

THE QUESTION OF LANGUAGES IN THE PREPARATION OF VATICAN II

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Special attention is usefully given to this question for a number of reasons. First, it illustrates well the tensions that often arose between the preparatory bodies and some circles within the Roman Curia. Second, in its various aspects, at least as it was argued, it raised the issue of the relationship between the doctrinal and the pastoral. Third, it represented a more than symbolic issue over which to discuss what is involved in a genuinely pastoral renewal of the Church and in an apostolic engagement with the modern world: at stake in the question, in other words, were basic notions of the Church and its role in the world.

1. The Language of the Council

The question was first raised with regard to the language that would be used at the Council. That this must be Latin had been urged by A. Bacci in *Osservatore Romano* only two weeks after the announcement of the Council.¹ This was also the view of Tardini, who in his first press conference called Latin "the Church's language, especially adapted to express doctrinal concepts and disciplinary norms." No thought was being given to simultaneous translations, he added, because of the danger of confusion if they were done poorly or inaccurately.²

Assistance in the use of Latin was the only subject on which the counsellors and members of the Central Preparatory Commission were asked to comment as the conciliar rules began to be elaborated: "It being established that the Council's language must be Latin, should some help be provided to facilitate its use and understanding?"³ Among the responses prepared for the June 1961 meeting of the Central Commission there was some support for exceptional use of vernacular languages, at least in commission meetings; there was, on the other hand, considerable support for a system of simultaneous translation.⁴ The strongest case against the use of the vernacular came from Pizzardo and Staffa, the prefect and the secretary of the Congregation for Seminaries and Universities, whose arguments in favor of Latin anticipate *Veterum sapientia* by invoking the primacy of Rome and the Pope's universal and immediate authority.⁵ The ecclesiological assumptions of this argument were challenged by Bea and by

¹ A. Bacci, "In quale lingua si parlerà nel futuro Concilio ecumenico?" *OssRom*, 11 Feb 1959; he returned to the argument in *OssRom*, 3 July 1960; see *Documentation Catholique* 57 (1960) 1001-1008.

² *ADA I* 157; discussions were continuing, he said, about the use of other languages at the Council and about means for assisting the conciliar participants in the use of Latin. Tardini had already made a similar announcement to the CAP on 26 May 1959; see *AS App*, 8.

³ *ADP II/1* 22.

⁴ See Indelicato, *Difendere la dottrina*, 48-52.

⁵ See *ADP II/1* 47-48 (Staffa) and 219-20 (Pizzardo). Pizzardo's remark anticipates, at times verbatim, the argument of *Veterum sapientia* (see *AAS* 54 [1962] 131) and probably explains the appearance in that text, for the only time in Roncalli's writings, of the Latin text of canon 218 § 2; see A. Melloni, "Tensioni e timori nella preparazione del Vaticano II: La *Veterum sapientia* di Giovanni XXIII (22 febbraio 1962)," *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 11 (1990) 291. In a speech given on 28 October 1961, Staffa also invoked the universal primacy of the pope and cited the same canon; see "L'unità della fede e l'unificazione dei popoli nel magistero del Sommo Pontefice

Maximos IV.⁶

At the conclusion of this discussion, Pope John said that Latin would be the official language of the Council, but that occasionally, when necessary, other languages could be used.⁷ Discussions and experiments about the use of simultaneous translation went on well into 1962, but the *Ordo Concilii* in the end imposed Latin for all public sessions and general congregations, offered only the help of translators, and left room for the vernacular only in the commissions.

This decision in favor of Latin as the official language of the Council was significant on several counts. The arguments for retaining it were often based on its value as an instrument of unity and of doctrinal exactitude. Ecclesiologically, this was a problematic argument, since Churches that used other languages were within the catholic unity and retained the orthodox faith. On a practical level, the choice of Latin also served to limit the degree to which many of the bishops would be able to participate in or even to understand the conciliar debates.

2. Languages in Clerical Studies

Another element in the debate was the place of Latin in the education of the clergy. Concern about the decline in the clergy's ability to understand and use Latin had been expressed most recently in a letter of the Congregation for Seminaries and Universities, 27 October 1957.⁸ The antepreparatory *votum* of the same Congregation contained a section "On the knowledge and use of Latin in ecclesiastical studies."⁹

Although it had not been included in the official *Quaestiones* assigned to it, the Commission on Studies and Seminaries designated a subcommission to prepare a text "On fostering Latin in ecclesiastical studies"; this text was approved at the plenary session of the Commission in October 1961.¹⁰ After describing Latin as the "language eminently proper to ministers of the Catholic Church" and a clear sign and instrument of unity, the text deplored the neglect of and opposition to Latin. Its own *vota* required that clerical students learn Latin before beginning their study of philosophy and theology and that it be used in teaching and learning

Giovanni XXIII," *Divinitas* 6 (1962) 30.

