between Christ, the kingdom, and the Church.¹³⁴ The declaration also acknowledges that “the Church is not an end unto herself,”¹³⁵ but the seed, sign, and instrument of the kingdom of God. Further on it confirms the thoughts of Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* which teaches that the actions of Christ and the Spirit outside the visible boundaries of the Church are equally manifestations of the kingdom of God.¹³⁶ In conclusion, it uses the text of *Redemptoris Missio* to say: “Building the kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. In a word, the kingdom of God is the manifestation and realization of God’s plan of salvation in all its fullness.”¹³⁷

Dominus Iesus rejects those theologies that apply one-sided accentuation to the relationship between the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church. It faults such interpretations because they tend to be silent about Christ, the need for a Christian faith, and the role of the Church in their theocentric kingdom.¹³⁸

The document then shifts attention to the subject “The Church and the Other Religions in Relation to Salvation”. This is undeniably the second most important subject of this declaration. To accentuate the importance of this subject, the declaration uses the words of *Lumen Gentium* to state:

it must be firmly believed that “the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and baptism (Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:5), and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through baptism as through a door”.¹³⁹

While affirming with *Lumen Gentium* that the Church is the “universal sacrament of salvation,”¹⁴⁰ *Dominus Iesus* also agrees with the Second Vatican Council document *Ad*

¹³² Ibid., n. 18 and see also *Lumen Gentium*, n. 3.

¹³³ See Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, n. 18.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ See Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 18.

¹³⁷ See Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, n. 19. Also see Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 15.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., n. 20. Also see *Lumen Gentium*, n. 14.

¹⁴⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, n. 48.

Gentes, that the salvific grace of God comes to non-Christian believers “in ways known to Himself (God).”¹⁴¹

The declaration rejects any suggestion or theology that considers: the Church as one of the many ways of salvation; that the other religions are complementary to the Church; or substantially equivalent to the Church. While it is willing to appreciate the positive spiritual and religious elements of the other religious traditions, which the Second Vatican Council sincerely observed in non-Christian religions, *Dominus Iesus* seems to be falling back to the theological position of the Council of Trent to assert: “One cannot attribute to these (non-Christian religions), however, a divine origin or an *ex opera operato* salvific efficacy, which is proper to the Christian sacraments.”¹⁴² Further on it drew from the thoughts of Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Mystici Corporis* to conclude on this subject saying:

If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that objectively speaking they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation.¹⁴³

As part of its concluding thoughts *Dominus Iesus* confirms interreligious dialogue as part of the evangelizing mission of the Church to the world. In reference to one of the fundamental prerequisites for successful dialogue, which is equality, the declaration says that equality “refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue, not to doctrinal content, nor even less to the position of Jesus Christ - who is God himself made man - in relation to the founders of the other religions.”¹⁴⁴

At the dawn of this millennium (when *Dominus Iesus* was published), in a world that is growing in diversity and the call for dignity and respect to all, *Dominus Iesus*’ ecclesiastical theology has sounded very offensive to many, both Catholics and non-Catholics.¹⁴⁵ Despite the oppositions and negative comments that greeted the publishing of *Dominus Iesus* and the concern that its theological position stands to hurt the Church’s commitment to ecumenism and sincere interreligious dialogue, the Church has resolutely demonstrated in her recent response to questions of doctrine, that she is solidly affirming the teaching and position of *Dominus Iesus*. In the June 29, 2007 publication from the Office of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Responses

¹⁴¹ See Vatican II, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes Divinitus*), n. 7.

¹⁴² See Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, n. 21.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, n. 22.

¹⁴⁴ See *Ibid.*, n. 22.

¹⁴⁵ See Stephen J. Pope and Charles Hefling (eds.), *Sic et Non: Encountering Dominus Iesus*.

to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church, the teachings of *Dominus Iesus* were reaffirmed on the defects inherent in non-Catholic ecclesial bodies and the affirmation that the Church of Christ subsists exclusively in the Catholic Church.¹⁴⁶

A COMMON WORD

Pope Benedict XVI while delivering a lecture, on September 12, 2006, entitled "Faith, Reason and the University – Memories and Reflections" in the University of Regensburg in Germany sparked an unanticipated controversy by quoting, unfavourable remarks of Manuel II Palaiologos, a fourteenth century Byzantine emperor regarding Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the spread of Islam.¹⁴⁷ The Muslim World was quick to respond. Of the varying degrees of responses that ensued from the Muslim World, one of the more composed and calmer reactions came from 38 leading scholars and leaders of the Muslim World in the form of an *Open Letter To His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI* on October 12, 2006.¹⁴⁸ Towards the end, the letter shows appreciation for the

"[the Pope's] unprecedented personal expression of sorrow, and [his] clarification and assurance (on the 17th of September) that [his] quote does not reflect [his] own personal opinion" and for the fact that the Pope (on September 25th) in front of an assembled group of ambassadors from Muslim countries...expressed "total and profound respect for all Muslims".

In the days and weeks to follow, several responses from the Vatican and other Christian quarters (ranging from unequivocal support of the Pope to muffled apologies) on the one side and Muslim heads of states, scholars and lay on the other (ranging from calls to kill the Pope to declaring Muslims prone to violence and 'verbal aggression' and incapable of 'reasonable debate') helped in various degrees to somewhat mitigate the controversy.

A year later on October 11, 138 Muslim scholars, dignitaries and religious leaders sent another open letter to the Pope Benedict XVI and other World Christian authorities,

¹⁴⁶ Congregation For the Doctrine of the Faith, Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20... 25/10/2008. Second and Fourth Question.

¹⁴⁷ The text of this speech is available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.htm. Retrieved on October 07, 2008.

¹⁴⁸ The full text of this letter is available at <http://www.acommonword.com/>. Retrieved on October 07, 2010.

entitled *A Common Word Between Us and You* (henceforth *A Common Word*) with the coordination of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute of Islamic Thought of Jordan.

The latter which is addressed to World Christian leaders, particularly Catholic, Orthodox and mainline Protestant denominations, has resulted in a continuous and sustained debate on the issue of Muslim-Christian dialogue. It was noticeable that non-Catholic dispensations responded far quicker to the *Common Word* than the Vatican.

The earliest response came from a meeting of the Chief Rabbis of Israel and the Archbishop of Canterbury on October 31, 2007 in which both religious figures expressed deep respect for the spirit of the letter and pledged to 'commit ourselves and encourage all religious leaders to ensure that no materials are disseminated by our communities that work against this vision.'

The most publicized response however came from four scholars of Yale Divinity School the very next day in which they wrote:

"We receive it [*A Common Word*] as a Muslim hand of conviviality and cooperation extended to Christians world-wide. In this response we extend our own Christian hand in return, so that together with all other human beings we may live in peace and justice as we seek to love God and our neighbors."

This was followed by a Workshop and Conference that was held at Yale University, USA from July 24-31, 2008 entitled, "Loving God and Neighbour in Word and Deed: Implications for Muslims and Christians." It was convened by the Yale Centre for Faith and Culture in collaboration with the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought and attended by over 120 leading Muslim and Christian scholars and leaders. "Let us learn to love each other. Let us learn to love all neighbors. And let us do that in the name of our common future and in the name of our one God," were the closing remarks of the conference by Professor Miroslav Volf of the Yale Divinity School.¹⁴⁹

The World Council of Churches also made a press release on March 20, 2008, entitled "Learning to Explore Love Together," and it saw *A Common Word* as "an encouraging new stage in Muslim thinking about relations between Muslims and Christians."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ For the Final Declaration of the Yale Common Word Conference, July 2008 see http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:NcO-giWfogJ:www.yale.edu/faith/downloads/Yale_Common_Word_Conf_2008_Final_Decl.pdf+Final+Declaration+of+the+Yale+Common+Word+Conference.+July+2008&hl=...=AHIEtbRZuGggmt7O7b2ATmQ9kKF-irizhg. Retrieved on March 03, 2009.

¹⁵⁰ See <http://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/learning-to-explore-love-together.html>.

A few months later in October 2008, an intra-Christian consultation organized through the Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) between the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Christian World Communions (CWC) explored questions related to Christian self-understanding in relation to religious plurality with special focus on Christian self-understanding in relation to Islam and Christian-Muslim dialogue.

The two-day consultation, held at the Hotel Chavannes de Bogis near Geneva lasted from October 18-20 and was attended by fifty experts in Christian-Muslim dialogue and Christian leaders who represented the fellowship of WCC member churches, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and a variety of CWCs, including the Roman Catholic Church. This consultation was facilitated jointly by the WCC programme on Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation and the programme on Church and Ecumenical Relations. The Joint Consultative Commission of the WCC and CWCs appointed a steering group to prepare the consultation. The group included representatives from the Anglican Communion, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the World Council of Churches. This consultation produced a 32 page comprehensive document entitled, "Christian Self Understanding in Relation to Islam, WCC 2008,"¹⁵¹ and issued a Joint Press Release by the WCC and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches on October 22, 2008.

The initial response of the Vatican on the other hand seemed more ambivalent than clear. Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue responded to the letter calling it "a very interesting letter" and "a very encouraging sign because it shows that good will and dialogue are capable of overcoming prejudices..." In the very same breath however, he quipped "but some questions remain. When we speak of the love of God, are we speaking about the same love?" Press releases also confirmed that the Pope could 'not sign a collective response to Muslims provoking terse remarks from various Christian denominations. A year later however, this ambivalence gave way to more concrete developments when the first Catholic-Muslim Forum was held between November 4-6, 2008 entitled "Love of God, Love of Neighbour" under the auspices of the Vatican.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ This document is available in PDF at the official website of WCC: <www.oikoumene.org/.../christian-self-understanding-in-relation-to-islam.html?...>.

¹⁵² For the text of the Declaration see <http://www.zenit.org/article-24175?l=english>. Retrieved February 10, 2010.

Not all responses however could perceive the “hand of conviviality and cooperation” that Yale Divinity School or WCC did in *A Common Word*.¹⁵³ Patrick Sookhdeo, Director of ‘The Barnabas Fund’ called it “a misrepresentation of the truth” and a “veiled threat calling for the acceptance of Islamic dominance” in his response to it on 28 November 2007.¹⁵⁴ Others thought that there was nothing “common” nor “new” in it nor was it a true “invitation”.

Two more events are worthy of mention in addition to a few more moots, speeches and meetings. Firstly Georgetown University, in collaboration with the Prince al-Waleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, and the Royal *Aal al-Bayt* Institute for Islamic Thought organized a conference between October 7-8, 2009 under the title “A Common Word Between Us and You: A Global Agenda for Change”.¹⁵⁵

Next was an International Consultation organized by the WCC, the World Islamic Call Society and the Royal *Aal al-Bayt* Institute entitled “Transforming Communities: Christians and Muslims Building a Common Future” held from November 01-02, 2010 at the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva and attended by 64 Muslim and Christian scholars and leaders from various parts of the world. They called ‘for the formation of a joint working group which can be mobilized whenever a crisis threatens to arise in which Christians and Muslims find themselves in conflict’.¹⁵⁶

As of today (February 18, 2011), *A Common Word* website endorses the signatures of 309 signatories, 385086 visitors and 8554 online endorsements of the text itself. Over 740 articles have appeared on the text in English language alone. The official website of *A Common Word* claims that many M.Phil and PhD theses have been registered in Harvard, the Theological Seminary at the University of Tübingen in Germany, and the

¹⁵³ For some interesting ‘negative’ academic and non-academic responses to “A Common Word” see <http://www.investigativeproject.org/519/a-common-word-between-us-and-you-is-a-call-for-conversion>. Retrieved on February 04, 2010. Of particular interest is Dr. Mark Durie’s response in <http://acommopword.blogspot.com/>. Retrieved on February 04, 2010. For a good online repository of mixed responses see http://answering-islam.net/Letters/common_word.htm. Retrieved on February 05, 2010.

¹⁵⁴ See <http://www.barnabasfund.org/RESPONSE-TO-OPEN-LETTER-AND-CALL-FROM-MUSLIM-RELIGIOUS-LEADERS-TO-CHRISTIAN-LEADERS-13-OCTOBER-2007.html> for the whole text of the response. Retrieved March 09, 2011.

¹⁵⁵ For Professor Esposito’s write-up on the conference see <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=34910>. Retrieved on March 09, 2010.

¹⁵⁶ See [http://muslimsandchristians.net/news/featured/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=6&cHash=7a1d30d31c83c2bedd3c010fec4a7cd](http://muslimsandchristians.net/news/featured/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=6&cHash=7a1d30d31c83c2bedd3c010fec4a7cd). For more details on the consultation please see <http://muslimsandchristians.net/documents/>. Retrieved on February 18, 2011.

Center for Studies of Islam in the United Kingdom. This statement can only be confirmed on the availability of information about them.

A Common Word has also formed part of important speeches such as President Barack Obama's speech at the National Cathedral, Washington DC on January 21, 2009. Lastly a one-hour film entitled "A Common Word: A 21st century global Muslim-Christian Encounter" has been prepared by Ten Thousand Films and is yet to be released according to the film makers website.¹⁵⁷ It would be produced both in English and Arabic.

There is little doubt that the Keynote Addresses and Final Statements of most, if not all, of these moots are quite inspiring and seem to provide both viable theoretical frameworks and practical suggestions for a successful dialogue to take place between Christians and Muslims.

It remains to be seen how effective they are in the actual realization of the objectives of dialogue.

¹⁵⁷ See <http://www.tenthousandfilms.com/main.html>. Retrieved on February 18, 2011.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE IMPACT OF REVELATION (*DEI VERBUM*) ON THE CATHOLIC VIEW OF 'OTHERS'

So far we observed the problematics of the concept of revelation as rising out of *Dei Verbum* and then we cast a bird's eye view on the Catholic concept of since Vatican II. It remains to be seen whether or not and if so, how, has this concept of revelation impacted the reality of the Catholic view of the other.

Since much of the chapter would be based on my own analysis of the issues at hand, I would also be including much of what the conclusion would later include in this chapter.

It was noted during our previous discussions that *Dei Verbum* was significantly more pastoral and ecumenical than the previous two councils and the papal bulls and Church documents that were enunciated and disseminated prior to the years leading to Vatican II. This character has come out quite powerfully in the theological trends right after Vatican particularly when approaching the issue of understanding or encountering other religions.

REVELATION AS SALVATION HISTORY

One of the hallmarks of Vatican II revelation is that it strongly embeds itself in salvation history. While delineating the purpose of revelation, *Dei Verbum* says:

In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will...Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex. 33:11; John 15:14-15) and lives among them (see Bar. 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself. *This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them.* (emphasis mine)

Salvation history is a Christian lore and no discussion on the idea of human history through Christian eyes could possibly overlook it. But officially speaking, the Catholic church for the first time tied it up with the idea of revelation. The idea was first floated by Irenaeus in his *Adversus Haereses*. This is what he says:

As it has been clearly demonstrated that the Word, who existed in the beginning with God, by whom all things were made, who was also always present with mankind, was in these last days, according to the time appointed by the Father,

united to His own workmanship, inasmuch as He became a man liable to suffering, [it follows] that every objection is set aside of those who say, If our Lord was born at that time Christ had therefore no previous existence. For I have shown that the Son of God did not then begin to exist, being with the Father from the beginning; but when He became incarnate, and was made man, He commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished us, in a brief comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam—namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God—that we might recover in Christ Jesus.¹

This was also termed as the theory of Recapitulation or enfolding everything into Christ. So God gathers up everything that had been sidetracked by the fall of Adam and restores it in Christ, who thus becomes the Second Adam. This was obviously so because the human race lost its way and God's grace through the Original Sin. The Son of God became a human being in order to recreate the whole of humankind. This also means that history was made sacred. Now history was not merely the context where God communicated eternal truths to man. It was itself the creative act of God through which God manifests Himself. The climactic moment of history is, as far as the Christian concerned, always Christ.

Such a theory of history also necessitates that all of history brings us to a knowledge of God. So while Jews might have 'fallen' into looking at and interpreting history largely through the event of the Exodus and Christians through the creative act of God in Christ, theoretically speaking God ought to be equally knowable through any event of human history and not only through the history of the Bible, Christ or the Church.

It was this idea of 'inclusiveness of human history in its manifestation of God' that prompted the Vatican to understand revelation as salvation history. It was only a matter of time that this perception developed within the realm of the Christian view of non-Christian religions. Hence the general ambience of inclusiveness that is perceptible in the Vatican's views of other religions rises from this concept of revelation. Having said that, it needs to be reiterated that not everyone was happy about this; simply because it quite dramatically compromises the more or less exclusivist stance of Christianity and the uniqueness of the Christ event over its 2000 years of history and brings other religious traditions almost at par with it. This would be nothing short of a religious nightmare.

¹ See <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/antfl01.ix.iv.xix.html>, accessed on February 16, 2014.

SENSUS FIDEI: THE SENSE OF THE FAITHFUL

One of the most pertinent impacts of *Dei Verbum*, particularly in the context of the Catholic view of other religions, is possibly that related to *Sensus Fidei* or the sense of the faithful. Article 8 of the Constitution reads as follows:

And so the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved by an unending succession of preachers until the end of time. Therefore the Apostles, handing on what they themselves had received, warn the faithful to hold fast to the traditions which they have learned either by word of mouth or by letter (see 2 Thess. 2:15), and to fight in defense of the faith handed on once and for all. (see Jude 1:3) Now what was handed on by the Apostles includes everything which contributes toward the holiness of life and increase in faith of the peoples of God; and so the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes.

This tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. *This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Luke, 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth.* (emphasis mine)

This passage proposes that the faithful share in growth of understanding even of the Church because they share in the gift of truth as a result of their contemplation and study.