⁶ ADP II/1 306 (Bea): "On this question we should not proceed on the basis of a principle, quite debatable, that Latin is the language of the Church 'because of its [that is, Rome's] superior authority'. For the superior Church of Rome spoke Greek until the second century, and the definitive Latinizing of liturgical language was not accomplished until the second half of the fourth century. In the seventh century, when Greeks were numerous in Rome, the liturgy again became bilingual;" for Maximos IV see 379-80.

⁷ ADP II/1 128; cp. Staffa's *votum*, 52. On 7 Oct 1961, the Pope spoke briefly about the usefulness of Latin as an instrument of unity and added that the Council "would offer another occasion for the Fathers, that is, the Bishops, to understand one another by using the old and venerable Latin;" ADP I, 114.

⁸ AAS 50 (1958) 292-96. On this letter, which, Romita says, "contains in nuce the material in *Veterum Sapientia*" (ME 87 [1962] 251), see the commentaries of I. Parisella, ME 83 (1958) 248-61, and M. Noirot, "Le Latin, langue vivante de l'Eglise," *Ami du Clergé* 68 (1958) 537-46.

⁹ ADA III 358-63.

¹⁰ See ADP IV,2 181-85; A. Stickler, "A 25 anni della costituzione apostolica 'Veterum Sapientia' di Giovanni XXIII: Rievocazione storica e prospettive," *Salesianum* 2 (1988) 372 (but note that it was the Commission on Studies and not the Central Commission that approved this text on that date).

those higher studies. H. Jedin interprets the introduction of the adverb "suitably" in the norm on using Latin in teaching and learning philosophy and theology as an effort to mitigate the prescription,¹¹ an attempt perhaps also visible in the following norm, which acknowledged the need for local situations to be taken into account and allowed episcopal conferences to draw up appropriate norms, subject to Roman approval.

The question also arose in the Commission on Missions, one of whose texts proposed that clerical studies, including the textbooks and languages used in teaching, be prudently adapted by bishops to local cultures. But by the time this text came before the Central Commission, the general principle had been settled by *Veterum sapientia*.¹² Before discussing this document, it will be helpful to consider the last of the issues involved in the question of languages.

3. Languages in the Liturgy

The most controversial aspect of the question was the use of the vernacular in the liturgy, a matter of hot debate in the previous decade.¹³ As proponents of the introduction of the vernacular multiplied their efforts, there began what an opponent called "a veritable barrage which the Church intends to oppose to any desire for solemn liturgy in the vernacular."¹⁴ On 29 April 1955, the Holy Office issued a decree restricting appeals to exceptions to the general law about Latin in the liturgy.¹⁵ At the end of that year the Encyclical *Musicae sacrae* confirmed the principle of Latin as the liturgical language with exhortations to obtain greater participation of the faithful by means of better catechesis. This was thought to have settled the issue.¹⁶

In fact it did not end discussion, and the First International Congress of Pastoral Liturgy held in Assisi in September 1956 saw the two sides of the issue confront one another again. The announced theme of the Congress was pastoral liturgy, but the undercurrent that directed its preparation and the content of many of its reports was the introduction of the vernacular. Aware that such movements were abroad, Cardinal Cicognani, in the opening address of the Congress, tried to limit the concerns to the implementation of already given papal directives with regard to

¹¹ See H. Jedin, *Lebensbericht* (Mainz 1984) 202.

¹² Agagianian thus felt it necessary to assure the Central Commission: "Allow me to note that the study of Latin has always been and still is respected and used in all our seminaries in the missions. It will now be even more inculcated by our bishops and missionaries in accord with the recent Encyclical *Veterum sapientia*;" *ADP* II/3 424. In the discussion that followed, only Godfrey (427) and Micara (433) referred to *Veterum sapientia*, the latter proposing that "perhaps it is useful that it be stated in the program of clerical studies everywhere that the exclusion or disparagement of Latin is not permitted."

¹³ See A.-G. Martimort, "Le problème des langues liturgiques de 1946 à 1957," *La Maison-Dieu* 53 (1958) 23-55.

¹⁴ J. Claire, "La Messe basse solennisée," *Revue Grégorienne* 35 (1956) 82.

¹⁵ J. Claire, "Un Décret du Saint-Office à propos des concessions faites aux diocèses allemands concernant l'usage de la langue vulgaire dans la liturgie," *Revue Grégorienne* 34 (1955) 231-37.

¹⁶ *AAS* 48 (1956) 5-25. For rather different commentaries, see A. Stohr, "The Encyclical 'On Sacred Music' and its Significance for the Care of Souls," in *The Assisi Papers: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Pastoral Liturgy, Assisi-Rome, September 18-22, 1956* (Collegeville 1957) 186-200; F. Romita, "Langue et catéchèse liturgique d'après l'Encyclique *Musicae sacrae disciplina*," *Revue Grégorienne* 35 (1957) 95-107, 168-76.

liturgy. In a section apparently added at the last minute, he reminded the participants that in *Mediator Dei* Pius XII had spoken of the use of Latin as "at once an imposing sign of unity and an effective safeguard against the corruption of true doctrine."¹⁷

Cicognani's words did not inhibit other speakers from addressing the question of liturgical languages either directly or by implication. But when the participants were received by Pope Pius XII at the end of the Congress, they received an admonition that was not encouraging for defenders of the vernacular:

On the part of the Church, the liturgy today entails a concern for progress but also for conservation and defense. She returns to the past without slavishly copying it and creates anew in the ceremonies themselves, in the use of the vernacular, in popular song and in the building of churches. It would be superfluous, nevertheless, to recall once again that the Church has serious reasons for steadfastly retaining in the Latin rite the unconditional obligation of the celebrating priest to use the Latin language and, likewise, for insisting that the Gregorian chant in the holy sacrifice be in the language of the Church.¹⁸

Once again, defenders of Latin thought they now had another papal text that definitively settled the issue.¹⁹

Despite these Roman interventions, the issue did not die. It was raised often in the antepreparatory *vota* submitted by the world's bishops.²⁰ Although in the official *Quaestiones*, the question of the vernacular appeared only among the topics assigned to the Liturgical Commission--"It should be diligently considered whether it is expedient to allow the vernacular in some parts of the Mass and in administering the sacraments,"²¹--two other commissions also took it up.

¹⁷ See *The Assisi Papers*, 13-16; for the circumstances of Cicognani's speech, see Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, 11-13.

¹⁸ *AAS* 48 (1956) 725.

¹⁹ See J. Claire, "Le Ier Congrès International de Pastorale Liturgique," *Revue Grégorienne Supplément* 35 (1956) 33-43; F. Romita, "Commentaire," *ME* 82 (1957) 21-5; M. Noirot, "Le Saint-Siège et le mouvement liturgique contemporain," *Revue Grégorienne* 35 (1957) 45: "If on certain points of Church legislation, one might admit that a rejection is not quite definitive, here the adjectives and adverbs used by the Holy Father, which a canonist owes it to himself to underline, show clearly that the Holy See, in full consciousness of the matter and for the good of the Church, can make no concessions on this point."

²⁰ See the summary in the "Sintesi finale" 16: "Only about sixty bishops and prelates ask that Latin be preserved in the liturgy. A much larger number, however, hope for greater use of the vernacular in the Mass, at least for the catechetical parts (354 bishops and prelates), in the administration of the sacraments, except for the formula (305 bishops and prelates), and in other rites." The antepreparatory *votum* of the Congregation for Rites had included a section "On Latin and on admitting vernacular languages in liturgical celebrations" (*ADA* III 266-75), in which there was an extensive and not unsympathetic review of all the arguments against the use of Latin. But this was followed by rather cautious recommendations: 1) "Every effort should be made that the use of Latin in the liturgy of the 'Latin' Church be kept in its present state;" 2) that the clergy be well trained in the understanding and use of Latin, "so that every complaint on this basis against liturgical Latin can be removed;" 3) that in a revised Roman Ritual in Latin there also be indicated "those texts which can be translated into the vernacular where this may be needed or opportune."

²¹ *ADP* II/1 412.

In April 1961 the Commission on Oriental Churches approved a text "On the use of vernacular languages in liturgies," which was brought before the Central Commission in January 1962.²² It seems likely that the subject had been placed on the agenda of the Commission because of N. Edelby, representative of the Melkite rite, which for the last three years had been engaged in a struggle with the Holy Office over the use of the vernacular in its liturgies in the United States.²³ In December 1959 bishops there were informed by the Apostolic Delegate, acting on instructions from the Holy See, that Eastern-rite priests in their dioceses were to cease any use of English in the liturgy. The Delegate made clear the reason: "But they must avoid causing confusion by introducing the vernacular language into the mass, for, in so doing, they offer to promoters of the abandonment of the Latin language in the Sacred Liturgy an opportunity to cite as an example and a precedent what the Oriental priests are doing in their midst." Inquiry by the Melkite discovered that the instructions came, not from the Congregation for the Oriental Church, but from the Holy Office, which had reserved to itself all questions on the liturgical use of the vernacular. Maximos IV appealed the issue directly to the Pope on 5 February 1960,²⁴ and on 31 March the Holy Office issued a formal decree permitting the use of the vernacular except for the Anaphora. Despite the rather profound ignorance of the Byzantine liturgy that this decree revealed,²⁵ it was received with satisfaction by Maximos IV, who urged obedience to it "while we await an amendment." It is understandable, then, that the Melkites would wish to see their immemorial privileges in the matter of languages safeguarded by the Council.