Lumen Gentium made the same statement although more directly by saying:

Christ, the great Prophet, who proclaimed the Kingdom of His Father both by the testimony of His life and the power of His words, continually fulfills His prophetic office until the complete manifestation of glory. He does this not only through the hierarchy who teach in His name and with His authority, but also through the laity whom He made His witnesses and to whom He gave understanding of the faith (*sensu fidei*) and an attractiveness in speech so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life.²

What exactly is *Sensus Fidei* of sense of the faith? Richard Gaillardetz helps us in understanding the issue with a remarkable example. He says that it can be understood in two ways. It can 'refer to a capacity of the individual believer to understand God's revelation addressed to them in love' almost like a sixth or spiritual sense. It can also be understood to mean an 'actual perception or imaginative grasp of divine revelation.' To illustrate this further he gives the example of a beautiful sculptor or a piece of art being

² See *Lumen Gentium*, no. 35.

viewed by people. People view this piece of art each through his/her own understanding, background information, artistic sense and a host of other experiences of life. All this put together helps in completing the work of the artistic by giving it a meaning.

Although this is a very complex process and has not been defined by *Dei Verbum*, the reading, study and understanding of the Scripture, the experience of participating in the celebration of Mass, the meditation on the crucifix all when done communally is not only an instance and experience of being enriched both communally and individually by partaking of a Catholic practice, it is also an act of reciprocation on the part of the individual in which he/she gives back to the church his/her understanding thus enriching the church by the gifts of God that he/she has received. This act of handing back to the Church of the sense of faith by the common people has been closely linked to what is termed in contemporary Catholic circles as “ecclesial reception” something that scholars started concentrating on after Vatican II.

In ancient times, the elect who were being prepared to celebrate the Easter sacraments underwent a ritual called “*tradition-redditio symboli*”, “the handing over and giving back of the creed.” They received a copy of the creed and then professed the creed to the community. The same was true in the way the laity received a teaching from the bishop enriching themselves and then give it back to him thus enriching him as well with their experience.

This model of handing down and then receiving it once again (the *traditioning* process as some scholars like to call it) is also known as the “*Communio Model of Reception*” which progresses in the following sequential manner:

- the expressions of faith (in the form of liturgy, devotion, religious art, daily Christian living etc.) of the Christian faithful is received by the elect i.e. the Bishops
- the Bishops assess their fidelity to the Apostolic tradition.
- if the need arises, the Bishops give a doctrinal form to the insights manifested in the faith expressions of the community
- this is then handed back to the community which engages these official teachings and it starts taking expression in the lives of the community once again.

In line with the development of the relationship of the laity to the Magisterium, there was a parallel development concerning the relation of the theologians - also considered 'lay' or 'faithful' - to the Magisterium, the teaching office of the Church.

Before the Second Vatican Council many ecclesiastical documents viewed theology as an auxiliary service to the Magisterium. According to this view Peter and the apostles were sent forth by Christ to preach the Holy Spirit was supposed to assist them. Thus the pope and bishops belonged to the "teaching church," and everyone else, including theologians, belonged to the "learning church." In short, the pope and bishops were the sole custodians and authoritative transmitters of that deposit.

Within this framework the role of theologians was reduced to explicating the meaning of these propositional truths. The teaching ministry of theologians, such as it was, was totally dependent on the authority of the pope and bishops. Theologians could be seen as teachers of the faith only by virtue of a delegation of authority from the bishops. They were expected to submit their work to the authoritative scrutiny and potential censorship of the magisterium. The rejection or even questioning of any authoritative teaching of the magisterium was considered 'dissent' and was obviously viewed with great suspicion; as a negative attack on the authority of the magisterium itself. Theologians were supposed to bring the discovery of any difficult position (related to a doctrinal issue which had not been considered infallible) to the attention of the magisterium privately and to refrain from any public speech or writing that was contrary to 'received' church teaching.

As we mentioned earlier new developments in the theology of revelation challenged the somewhat simplistic conception of the transmission of church teaching as the handing on of a collection of individual truths. Moreover, there did not seem to be a sufficient acknowledgement of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the whole Church. The dominant conception of the Church itself was excessively pyramidal and consequently saw revelation as "trickling down" from the hierarchy, through the theologians to the laity.

The inadequacies of this understanding of the magisterium-theologian relationship were brought to light in the teaching of Vatican II. The council presented divine revelation as the living Word of God communicated in its fullness by the power of the Holy Spirit in the person of Jesus Christ. The Magisterium was to be a servant to this Word as its authoritative interpreter. In this regard, the vocation of bishops and theologians shared a common foundation, service to the Word of God.

Unlike the pre-conciliar view, the council did not limit the work of the Spirit to ensuring the efficacy of the sacraments and empowering church office. The council's teaching that the Church did not have all truth as its possession but rather moved toward the "fullness of truth" (*Dei Verbum* No. 8) suggested a prominent role for theologians in the ecclesial work of reflection and discovery as the Church journeyed toward the fullness of truth.

The council did not reflect explicitly on the role of the theologian in any depth. However, several passages are worth considering. The bishops insisted that the work of biblical exegesis and theology must be done under the guidance of the magisterium:

Catholic exegetes. . . and other students of sacred theology, working diligently together and using appropriate means, should devote their energies, under the watchful care of the sacred teaching office of the Church, to an exploration and exposition of the divine writings.³

They reiterated that it was the responsibility of theologians to interpret and explicate church teaching faithfully. However these tasks did not exhaust the work of theologians. Theologians must also consider new questions:

... recent research and discoveries in the sciences, in history and philosophy bring up new problems which have an important bearing on life itself and demand new scrutiny by theologians. Furthermore, theologians are now being asked, within the methods and limits of theological science, to develop more efficient ways of communicating doctrine to the people of today.⁴

Though the council texts did not develop this, the work of the theologian is presented as a mediation between insights gained from a study of the contemporary situation and the probing interpretation of the received church tradition.

What comes out very strongly through these two parallel developments is that service was to be rendered to the Word of God. This service was not the prerogative of the Magisterium, Pope or Bishops alone. The theologians and lay played an equally important role in doing service to the Word of God as well as adding richness, vigour and possibly newer dimensions to understanding the Word of God. We shall now see how these two fundamental changes led to a different view of how other religions were viewed in Catholic circles.

³ See *Dei Verbum*, No. 23.

⁴ See *Gaudium Et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, accessed on November 23, 2010.

PARADIGMATIC SHIFT FROM ECCLESIOCENTRISM TO CHRISTOCENTRISM

J.P. Schineller in his insightful article "Christ and Church: A Spectrum of Views" has described the theological trends among Catholics in the mid-seventies. He produces a diagram which I have only slightly modified (not in content rather in presentation) to delineate the various models among Catholic theologians with respect to the 'other' in relation to Jesus Christ and the Church. See diagram 2⁵ on page 211.

In the first model, there are no mediators of salvation other than Jesus Christ. All other saviours are idols and man-created. It is only through a personal relationship with Jesus that salvation is possible. The scriptural evidence for this sort of stance as mentioned earlier as well is Jn. 14: 6 where Jesus is said to have said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

The second model makes more room and allows for an anonymous Christian faith as a way of salvation. People can only be saved by Christ but at least God's grace is available for all. Scriptural evidence for this position comes from 1 Tim. 2: 4-6, "god our Saviour desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth; for there is one God and there is one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all."

In the second type, the authority of the Church is slightly toned down as it is depicted as the representative community in continuity with Christ. The Church is not absolutely essential for salvation. "In accord with this position," writes Schineller, "to be saved, a non-Christian need not necessarily have a desire fo the Church...only a desire for Christ..."

In needs to be added here that the second model is a clear paradigm shift as can be seen, from an Ecclesiocentric model to a Christocentric one. We shall have something to say about this ahead.

The third model is a theocentric model where both Christ and the Church are taken to be normative and not constitutive way of salvation. "God is love, and this love has been operative always and everywhere; this love is revealed most clearly in the person and work of Christ, but it is not mediated *only* through Christ." The scriptural evidence for this stance is to be seen in the first Letter of John 4: 7-10.

⁵ J. Peter Schineller, "Christ and Church: A Spectrum of Views" in *Theological Studies* (1976), 37: 545-566.

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.

The Church's authority here also is similar to its authority in model two where it is not indespensible for salvation.

The fourth and last model could only be termed 'a Catholic nightmare'. In it there is no evidence for Christ to enjoy any privileges of uniqueness. He is one of the many saviours and his religion one of the many religions. The fourth model does not have too many champions even among non-Catholics, let alone Catholics. Needless to say, this position was vehemently repudiated in general Catholic thought and *Dominus Iesus* is sufficient evidence.