The Oriental Commission's schema asked the Council to confirm the ancient customary law that permitted the Oriental churches to use whatever languages they considered best for the good of souls. The four *vota* in which this position was articulated were preceded by a brief preface which vindicated the practice biblically and traditionally and argued that it did no damage to the Church's unity but rather displayed it more splendidly. In his presentation of the text to the Central Commission, A. Cicognani at several points reviewed the differences between western and eastern practice in the question of popular languages and noted that the western practice had, especially since Trent, affected the legitimate practice of the eastern churches. Three of the four formal responses (Ruffini, Jullien, Browne) urged caution because of the probable impact of this provision for the eastern churches upon the question of Latin in the western church: "Lest the Latins say," remarked Jullien, "if these and those, why not we also?"²⁶

The issue was addressed also by the Commission on Missions, in its schema "On the sacraments and the sacred liturgy," discussed by the Central Commission at the end of March

²² ADP II/2 248-58.

²³ See *Les églises orientales catholiques*, 443-44; N. Edelby, "Comments on a Recent Decision of the Holy Office," typescript, dated "Cairo, May 1960" (A-McManus).

²⁴ An English translation of the "Declaratio Beatitudinis Suae Maximos IV, Patriarchae Antiochen. Melchitarum," can be found in the A-McManus.

²⁵ See the editorial remarks in *Irénikon* 33 (1960) 232-33 and in *Proche Orient Chrétien* 10 (1960) 134-35.

²⁶ ADP, II/II 251; Jullien had defended Latin as an instrument of culture in *Cultura cristiana alla luce di Roma* (Rome 1956), 34-43, and in *Etudes ecclésiastiques dans la lumière de Rome* (Paris 1958). For the discussion in the CPC, see Indelicato, *Difendere la dottrina*, 143.

1962.²⁷ The text also proposed a general principle: "From Scripture we know that all languages are ordered towards the praise of Christ. Such praise is expressed especially in the liturgy, where the law of intelligibility of liturgical language for all gathered was stated by the Apostle. A diversity of customs and of rites has always existed in the Church, showing most clearly the riches of the Church's unity." The text was very cautious, however, in drawing conclusions from this apostolic "law of intelligibility"; it sought only "some use of the vernacular and some adaptation of rites to the genius of peoples and to local conditions."²⁸ Here too caution was urged at the Central Commission's discussion, particularly by Ruffini, Lefebvre, and D'Alton, who offered the principle that "the visible unity of the Catholic Church is chiefly manifested by the visible uniformity of its worship."²⁹

For its part, the Liturgical Commission, at its first plenary session in November 1960, established a subcommission "On Latin" to address three questions: whether the use of Latin was to be fully retained; whether some use of the vernacular was to be allowed, and if so, in what parts and to what degree; how clerics could be trained in Latin in order to be able to understand and use it in the liturgy.³⁰

At the first meeting of the subcommission, 15 November 1960, its relator, D. Borella, expressed the view that the matter could be handled rather easily on the basis of the comments presented by several Roman Congregations, which revealed the mind of the Holy See.³¹ Other members disagreed very strongly, however, and argued that it was necessary to approach the issue from the point of view of principles that would be valid for the whole Church, both eastern and western.³² Botte then prepared a report on liturgical languages in which he briefly reviewed the history and the present situation before addressing the reasons for and against the use of the vernacular.³³ According to Botte, this was used as the basis for the report that Borella prepared for the April 1961 plenary session of the Commission.³⁴ This text documented the variety of liturgical languages in the Church's tradition and how conflicts had regularly ended with the Church legitimizing local liturgical languages.³⁵

Within the subcommission the strongest opposition to the greater use of the vernacular

²⁷ ADP II/3 369-94.

²⁸ ADP II/3 370.

²⁹ ADP II/3 388.

³⁰ See Braga, "La 'Sacrosanctum Concilium,'" 115-116.

³¹ Borella was concerned that to ask for too much with respect to the vernacular might compromise the whole cause; he sought a gradual change "so as to provoke not a revolution but an evolution, which will gradually prepare the ground;" cited in Paiano, "Il rinnovamento della liturgia," 106-107.