Jacques Dupuis approves - with slight restraint - Schineller's models and adds that these models depict two paradigmatic shifts: once from an ecclesiocentric worldview to a Christocentric one and then from a Christocentric worldview to a theocentric one. The first one is obviously not new, the second one has been around in Catholic thought though it seems to have been hijacked by the first one during the previous two centuries, so its revival is quite welcome but the third 'theocentric' view is quite new and needs to

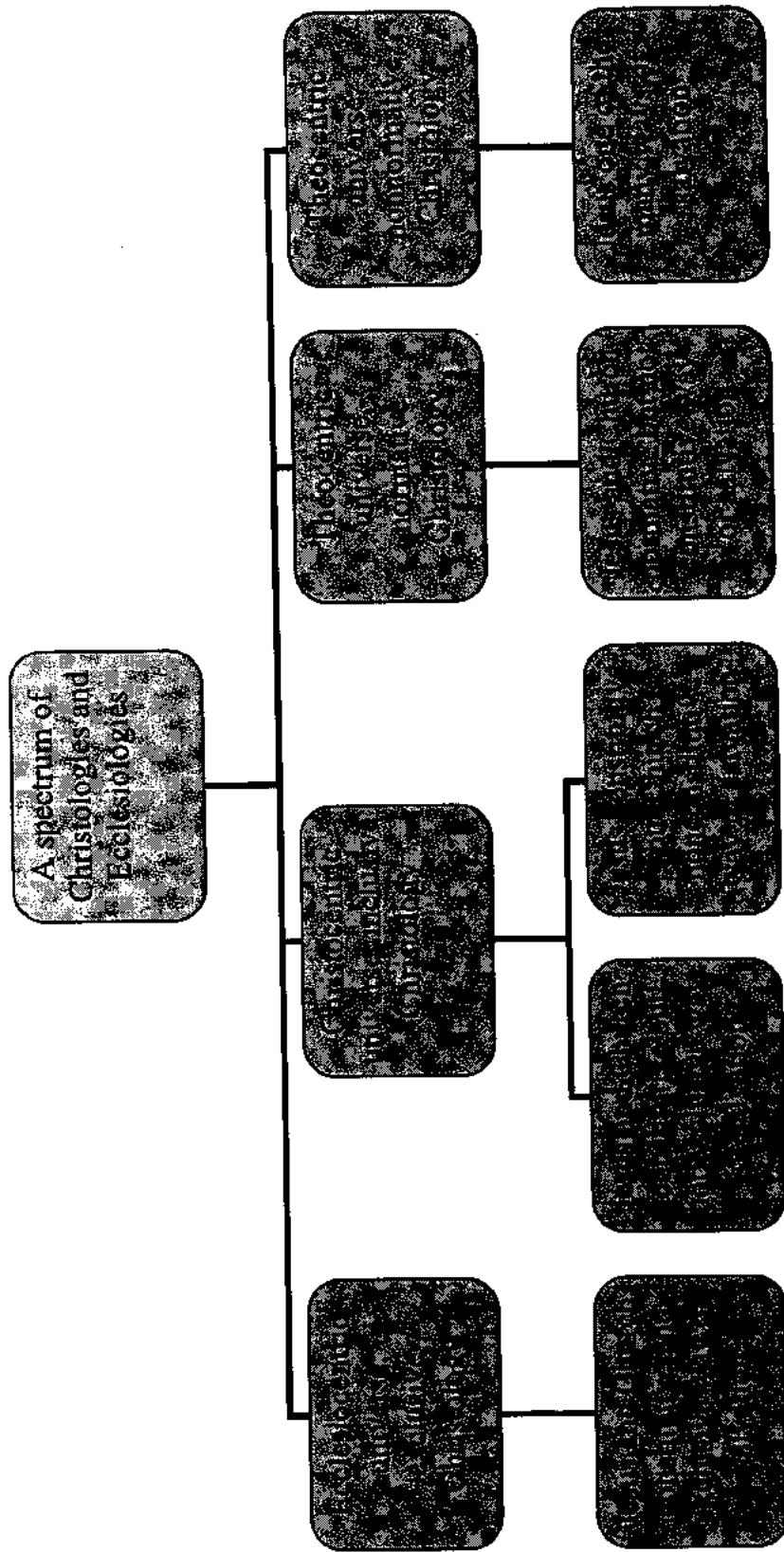


Diagram 2: Spectrum of Christologies and Ecclesiologies

be looked at in a little more detail. But we will start with the second view now.

We said in the previous paragraph that the shift from an Ecclesiocentric paradigm to a Christocentric one was not new. Indeed it was not new yet its revival was owing to a direct impact of *Dei Verbum*. *Dei Verbum* took revelation, i.e. Christ once again and situated it in its rightful place in Catholic theology. Catholicism for long had been too busy trying to defend itself against the wanton and hideous attacks of modernity. Since the bulk of this attack was directed towards the Church, the Magisterium had rightly taken it upon itself to defend the infallible institution of the Church before anything else. As long as the Church survived Catholicism was safe. In the event, two important developments took place; first, the authority of the Pope increased and second the Magisterium's authority rose to tyrannical proportions. To the outside world, St. Peter's throne and the Church represented the external aspects of Catholicism. Catholic doctrines and teachings were internal affairs.

Dei Verbum changed all that. St. Peter's throne, the Magisterium, the Church mattered as long as they were serving Christ thus the clear suggestion by *Dei Verbum*: "This teaching office is not above the word of God..." It is now Christ who stands at the centre of the Christian mystery; the Church is a derived related mystery, which finds in him its *raison d'être*.

In the parlance of the theology of religions, this paradigmatic shift may be termed as a forward leap from exclusivism to inclusivism. This implies a clear distinction between Christ's role and the role of the Church in the order of salvation. Both can not be placed on the same level. Jesus Christ alone, according to the New Testament, is the mediator between God and human beings.

While in the first paradigm the extent of God's saving grace and love is limited to Christians alone, in the second one it is available for all though through Christ. In the first the Kingdom of God and the Spirit of God are identified with the Church, in the second, they are seen to be manifesting themselves most fully in Christ for all. Similarly in the first paradigm sinfulness is overcome by Christ in and through the Church in the second Christ is taken to be the way beyond sin. Lastly with respect to world religions, the attitude that the first paradigm creates is abundantly negative where all religions are absolutely false while in the second paradigm, other religions are only relatively false or true to the extent that they are close or removed from Christ.

This is however not to say that the necessity of the Church in the order of salvation stands compromised. Vatican II clearly affirmed the Church's necessity in the

constitution *Lumen Gentium* saying: "This Sacred Council wishes to turn its attention firstly to the Catholic faithful. Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, it teaches that the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation." But how does the Catholic Church view this necessity is still a very new and ongoing debate simply because the Church has not witnessed the new levels of irreligiosity and non-attendance of Church as it does today. G. Canobbio says:

The modalities in which the Church exercises her influence on those who do not yet know her, are not spelled out...¹

CHRISTOCENTRISM TO THEOCENTRISM

The next paradigmatic shift i.e. from Christocentrism to Theocentrism. This model implies casting aside the centrality of Jesus Christ in the order of salvation. It is God alone who remains at the centre. This is because it is impossible to judge among religious and saviour figures. Judgements about claims to uniqueness are unverifiable and without basis. Schineller adds that 'adherents of this position refuse to make judgements or comparisons about various religions, and prefer an epistemological relativism or scepticism'. They take their cue from Job's posture when he claims in reverent awe before the mystery of God: "I have been holding forth on matters I cannot understand, on marvels beyond me and my knowledge." (Jb. 42:3). In addition they cling to Jesus' assertion that: "men from east and west, from north and south, will come to take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God." (Luke 13: 29).

Obviously the Catholic Church would be extremely wary of any Catholic theologian worth the name taking up such a position as it is clear that it undermines the uniqueness of Christ and the Christian path to salvation effectively enough to render what many have called a post-Christian world. Yet, every cloud has a silver lining as the saying goes. Surprisingly enough, the stand of this model on the incomprehensibility of God and its understanding of Jesus as a way of salvation for his followers has in fact drawn the attention of some notable Catholic theologians, most notable of course Jacques Dupuis.² As can be discerned by now, this position is that which is called 'pluralism' in the theology of religions. Although it has won many champions on its side, such as John Hick, Paul Knitter and among pronounced Catholics S.J. Smartha and Raimon Panikkar,

¹ Quote taken from Dupuis' *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 352.

² See *Ibid*, chapter seven entitled "The Debate over Theology of Religions".

generally religious authorities of Christianity and other religions are viewing it with extreme caution.

As far as Christianity is concerned, it is obvious that the main problem with this model is the question of Christ. What consequences could Christian theology face if the person of Christ is removed from the salvation plan of Christianity only to be replaced by God? Dupuis tries to tackle the question with his native ingenuity. Jesus Christ is never placed in the place of God; this model merely affirms that God has placed Christ at the centre of his saving plan for mankind, not as the end by as the way, not as the goal of every human quest for God but as the universal mediator of God's saving action toward people. "Christian theology is not faced with the dilemma of being either Christocentric or theocentric; it is theocentric by being Christocentric and vice versa.

Another problem with this model is that it is tailored to suit monotheistic religions. For those religions such as Hinduism, African religions and some forms of Buddhism where God is impersonal, this model does not work and hence the whole salvational plan of Christianity stands questioned.

OBSERVATIONS

In the lines to follow I shall be making some observations regarding what I think are important issues to be noted after having attempted to study the impact of Vatican II's perception of revelation on the Catholic view of the other.

REVELATION AND WORLDVIEW

Christianity being a religion of revelation, does of necessity have a worldview; how its various denominations and their respective practitioners interpret this worldview is not our concern at the moment. I would like to explain a little briefly what I think worldview is.

Sigmund Freud has described world view in these terms. He says:

[It is]...an intellectual construction which solves all the problems of our existence uniformly on the basis of one overriding hypothesis, which, accordingly, leaves no question unanswered and in which everything that interests us finds its fixed place.

I would summarize my worldview as a comprehensive framework of my basic beliefs which guide me and my community (or ought to guide me and my community) about myself and my relations with the things around me. It answers some of the basic questions of my life such as Who am I? Where am I and how did I get here? What are

the things around me and what is their reality? How do I know what I know? Why am I here? And where am I headed?

Professor Kenneth Funk in his vivid description of worldview tells us in a more articulate and scholarly way what worldview is all about.

The elements of one's worldview, the beliefs about certain aspects of Reality, are one's

epistemology: beliefs about the nature and sources of knowledge;

metaphysics: beliefs about the ultimate nature of Reality;

cosmology: beliefs about the origins and nature of the universe, life, and especially Man;

teleology: beliefs about the meaning and purpose of the universe, its inanimate elements, and its inhabitants;

theology: beliefs about the existence and nature of God;

anthropology: beliefs about the nature and purpose of Man in general and, oneself in particular;

axiology: beliefs about the nature of value, what is good and bad, what is right and wrong.³

My worldview is then a set of beliefs about fundamental aspects of Reality that influence my "perceiving, thinking, knowing and doing". This also means that through my worldview, I am prompted to 'see' certain 'truths' about certain aspects of reality and therefore life that others would not see unless they stand where I stand. This also means that no matter what ones perspective, there is none who does not act on the basis of a certain worldview. I claim once again that those who deny upholding a certain worldview are being 'naïve, willfully ignorant, or simply misled'.

If on the other hand, I have a worldview which I refuse to articulate, then I am being 'intellectually evasive at best or dishonest at worst'. Those around me would be in the dark concerning my beliefs. If one makes a mistake concerning my worldview on the basis of my actions alone, then he or she can not in any way be held responsible. The responsibility would lie squarely on me for the misinterpretation that would have been caused owing to my negligence.

Similarly, 'if one considers a worldview a private matter and takes steps to prevent the open discussion of worldviews, then one is in fact imposing his/her worldview on others; by doing so you would deny individuals the opportunity to bring their own

³ See his article "What is a worldview?" in <http://web.engr.oregonstate.edu/~funkk/Personal/worldview.htm>, date October 12, 2008.

worldviews fully to bear on matters of common concern and the opportunity to examine their worldviews in the light of others'; this would end in effectively restricting public discourse to trivialities and ungrounded assertions.'

In the case of religions, worldviews are more often than not coloured by religious teachings; rather religions form the foundation of many a worldview. The same is true for Christianity particularly Catholicism. In its idea of revelation, Christianity has a worldview peculiar to it. It is the birth, death and rising of Jesus Christ. In fact, Christianity is exclusively about Christ for Christ is revelation and revelation is Christ and Christianity is all about understanding this dialectic relation between revelation and Christ. So far so good. What does all this Christ talk have to do with worldview? To the extent that one can understand Christ as revelation, ones 'Christ'ian worldview would be sensible and possibly vice versa.

So the fundamental step forward towards understanding the Christian worldview is to understand the revelation of Christ. The revelation of Christ has been recorded for us in the form of Scripture and Tradition both of which are upheld by the Church as working 'harmoniously' for making Jesus Christ known. Yet as we saw in the last chapter, this has been an extremely unsettling relation eversince the Catholic Church got caught up in the labyrinth of modern studies both on scripture and tradition and the chances are that this issue is not about to settle down for quite some time to come. The application of modern historical-critical methodology on the study of the Holy Bible (which has the blessings of *Dei Verbum* with some restraint though) has dealt scathing blows to the majority of conclusions regarding Christology-the bedrock of Christianity.

I will, in passing, mention some of the conclusions of these historical-critical studies to give the reader an idea about the kind of evidence Christianity and the Catholic Church have to work with in contemporary times.

'FACTS' ABOUT CHRIST AND THE BIBLE⁴

We will start with some "facts" about the Bible about which there is consensus among scholars of biblical criticism, whether secular, Protestant or Catholic.

- 1- We do not have the original texts of any early Christian book (or of any literary work from antiquity). Instead, we have copies made much later.

⁴ My source for this section is a series of lectures entitled "The New Testament" by Bart D. Ehrman James A. Gray Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Produced by the Teaching Company, United States of America in 2000. For more details visit http://www.thegreatcourses.com/tgc/courses/course_detail.aspx?cid=656, accessed Fall 2008.

- 2- At present, there are nearly 5,400 copies (or manuscripts) of the New Testament (in Greek), from extremely small fragments to entire massive tomes containing all the books.
- 3- The earliest copy of any book of the New Testament is called P52 and is the size of a small card which dates to around 125 AD and preserves some words from John 18.
- 4- The first full manuscript of the entire New Testament is the *Codex Sinaiticus*, dating from the second half of the fourth century. Most of the manuscripts date from the Middle Ages which date from the second to the sixteenth centuries.

Now for a few ‘facts’ about Christ

From 30 AD to around 130 AD that is about within a hundred years of Christ’s death (roughly from 30 AD up to 130 AD), this is what we know for sure:

- No surviving pagan sources are of any help in trying to reconstruct the life and teachings of Jesus because he is not mentioned in them. Given the impact that Christ has had on history ever since his death, one might expect that his life made an enormous impact on the society of his day—like a comet striking the earth. But if the historical record is any indication, Jesus scarcely made any impact at all less like a comet striking the earth than a stone being tossed into the ocean.
- From the first century AD, there are hundreds of documents written by all kinds of pagan authors for all kinds of reasons. Among all these surviving sources, Jesus is mentioned only twice which means that he is not mentioned by the vast majority of any of the philosophers, poets, historians, or scientists; he’s not named in any private letters or public inscriptions known to date.
 - o The Roman governor of the province of Bythinia-Pontus (in modern-day Turkey), Pliny the Younger, in a letter written to his emperor, Trajan (112 AD), mentions a group of Christians who are followers of “Christ, whom they worship as a God” (Letter 10 to the Emperor Trajan).
 - o The Roman historian Tacitus gives a lengthier reference in his history of Rome, *The Annals* (115 AD), in his discussion of the torching of the city of Rome by the emperor Nero in the year 64 AD. Here he mentions the Christians as the hatred of the human race and says that they were followers of “Christ” who, he notes, was crucified under the procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate, when Tiberius was the emperor.

In religious sources, Jesus is mentioned twice by Josephus Flavius, the Church historian.

To come to the New Testament, the life of Jesus is scarcely mentioned outside of the Gospels (e.g., by the apostle Paul, who is far more concerned about faith in Jesus' death and resurrection than in the details of his life). That means, then, that if we want to know about what Jesus said and did, our only sources are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (and possibly the Gospel of Thomas).

There is once again consensus among all biblical scholars that these sources are also problematic if we want to use them to reconstruct what Jesus said and did.

- They were written between 35 to 65 years after the events they narrate. The authors were not eyewitnesses and they appear to have acquired their stories from oral traditions that had been in circulation for decades.
- All four books were written anonymously. They were not ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John until some time in the second century AD, decades after they were written and there is good reason for doubting that these traditional ascriptions are accurate:
 - o Even though Christ and his own disciples spoke Aramaic, these books are written in Greek.
 - o Jesus' own disciples, at least according to the New Testament accounts, were mostly lower-class, uneducated peasants (according to Acts 4:13, both Peter and John were known to be illiterate); the Gospel writers were highly educated, literate and seemed to handle sophisticated ways of thinking quite well.

If these are our only historical sources for the life of Christ how can one possibly use them to reconstruct what Jesus was really like or what he said and did.

Add to that the matter of alteration, deletion and addition to the text of the Bible. There is compelling evidence to suggest that whole passages even books were added and scratched away simply because they fitted well or did not fit with somebody's personal theology. A befitting example all too well known in the area of Biblical Criticism is St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews (extremely essential to understand the paradigmatic shift in the understanding of revelation from the Old Testament model to the New Testament model). Nobody knows how it got into the Bible and who its author was. It is almost confirmedly not St. Paul's but since the ideas mentioned therein were essential for the church, it was adopted.

To come back to Christ, Rudolf Bultmann (1884 - 1976), a Catholic theologian yet vehemently criticized by the Catholic Church for his view on the demythologization of

Christianity, clearly stated that to write the history of Christ was impossible given the lack of historical information available on him.⁵

This means that, that scripture which actually testifies to revelation in Christianity i.e. Christ itself stands compromised and becomes suspicious with respect to its authority. This Scripture which also happens to be the creation of Tradition, moves alongside it - in parallel - with respect to authority and intertwined with it with respect to enunciation and promulgation of doctrines and teachings - to create a Christian Catholic worldview. Since Catholics staunchly believe that revelation is the basis for a Christian worldview, it stands to question as to what degree could this form of revelation help in creating a sound, even progressive worldview. With the content and epistemology of revelation questioned to its core and at times enmeshed in doubt, it would seem quite plain to an even-headed outsider/bystander that such an epistemology could hardly pose as a solid foundation upon which to build veritable conceptions of our world.

The manner in which the Catholic Church has tended to buckle over the past 100 years in the face of modern biblical studies – backed by a ‘science’ dead sure about itself – gradually yet surely allowing its findings to eat into its traditional stance is extremely worrying. A worthy example is the battle regarding the theory of evolution or creation by God which has ceased the Catholic Church for the past few decades with its theologians and bishops oscillating from one position to another not too sure how to handle this so called ‘scientific construction.’