³² "Relatio de sessione Subcommissionis 'De lingua latina' Romae, die 15a novembris, ... habitae (A-McManus). B. Botte argued that the very title of the subcommission should be changed, since it restricted its attention to the Latin church.

³³ "Relatio de linguis liturgicis", undated, but probably late 1960 (A-McManus).

³⁴ B. Botte, *From Silence to Participation: An Insider's View of Liturgical Renewal* (Washington 1988) 120-21. Borella's report, which was removed from the agenda of the April plenary session, was later published by him in *Ambrosius* 44 (1968) 71-94, 137-68, 237-66.

³⁵ Paiano, "Il rinnovamento della liturgia," 109.

came from H. Anglés, a zealous defender of Gregorian Chant whose fortunes he knew to depend on the retention of Latin.³⁶ He seems to have been responsible for arousing the fear in several Roman circles that the Liturgical Commission was hostile to Latin and intended to propose radical innovations in the use of the vernacular.

Apparently because of Anglés' opposition, on 4 March 1961 Bugnini submitted a pro-memoria defending his commission against these charges.³⁷ While noting that the Commission had not yet reached any definitive conclusions, he said that it was likely that two guidelines would be followed: that Latin must be preserved "without qualification" for the clergy, and that the vernacular in the liturgy for the faithful would follow the principles set out by Pius XII and the Holy Office. Bugnini noted that a mixed commission with the Commission on Studies and Seminaries had reached an agreement on the necessity of retaining Latin in the education of the clergy; on the other hand, a similar commission with the Commission on Missions had asked for a "more functional form" when it came to mission territories. As for the Liturgical Commission itself, its subcommissions would be asked to include minority positions on controverted topics, with the decision to be made by the plenary commission. If the whole Commission could not reach agreement, the issue would be left to the Council. In any case, Bugnini concluded, the Central Commission would be in a position to coordinate material which several commissions had addressed, to choose "the position it thinks most opportune and present it to the Fathers of the Council for their consideration," a subtle reminder that questions raised in the preparatory process belonged to the Central Commission and not to the Curia to resolve.

Bugnini's pro-memoria had little effect, however, and on 25 March 1961 *Osservatore Romano* published a three-starred anonymous article, "Latin, the Language of the Church," which was a vigorous defense of the Church's need of a language which is "universal, immutable, and not popular."³⁸ The article became particularly vigorous when it turned to "the campaign underway against liturgical Latin," of which it used words like speciousness, disloyalty, iconoclastic fanaticism, and intemperance. It ended by calling upon priests to give submission and obedience to the "admonitions" of Pius XII at the Assisi Congress.³⁹

In response to such pressure, at its second plenary session in April, the secretariat of the Liturgical Commission thought it more prudent to withdraw from the agenda the report prepared

³⁶ See H. Anglés, "Il prossimo Concilio Ecumenico e la Musica Sacra," *Bollettino degli Amici del Pont. Istituto di Musica Sacra* 11 (1959) 6; and the *votum* submitted to the Antepreparatory Commission by Anglés' Institute, *ADA* IV/II/1 226.

³⁷ See Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, 22-24; on p. 22 he names Anglés as the source of the complaint that the Liturgical Commission was "the number one enemy of Latin." He does not identify to whom he addressed his pro-memoria.

³⁸ The article was also published in French in *DC* 58 (1961) 593-610 and in *Revue Grégorienne* 40 (1962) 32-41, which borrowed its translation from *Nouvelles de Chrétienté*. There is reason to think that the article was aimed not only at the Liturgical Commission but also at the recently published book by Paul Winninger, *Langues vivantes et liturgie* (Paris 1961), perhaps particularly because it had received a lengthy and favorable notice in *Etudes*.

³⁹ As a result, it seems, of the *Osservatore Romano* article, rumors began to circulate that the Theological Commission was trying to appropriate the question of liturgical languages. "Which is false," wrote Tromp, drily adding: "Perhaps they are confusing the Theological Commission and the Holy Office;" Tromp Diary, 12 April 1961.

by the subcommission on Latin and instead to consider the question as it arose in the reports of the other subcommissions.⁴⁰ Bugnini had Vagaggini prepare a text on liturgical languages, which proposed a compromise solution: the vernacular would be permitted in the didactic parts of the liturgy but Latin retained in others. At the session a very vigorous debate on the issue took place among the members, during which Cicognani cautioned against altering the tradition. An appeal seems to have been made to the Pope,⁴¹ and remarks of Felici a few days later about the freedom of discussion in the commissions were interpreted as a sign that the Liturgical Commission could continue to discuss the matter.⁴²

While all this was going on in that commission, the Secretariate for Promoting Christian Unity was preparing to lend its support. It had taken up the question of Latin particularly in connection with the relation between unity and uniformity.⁴³ In February 1961, its subcommission on liturgical questions had prepared a *votum* that asked for "the widest possible use of the vernacular" in the Mass and sacraments. Even before the plenary session of April, perhaps because of the Roman controversy, the text had been weakened to read "a wider use."