The present writer feels that if Catholicism continues to allow a ‘scientific worldview’ to have its way when it comes to religion, we are possibly headed for a post-Christian world where Christianity even if it remains would be almost alien to its ancient authorities.

SEPARATION BETWEEN DIALOGUE AND SALVATION

Salvation, the way the present writer understands it means, our ultimate abode or state after death and judgment as far as the understanding of the Abrahamic traditions is concerned. We have seen that the Catholic Church has consistently linked the issue of salvation to the idea of viewing the others. This seems to be an extremely problematic situation.

⁵ See Rudolf Bultmann, *The New Testament and Mythology and Other Writings*, edited and translated by S. M. Ogden (London, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1984), p. 3.

For one, gone are the days when the Catholic Church was considered fit for handing out indulgences to people for an entry to paradise. In fact with inclusivist tendencies clearly settling in as the official teaching of the Church (though if one observes the document *Dominus Iesus*, one gets the feeling that the Church has clearly retracted from the teachings of Pope John Paul II), the monopoly over salvation has somewhat started waning. The need of the hour seems to be to detach the issue of salvation from ones perception of 'others'. No person, institution, magisterium or committee has any means of knowing or deciding who would be saved and how.

The truth of the matter is that it is for God alone to decide whom He will deal with and in what manner because salvation is God's prerogative alone. He does not have to work according to the justice mechanisms of this world nor is He bound by any logical construction for salvation that many people in modern times bent upon having dialogue with others tend to force upon Him. No pope can guarantee salvation for himself let alone others. In fact in Islamic thought not even the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) could have laid claim to have been saved. He spelt out his position vis-à-vis salvation thus: "I can be saved by the mercy of God alone" Unfortunately this is a position that many Muslims in modern times seem to have forgotten. Any Muslim who believes that he or she is going to be saved at the expense of the followers of other religions is being theologically ignorant to say the least.

It needs to be reiterated that religions by their very nature and construction are prone to exclusivist tendencies and there is nothing wrong in admitting this fact. When I say that I am a Muslim, while I am saying a hundred positive things about who I am, I am also implying that the worldview being projected by Christianity, Hinduism or any other religion for that matter is incoherent as far as I am concerned. It also means that my worldview and thereby my epistemology, axiology, anthropology and the whole package of worldview is quite different even if there are places where we cross roads. In other words, my forward march to truth is not possible through other religions. The same obviously is true for a Christian who says that he/she is a Christian or a Hindu who believes in the tenets of his/her religion. There is for instance, no room in my worldview for a Trinitarian belief system which in simple words means that Christ is not God nor is the Holy Spirit. As soon as I say that I stand outside the pale of Christianity. If this is so and it certainly is, then on what grounds can I say that Christianity caters for a worldview which can actually lead me to the Truth.

Moreover most of the discomfort caused today among the followers of various religions when they meet each other is how the other sees them with respect to salvation. And as soon as they come to know that they are going to land in hell no matter what they do, it is enough to douse any furtherance of the dialogical cause. My humble submission therefore is to scratch the issue of salvation out of dialogical interaction. This needless to say, ought to be done with a lot of wisdom.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Dialogue with others starts eternally with the self. Charity starts at home is the often heard wisdom that we generally hear. Any change that I want to bring around me depends upon me changing myself first. The people who have done this best are the spiritual masters of all religious traditions whether Abrahamic or not. The reason mystics, monks, Sufis, gurus and Zen masters could bring about such great spiritual and silent revolutions throughout the world without provoking people to change their religions or causing religious wars was because they had changed their selves first and this by far is the most difficult change to bring about. Anyone who has experienced what goes on in spiritual retreats and hospices can bear witness to what I say here. It is a path which knows no shortcuts; no Teach Yourself guides can get you there in a month nor can any 10-point agenda nor any 7 quick steps to know yourself or elevate your spirituality will help you achieving that goal. Personal change necessitates persistent endeavour on the part of the person concerned and a great deal of self-evaluation and self-criticism; it is only natural that modern forms of dialogue are not too concerned with it. One befitting way of addressing this problem is to get mystics, Sufis, monks and gurus to enter into dialogue with each other. With their transcendental vision, open hearts and purified selves, they would be able to attract people at the grass-root level to a degree many self-styled academics, jurists and theologains would take a lifetime to do with their dry, philosophical and logic-laden arguments. Dialogue is eternally a matter of the heart and will not succeed unless the desire for a better and more peaceful world rises from the heart.

APPENDIX I¹

DOGOMATIC CONSTITUTION ON DIVINE REVELATION *DEI VERBUM*

SOLEMNLY PROMULGATED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI ON

NOVEMBER 18, 1965

PREFACE

1. Hearing the word of God with reverence and proclaiming it with faith, the sacred synod takes its direction from these words of St. John: "We announce to you the eternal life which dwelt with the Father and was made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we announce to you, so that you may have fellowship with us and our common fellowship be with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:2-3). Therefore, following in the footsteps of the Council of Trent and of the First Vatican Council, this present council wishes to set forth authentic doctrine on divine revelation and how it is handed on, so that by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may believe, by believing it may hope, and by hoping it may love. (1)

CHAPTER I

REVELATION ITSELF

2. In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (see Eph. 1:9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (see Eph. 2:18; 2 Peter 1:4). Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex. 33:11; John 15:14-15) and lives among them (see Bar. 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself. This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them. By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation. (2)

3. God, who through the Word creates all things (see John 1:3) and keeps them in existence, gives men an enduring witness to Himself in created realities (see Rom. 1:19-

¹ See http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html, accessed on November 07, 2010.

20). Planning to make known the way of heavenly salvation, He went further and from the start manifested Himself to our first parents. Then after their fall His promise of redemption aroused in them the hope of being saved (see Gen. 3:15) and from that time on He ceaselessly kept the human race in His care, to give eternal life to those who perseveringly do good in search of salvation (see Rom. 2:6-7). Then, at the time He had appointed He called Abraham in order to make of him a great nation (see Gen. 12:2). Through the patriarchs, and after them through Moses and the prophets, He taught this people to acknowledge Himself the one living and true God, provident father and just judge, and to wait for the Savior promised by Him, and in this manner prepared the way for the Gospel down through the centuries.

4. Then, after speaking in many and varied ways through the prophets, "now at last in these days God has spoken to us in His Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). For He sent His Son, the eternal Word, who enlightens all men, so that He might dwell among men and tell them of the innermost being of God (see John 1:1-18). Jesus Christ, therefore, the Word made flesh, was sent as "a man to men." (3) He "speaks the words of God" (John 3:34), and completes the work of salvation which His Father gave Him to do (see John 5:36; John 17:4). To see Jesus is to see His Father (John 14:9). For this reason Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making Himself present and manifesting Himself: through His words and deeds, His signs and wonders, but especially through His death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth. Moreover He confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed, that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to life eternal.

The Christian dispensation, therefore, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Tim. 6:14 and Tit. 2:13).

5. "The obedience of faith" (Rom. 13:26; see 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6) "is to be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man commits his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals," (4) and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him. To make this act of faith, the grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving the heart and turning it to God, opening the eyes of the mind and giving "joy and ease to everyone in assenting to the truth and believing it." (5) To bring about an ever deeper understanding of revelation the same Holy Spirit constantly brings faith to completion by His gifts.

6. Through divine revelation, God chose to show forth and communicate Himself and the eternal decisions of His will regarding the salvation of men. That is to say, He chose to share with them those divine treasures which totally transcend the understanding of the human mind. (6)

As a sacred synod has affirmed, God, the beginning and end of all things, can be known with certainty from created reality by the light of human reason (see Rom. 1:20); but teaches that it is through His revelation that those religious truths which are by their nature accessible to human reason can be known by all men with ease, with solid certitude and with no trace of error, even in this present state of the human race. (7)

CHAPTER II

HANDING ON DIVINE REVELATION

7. In His gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what He had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations. Therefore Christ the Lord in whom the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion (see Cor. 1:20; 3:13; 4:6), commissioned the Apostles to preach to all men that Gospel which is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching, (1) and to impart to them heavenly gifts. This Gospel had been promised in former times through the prophets, and Christ Himself had fulfilled it and promulgated it with His lips. This commission was faithfully fulfilled by the Apostles who, by their oral preaching, by example, and by observances handed on what they had received from the lips of Christ, from living with Him, and from what He did, or what they had learned through the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The commission was fulfilled, too, by those Apostles and apostolic men who under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit committed the message of salvation to writing. (2)

But in order to keep the Gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the Apostles left bishops as their successors, "handing over" to them "the authority to teach in their own place." (3) This sacred tradition, therefore, and Sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testaments are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything, until she is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face (see 1 John 3:2).

8. And so the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved by an unending succession of preachers until the end of time. Therefore the Apostles, handing on what they themselves had received, warn the faithful to hold fast to the traditions which they have learned either by word of mouth or

by letter (see 2 Thess. 2:15), and to fight in defense of the faith handed on once and for all (see Jude 1:3) (4) Now what was handed on by the Apostles includes everything which contributes toward the holiness of life and increase in faith of the peoples of God; and so the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes.

This tradition which comes from the Apostles develop in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. (5) For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Luke, 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her.

The words of the holy fathers witness to the presence of this living tradition, whose wealth is poured into the practice and life of the believing and praying Church. Through the same tradition the Church's full canon of the sacred books is known, and the sacred writings themselves are more profoundly understood and unceasingly made active in her; and thus God, who spoke of old, uninterruptedly converses with the bride of His beloved Son; and the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel resounds in the Church, and through her, in the world, leads unto all truth those who believe and makes the word of Christ dwell abundantly in them (see Col. 3:16).

9. Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.(6)

10. Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church. Holding fast to this deposit the entire holy people united with their shepherds remain always steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the common life, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers (see Acts 2, 42, Greek text), so that holding to, practicing and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the bishops and faithful a single common effort. (7)

But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, (8) has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, (9) whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.

It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.

CHAPTER III

SACRED SCRIPTURE, ITS INSPIRATION AND DIVINE INTERPRETATION

11. Those divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in Sacred Scripture have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For holy mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles (see John 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-20, 3:15-16), holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.(1) In composing the sacred books, God chose men and while employed by Him (2) they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, (3) they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted. (4)

Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings (5) for the sake of salvation. Therefore "all Scripture is divinely inspired and has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error, for reformation

of manners and discipline in right living, so that the man who belongs to God may be efficient and equipped for good work of every kind" (2 Tim. 3:16-17, Greek text).

12. However, since God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion, (6) the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words.

To search out the intention of the sacred writers, attention should be given, among other things, to "literary forms." For truth is set forth and expressed differently in texts which are variously historical, prophetic, poetic, or of other forms of discourse. The interpreter must investigate what meaning the sacred writer intended to express and actually expressed in particular circumstances by using contemporary literary forms in accordance with the situation of his own time and culture. (7) For the correct understanding of what the sacred author wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of feeling, speaking and narrating which prevailed at the time of the sacred writer, and to the patterns men normally employed at that period in their everyday dealings with one another. (8)

But, since Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted in the sacred spirit in which it was written, (9) no less serious attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture if the meaning of the sacred texts is to be correctly worked out. The living tradition of the whole Church must be taken into account along with the harmony which exists between elements of the faith. It is the task of exegetes to work according to these rules toward a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture, so that through preparatory study the judgment of the Church may mature. For all of what has been said about the way of interpreting Scripture is subject finally to the judgment of the Church, which carries out the divine commission and ministry of guarding and interpreting the word of God. (10)

13. In Sacred Scripture, therefore, while the truth and holiness of God always remains intact, the marvelous "condescension" of eternal wisdom is clearly shown, "that we may learn the gentle kindness of God, which words cannot express, and how far He has gone in adapting His language with thoughtful concern for our weak human nature." (11) For the words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as the word of the eternal Father, when He took to Himself the flesh of human weakness, was in every way made like men.

CHAPTER IV

THE OLD TESTAMENT

14. In carefully planning and preparing the salvation of the whole human race the God of infinite love, by a special dispensation, chose for Himself a people to whom He would entrust His promises. First He entered into a covenant with Abraham (see Gen. 15:18) and, through Moses, with the people of Israel (see Ex. 24:8). To this people which He had acquired for Himself, He so manifested Himself through words and deeds as the one true and living God that Israel came to know by experience the ways of God with men. Then too, when God Himself spoke to them through the mouth of the prophets, Israel daily gained a deeper and clearer understanding of His ways and made them more widely known among the nations (see Ps. 21:29; 95:1-3; Is. 2:1-5; Jer. 3:17). The plan of salvation foretold by the sacred authors, recounted and explained by them, is found as the true word of God in the books of the Old Testament: these books, therefore, written under divine inspiration, remain permanently valuable. "For all that was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

15. The principal purpose to which the plan of the old covenant was directed was to prepare for the coming of Christ, the redeemer of all and of the messianic kingdom, to announce this coming by prophecy (see Luke 24:44; John 5:39; 1 Peter 1:10), and to indicate its meaning through various types (see 1 Cor. 10:12). Now the books of the Old Testament, in accordance with the state of mankind before the time of salvation established by Christ, reveal to all men the knowledge of God and of man and the ways in which God, just and merciful, deals with men. These books, though they also contain some things which are incomplete and temporary, nevertheless show us true divine pedagogy. (1) These same books, then, give expression to a lively sense of God, contain a store of sublime teachings about God, sound wisdom about human life, and a wonderful treasury of prayers, and in them the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way. Christians should receive them with reverence.

16. God, the inspirer and author of both Testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New. (2) For, though Christ established the new covenant in His blood (see Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25), still the books of the Old Testament with all their parts, caught up into the proclamation of the Gospel, (3) acquire and show forth their full meaning in the New Testament (see Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:27; Rom. 16:25-26; 2 Cor. 14:16) and in turn shed light on it and explain it.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW TESTAMENT

17. The word of God, which is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe (see Rom. 1:16), is set forth and shows its power in a most excellent way in the writings of the New Testament. For when the fullness of time arrived (see Gal. 4:4), the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us in His fullness of graces and truth (see John 1:14). Christ established the kingdom of God on earth, manifested His Father and Himself by deeds and words, and completed His work by His death, resurrection and glorious Ascension and by the sending of the Holy Spirit. Having been lifted up from the earth, He draws all men to Himself (see John 12:32, Greek text), He who alone has the words of eternal life (see John 6:68). This mystery had not been manifested to other generations as it was now revealed to His holy Apostles and prophets in the Holy Spirit (see Eph. 3:4-6, Greek text), so that they might preach the Gospel, stir up faith in Jesus, Christ and Lord, and gather together the Church. Now the writings of the New Testament stand as a perpetual and divine witness to these realities.

18. It is common knowledge that among all the Scriptures, even those of the New Testament, the Gospels have a special preeminence, and rightly so, for they are the principal witness for the life and teaching of the incarnate Word, our savior.

The Church has always and everywhere held and continues to hold that the four Gospels are of apostolic origin. For what the Apostles preached in fulfillment of the commission of Christ, afterwards they themselves and apostolic men, under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, handed on to us in writing: the foundation of faith, namely, the fourfold Gospel, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.(1)

19. Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy held, and continues to hold, that the four Gospels just named, whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day He was taken up into heaven (see Acts 1:1). Indeed, after the Ascension of the Lord the Apostles handed on to their hearers what He had said and done. This they did with that clearer understanding which they enjoyed (3) after they had been instructed by the glorious events of Christ's life and taught by the light of the Spirit of truth. (2) The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels, selecting some things from the many which had been handed on by word of mouth or in writing, reducing some of them to a synthesis, explaining some things in view of the situation of their churches and preserving the

form of proclamation but always in such fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus.(4) For their intention in writing was that either from their own memory and recollections, or from the witness of those who "themselves from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word" we might know "the truth" concerning those matters about which we have been instructed (see Luke 1:2-4).

20. Besides the four Gospels, the canon of the New Testament also contains the epistles of St. Paul and other apostolic writings, composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by which, according to the wise plan of God, those matters which concern Christ the Lord are confirmed, His true teaching is more and more fully stated, the saving power of the divine work of Christ is preached, the story is told of the beginnings of the Church and its marvelous growth, and its glorious fulfillment is foretold.

For the Lord Jesus was with His apostles as He had promised (see Matt. 28:20) and sent them the advocate Spirit who would lead them into the fullness of truth (see John 16:13).

CHAPTER VI

SACRED SCRIPTURE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

21. The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body. She has always maintained them, and continues to do so, together with sacred tradition, as the supreme rule of faith, since, as inspired by God and committed once and for all to writing, they impart the word of God Himself without change, and make the voice of the Holy Spirit resound in the words of the prophets and Apostles. Therefore, like the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture. For in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets His children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life. Consequently these words are perfectly applicable to Sacred Scripture: "For the word of God is living and active" (Heb. 4:12) and "it has power to build you up and give you your heritage among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32; see 1 Thess. 2:13).

22. Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful. That is why the Church from the very beginning accepted as her own that very ancient

Greek translation of the Old Testament which is called the septuagint; and she has always given a place of honor to other Eastern translations and Latin ones especially the Latin translation known as the vulgate. But since the word of God should be accessible at all times, the Church by her authority and with maternal concern sees to it that suitable and correct translations are made into different languages, especially from the original texts of the sacred books. And should the opportunity arise and the Church authorities approve, if these translations are produced in cooperation with the separated brethren as well, all Christians will be able to use them.

23. The bride of the incarnate Word, the Church taught by the Holy Spirit, is concerned to move ahead toward a deeper understanding of the Sacred Scriptures so that she may increasingly feed her sons with the divine words. Therefore, she also encourages the study of the holy Fathers of both East and West and of sacred liturgies. Catholic exegetes then and other students of sacred theology, working diligently together and using appropriate means, should devote their energies, under the watchful care of the sacred teaching office of the Church, to an exploration and exposition of the divine writings. This should be so done that as many ministers of the divine word as possible will be able effectively to provide the nourishment of the Scriptures for the people of God, to enlighten their minds, strengthen their wills, and set men's hearts on fire with the love of God. (1) The sacred synod encourages the sons of the Church and Biblical scholars to continue energetically, following the mind of the Church, with the work they have so well begun, with a constant renewal of vigor. (2)

24. Sacred theology rests on the written word of God, together with sacred tradition, as its primary and perpetual foundation. By scrutinizing in the light of faith all truth stored up in the mystery of Christ, theology is most powerfully strengthened and constantly rejuvenated by that word. For the Sacred Scriptures contain the word of God and since they are inspired, really are the word of God; and so the study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology. (3) By the same word of Scripture the ministry of the word also, that is, pastoral preaching, catechetics and all Christian instruction, in which the liturgical homily must hold the foremost place, is nourished in a healthy way and flourishes in a holy way.