By the time the Secretariate met for its April session, Bea had already participated in the Central Commission's discussion of the schema prepared by the Oriental Commission and had heard the arguments on behalf of Latin as a sign of unity. He might also have seen the ecumenical implications of the universalistic and uniformist ecclesiology presupposed in the *Osservatore Romano* article on Latin. This may account for the vigor of his statement at the beginning of the meeting: "We must strongly oppose the idea that Latin is a sign of unity. It is more a sign of uniformity than a sign of unity." While the members heard from defenders of the universal value of Latin, Bea's position, defended theologically by Thils,⁴⁴ was reflected in the Secretariate's clear and strong *votum*, which it forwarded to the Liturgical Commission: "That the Council, when it presents the principles of liturgical renewal, carefully refrain from any expressions which might suggest that the Catholic liturgy is identified with the Latin Roman liturgy and that the Latin language is a necessary bond of Catholic unity."

The first draft of the schema on the liturgy (August 1961), prepared by the Liturgical

⁴⁰ In a note written at the time about the withdrawal of the report on Latin, A.-G. Martimort commented: "This report was not read, and the subcommission was buried in silence, because Cardinal Pizzardo and others had criticized Cardinal Cicognani for having allowed a debate about so burning an issue;" *La Constitution sur la Liturgie*, 64.

⁴¹ See Jounel, "Genèse et théologie," 15; K. Hughes, *The Monk's Tale: A Biography of Godfrey Diekmann, O.S.B.* (Collegeville 1991) 189.

⁴² See C. Braga, "La 'Sacrosanctum Concilium,'" 97-99, 106; P. Jounel, "Genèse et théologie," 15, 48-51; Paiano, "Il rinnovamento della liturgia," 109-13.

⁴³ For what follows, see Velati, "La proposta ecumenica," 296-300.

⁴⁴ "It is of the essence of unity that it reveals itself in diversity; the unity of the world appears more clearly at the moment that its multiformity becomes more manifest. The plurality of languages does not threaten unity; on the contrary, it is of the essence of unity that it expresses itself in a pluriform richness." Pope John, in a speech on 19 August 1961, recorded only indirectly in *Osservatore Romano*, addressed the question of unity in variety. He noted that while Latin is used in the Roman and Ambrosian rites, Greek and Slavic languages are in use in other rites. The Church's unity was to be found elsewhere: "Now, if there are many different rites--and this confirms beauty and enchantment--the foundation is one and the faith is identical;" *ADP I*, 103.

Commission's secretariat after the April meeting, continued to call for the introduction of the vernacular, especially in the didactic parts, a principle later applied to the Mass and the divine office.⁴⁵ In its "Declaratio" on the Breviary the LI put out its most forceful statement on the matter. It acknowledged that Latin should be retained since it was a "bond of unity." But it went on immediately to point out that the study of Latin was diminishing rapidly everywhere and that the Church is powerless to halt this decline. It also made a pointed remark that "the question of language in the liturgy was in itself a cultural question and not a religious question in the strict sense." It was not spiritually useful to force priests who do not understand Latin to continue to use it in their daily prayer. Lastly, the Commission said, the use of the vernacular would promote the reunion of Christians. The general principle and its particular applications remained the same in the revised schema that was sent out to members of the Commission in November.⁴⁶

It was at this point, however, that the first of two interventions of Pope John took place. On 7 December 1961 his apostolic letter to Anglés for the fiftieth anniversary of the Pontifical Institute for Sacred Music appeared to vindicate its director's position. The Pope praised the Institute for its cultivation and defense of Latin in solemn liturgies, for which he borrowed a phrase from *Mediator Dei*: "a clear and beautiful sign of unity."⁴⁷ For many reasons Latin should continue to occupy that chief place; difficulties of comprehension could be met by greater liturgical catechesis and by the use of missals by the faithful. While greater adaptation was possible in non-solemn liturgies, the Pope concluded, "in solemn liturgies, whether in magnificent temples or in small churches in towns, Latin must always hold its royal sceptre and exercise its noble rule."⁴⁸

Both sides immediately tried to use the Pope's letter as a weapon in their battle. Anglés saw it as a vindication of his long and painful campaign in defense of Gregorian chant and of Latin.⁴⁹ Bugnini, however, warned against exaggerating the juridical force of the letter and saw in the close link the Pope drew between Latin and chant a reason for arguing that the latter could not be adapted to modern musical languages!⁵⁰

⁴⁵ "In the liturgy, more room should be allowed for the vernacular, especially in the directly didactic parts and at least in songs and prayers more proper to the people. The episcopal conferences in the individual regions should have the authority, with the approval of the Holy See, to set the limits and the manner for the introduction of the vernacular into the liturgy." A similar proposal was made explicitly about the Mass in #48. Jungmann protested to Bugnini that he had changed the language approved in April ("modum et mensuram") to "modum et limites;" see Paiano, "Il rinnovamento della liturgia" 118.