25. Therefore, all the clergy must hold fast to the Sacred Scriptures through diligent sacred reading and careful study, especially the priests of Christ and others, such as deacons and catechists who are legitimately active in the ministry of the word. This is to be done so that none of them will become "an empty preacher of the word of God

outwardly, who is not a listener to it inwardly" (4) since they must share the abundant wealth of the divine word with the faithful committed to them, especially in the sacred liturgy. The sacred synod also earnestly and especially urges all the Christian faithful, especially Religious, to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the "excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:8). "For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."(5) Therefore, they should gladly put themselves in touch with the sacred text itself, whether it be through the liturgy, rich in the divine word, or through devotional reading, or through instructions suitable for the purpose and other aids which, in our time, with approval and active support of the shepherds of the Church, are commendably spread everywhere. And let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that God and man may talk together; for "we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine saying." (6) It devolves on sacred bishops "who have the apostolic teaching"(7) to give the faithful entrusted to them suitable instruction in the right use of the divine books, especially the New Testament and above all the Gospels. This can be done through translations of the sacred texts, which are to be provided with the necessary and really adequate explanations so that the children of the Church may safely and profitably become conversant with the Sacred Scriptures and be penetrated with their spirit.

Furthermore, editions of the Sacred Scriptures, provided with suitable footnotes, should be prepared also for the use of non-Christians and adapted to their situation. Both pastors of souls and Christians generally should see to the wise distribution of these in one way or another.

26. In this way, therefore, through the reading and study of the sacred books "the word of God may spread rapidly and be glorified" (2 Thess. 3:1) and the treasure of revelation, entrusted to the Church, may more and more fill the hearts of men. Just as the life of the Church is strengthened through more frequent celebration of the Eucharistic mystery, similar we may hope for a new stimulus for the life of the Spirit from a growing reverence for the word of God, which "lasts forever" (Is. 40:8; see 1 Peter 1:23-25).

NOTES

Preface

Article 1:

1. cf. St. Augustine, "De Catechizandis Rudibus," C.IV 8: PL. 40, 316.

Chapter I

Article 2:

2. cf. Matt. 11:27; John 1:14 and 17; 14:6; 17:1-3; 2 Cor 3:16 and 4, 6; Eph. 1, 3-14.

Article 4:

3. Epistle to Diognetus, c. VII, 4: Funk, *Apostolic Fathers*, I, p. 403.

Article 5:

4. First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Chap. 3, "On Faith:" Denzinger 1789 (3008).

5. Second Council of Orange, Canon 7: Denzinger 180 (377); First Vatican Council, loc. cit.: Denzinger 1791 (3010).

Article 6:

6. First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Chap. 2, "On Revelation:" Denzinger 1786 (3005).

7. Ibid: Denzinger 1785 and 1786 (3004 and 3005).

Chapter II

Article 7:

1. cf. Matt. 28:19-20, and Mark 16:15; Council of Trent, session IV, Decree on Scriptural Canons: Denzinger 783 (1501).

2. cf. Council of Trent, loc. cit.; First Vatican Council, session III, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Chap. 2, "On revelation:" Denzinger 1787 (3005).

3. St. Irenaeus, "Against Heretics" III, 3, 1: PG 7, 848; Harvey, 2, p. 9.

Article 8:

4. cf. Second Council of Nicea: Denzinger 303 (602); Fourth Council of Constance, session X, Canon 1: Denzinger 336 (650-652).

5. cf. First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Chap. 4, "On Faith and Reason:" Denzinger 1800 (3020).

Article 9:

6. cf. Council of Trent, session IV, loc. cit.: Denzinger 783 (1501).

Article 10:

7. cf. Pius XII, apostolic constitution, "Munificentissimus Deus," Nov. 1, 1950: A.A.S. 42 (1950) p. 756; Collected Writings of St. Cyprian, Letter 66, 8: Hartel, III, B, p. 733: "The Church [is] people united with the priest and the pastor together with his flock."

8. cf. First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Chap. 3 "On Faith:" Denzinger 1792 (3011).

9. cf. Pius XII, encyclical "Humani Generis," Aug. 12, 1950: A.A.S. 42 (1950) pp. 568-69: Denzinger 2314 (3886).

Chapter III

Article 11:

1. cf. First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Chap. 2 "On Revelation:" Denzinger 1787 (3006); Biblical Commission, Decree of June 18, 1915: Denzinger 2180 (3629): EB 420; Holy Office, Epistle of Dec. 22, 1923: EB 499.

2. cf. Pius XII, encyclical "Divino Afflante Spiritu," Sept. 30, 1943: A.A.S. 35 (1943) p. 314; Enchiridion Bible. (EB) 556.

3. "In" and "for" man: cf. Heb. 1, and 4, 7; ("in"): 2 Sm. 23,2; Matt. 1:22 and various places; ("for"): First Vatican Council, Schema on Catholic Doctrine, note 9: Coll. Lac. VII, 522.

4. Leo XIII, encyclical "Providentissimus Deus," Nov. 18, 1893: Denzinger 1952 (3293); EB 125.

5. cf. St. Augustine, "Gen. ad Litt." 2, 9, 20: PL 34, 270-271; Epistle 82, 3: PL 33, 277: CSEL 34, 2, p. 354. St. Thomas, "On Truth," Q. 12, A. 2, C. Council of Trent, session IV, Scriptural Canons: Denzinger 783 (1501). Leo XIII, encyclical "Providentissimus Deus:" EB 121, 124, 126-127. Pius XII, encyclical "Divino Afflante Spiritu:" EB 539.

Article 12:

6. St. Augustine, "City of God," XVII, 6, 2: PL 41, 537: CSEL. XL, 2, 228.

7. St. Augustine, "On Christian Doctrine" III, 18, 26; PL 34, 75-76.

8. Pius XII, loc. cit. Denziger 2294 (3829-3830); EB 557-562.

9. cf. Benedict XV, encyclical "Spiritus Paraclitus" Sept. 15, 1920: EB 469. St. Jerome, "In Galatians" 5, 19-20: PL 26, 417 A.

10. cf. First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Chapter 2, "On Revelation:" Denzinger 1788 (3007).

Article 13:

11. St. John Chrysostom "In Genesis" 3, 8 (Homily 17, 1): PG 53, 134; "Attemperatio" [in English "Suitable adjustment"] in Greek "synkatabasis."

Chapter IV

Article 15:

1. Pius XI, encyclical "Mit Brennender Sorge," March 14, 1937: A.A.S. 29 (1937) p. 51.

Article 16:

2. St. Augustine, "Quest. in Hept." 2,73: PL 34,623.

3. St. Irenaeus, "Against Heretics" III, 21,3: PG 7,950; (Same as 25,1: Harvey 2, p. 115). St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "Catech." 4,35; PG 33,497. Theodore of Mopsuestia, "In Soph." 1,4-6: PG 66, 452D-453A.

Chapter V

Article 18:

1. cf. St. Irenaeus, "Against Heretics" III, 11; 8: PG 7,885, Sagnard Edition, p. 194.

Article 19:

(Due to the necessities of translation, footnote 2 follows footnote 3 in text of Article 19.)

2. cf. John 14:26; 16:13.

3. John 2:22; 12:16; cf. 14:26; 16:12-13; 7:39.

4. cf. instruction "Holy Mother Church" edited by Pontifical Consilium for Promotion of Bible Studies; A.A.S. 56 (1964) p. 715.

Chapter VI

Article 23:

1. cf. Pius XII, encyclical "Divino Afflante Spiritu:" EB 551, 553, 567. Pontifical Biblical Commission, Instruction on Proper Teaching of Sacred Scripture in Seminaries and Religious Colleges, May 13, 1950: A.A.S. 42 (1950) pp. 495-505.

2. cf. Pius XII, *ibid*: EB 569.

Article 24:

3. cf. Leo XIII, encyclical "Providentissimus Deus:" EB 114; Benedict XV, encyclical "Spiritus Paraclitus:" EB 483.

Article 25:

4. St. Augustine Sermons, 179,1: PL 38,966.

5. St. Jerome, Commentary on Isaiah, Prol.: PL 24,17. cf. Benedict XV, encyclical "Spiritus Paraclitus:" EB 475-480; Pius XII, encyclical "Divino Afflante Spiritu:" EB 544.

6. St. Ambrose, *On the Duties of Ministers* I, 20,88: PL 16,50.

7. St. Irenaeus, "Against Heretics" IV, 32,1: PG 7, 1071; (Same as 49,2) Harvey, 2, p. 255.

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