⁴⁶ The "Declaratio" that accompanied the paragraph on the use of the vernacular in the Divine Office was somewhat abbreviated and made slightly less aggressive.

⁴⁷ See *AAS* 39 (1947) 544-45: "The use of Latin is a clear and beautiful sign of unity and an effective remedy against any corruptions of true doctrine." These remarks of the Encyclical were constantly invoked by supporters of Latin, and it is perhaps significant that Pope John makes use only of the first of Pius XII's two arguments.

⁴⁸ *AAS* 53 (1961) 812. For the opponents of Latin, the preservation of the supreme place of the solemn liturgy was fundamental.

⁴⁹ See H. Anglés' commentary, written after *Veterum sapientia* had been promulgated, "La Lettera Apostolica 'Iucunda laudatio,'" *Bollettino degli Amici del P. Istituto di Musica Sacra* 14 (March-December 1962) 57.

⁵⁰ A. Bugnini, "Adnotationes," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 76 (1962) 63-68. In his "Adnotationes," *ME* 87 (1962) 96-103, F. Romita replied in detail to many of Bugnini's points. For a similarly grateful reception of the papal letter,

Despite Bugnini's effort to minimize the import of Pope John's letter, the Liturgical Commission thought it prudent to make certain adjustments in its schema. The November draft had described the solemn liturgy as "celebrated with song" but at the January plenary session of the Commission, this was changed to "celebrated in Latin."⁵¹ More serious was the change that Bugnini insisted had to be inserted into the article on liturgical languages: "The use of Latin in the western liturgy must absolutely be preserved."⁵² The insertion of this strong statement appears to have been the price of gaining Cicognani's support for the schema.⁵³ On the other hand, all the particular calls for greater use of the vernacular remained in the text. This last plenary session of the Commission was held only ten days before Pope John announced the proximate publication of a document on the use of Latin in clerical studies;⁵⁴ and it is possible that the new caution in the Commission reflected knowledge of what was in the works.

On 22 February 1962, amidst much pomp and ceremony, the Pope signed the Apostolic Constitution, *Veterum sapientia*.⁵⁵ Much about this action remains to be clarified: its textual history, the relationship between the document and the question of Latin as it had appeared in several texts being prepared for the Council, and the Pope's motives.

With regard to its origins, it is known that the *votum* of the Congregation for Seminaries and Universities had proposed the preparation of a "constitution on the learning of the Latin language" whose structure closely anticipated that of *Veterum sapientia*.⁵⁶ The Congregation appears to have continued to work on this project even while the preconconciliar Commission on Studies and Seminaries was working on its schema on Latin in clerical studies,⁵⁷ perhaps in part

see J. Gajard, "Lettre 'Jucunda laudatio' de S.S. Jean XXIII à Mgr H. Anglés," *Etudes Grégoriennes* 5 (1962) 7-8.

⁵¹ ADP II/3 462; see Paiano, "Il rinnovamento della liturgia," 128, 130.

⁵² This severe principle was then followed, however, by two paragraphs that came close to contradicting it, by legitimizing greater use of the vernacular where this is useful to the people and by allowing the episcopal conferences to establish the "limits and manner for introducing the vernacular into the liturgy."

⁵³ "Bugnini had been overtaken by all sorts of doubts or fears; he stated quite frankly that the text had to be palatable to Eminenza who must present it to the central commission. Eminenza in turn is alarmed over 2 things only--vernacular and an apparent attempt to shorten the Divine Office unduly.... On language, there was no substantive change but a sentence had to be inserted (to please Pizzardo I guess!): *Lingua Latina omnino retinenda est*. This is of course interpreted à la Rome: the exceptions are far more numerous than the rule," McManus to Diekmann, undated, but probably January 1962 (A-McManus).

⁵⁴ See DMC IV 147; Caprile, I/2, 276.

⁵⁵ AAS 54 (1962) 129-35, with the "Ordinationes" published by the Congregation for Studies and Seminaries on 22 April 1962, 339-68. See Stickler, "A 25 anni dalla costituzione apostolica;" and A. Melloni, "Tensioni e timori," 275-307. For contemporary comments, see A. Bacci, *Osservatore Romano* 26-27 Feb 1962 (=DC 59 [1962] 399-406; F. Romita, "Adnotationes," ME 87 (1962) 199-275; O. Rousseau, "*Veterum sapientia*," *Revue Nouvelle* 35 (1962) 361-67; M. Noïrot, "Etude et usage de la langue latine: La Constitution apostolique *Veterum sapientia*," *Revue Grégorienne* 40 (1962) 75-101; K. Rahner, "Über das Latein als Kirchensprache," *ZKTh* 84 (1962) 275-99; D. Staffa, "De Constitutione Apostolica '*Veterum sapientia*' rite exsequenda," *Seminarium* 14 (1962) 428-38.

⁵⁶ ADA III 363.

⁵⁷ But, apparently, without the knowledge of the subcommission within the ST that was preparing a text for the Council! See Stickler, "A 25 anni dalla costituzione apostolica '*Veterum sapientia*'", 372-74, where he speaks about the issuance of *Veterum sapientia* as "a dramatic surprise."

because it considered the latter's document too lenient.⁵⁸ Stickler thinks that both texts were brought to the Pope and that he assigned the task of redacting the apostolic constitution to Msgr. Tondini.⁵⁹ Brief instructions from the Pope have been made available: the text should avoid all harshness, affirm the dignity also of Greek and other ancient languages, and make a serious effort to explain to Asians and Africans why the Church treasures Latin.⁶⁰

In content, the first and expository part of *Veterum sapientia* closely follows the main arguments of the *Osservatore Romano* article, of which at some points it is a simple translation.⁶¹ The papal text differs most notably by the brief statement of respect for other ancient sacred languages and above all by the absence from it of the more exuberant expressions of the Church as a "super-culture."

Towards the end of this exposition, the Pope presents *Veterum sapientia* as an authoritative response to recent controversies over Latin and to requests received from many bishops for the Holy See to declare its opinion. The response took the form of eight norms, the first two of which urge bishops not only to implement the prescriptions but to see to it that none of their subjects, "eager for novelties," write against the use of Latin "either in teaching the higher sacred disciplines or in the liturgy" or try to extenuate the will of Rome. The other norms require that clerical students achieve a good knowledge of Latin before beginning their higher studies, that the length of their studies be extended if necessary to achieve this purpose, that Latin be used in lectures and textbooks, that the Congregation for Studies establish an institute to promote the study of Latin and of Greek, that bishops also take care that their clerical students gain a good knowledge of Greek, and that the Congregation elaborate norms for the implementation of the apostolic constitution.

These prescriptions, particularly the prohibition of questioning the use of Latin in the liturgy, were widely interpreted as settling the issues before the Council could even discuss them, a view that was accepted with a certain satisfaction in some circles,⁶² but with dismay in others.

⁵⁸ This is the view of Jedin, who in the Commission had opposed the use of Latin in clerical education and reports that a compromise formula had been reached: "The action was without doubt aimed at the Commission; the neo-Latinists in the Curia wanted to anticipate it and the Council, and they succeeded in getting the pope to approve a decree whose impracticability was obvious;" H. Jedin, *Lebensbericht* 202-203. Caprile, I/2 386n, records a similar view in Rome that *Veterum sapientia* was designed "to offset the text of a schema already prepared for the Council, although not with the unanimous agreement of the Commission for Studies and Seminaries."

⁵⁹ Stickler, "A 25 anni," 372.

⁶⁰ See Melloni, "Tensioni e timori," 289.

⁶¹ Similarly in the address he gave on the occasion of his promulgation of *Veterum sapientia*, the Pope's arguments closely follow those of the *Osservatore Romano* article; see *DMC* IV, 169-71.

⁶² See Romita, "Adnotationes," 257-58; Noirot, "Etude et usage de la langue latine," 88-89, was untroubled that the Pope should have taken this measure just before the Council: "Is not the Pope the head of the Church? And if he wished precisely to promulgate his resolute will to see the revival of the Latin education of clerics on the very eve of the Council--the preparation for which has no doubt shown clearly the urgency of such a measure--does he not have at once the authority and the grace to do so? When one reads that some people are waging a campaign to have the Council return to the question (that is, in order to modify the papal decision), one wonders if the authors of such requests have not forgotten that no conciliar decision (even if one were proposed!) has any value against the papal will." Noirot went on to remind them that anyone who appeals from a pope to a general council is suspect of heresy and automatically excommunicated (c. 2332)!

A group of Dutch Catholics issued an open letter to their bishops protesting the foreclosing of the question of liturgical languages. In response to this and other criticisms, assurances came that the question of liturgical language would remain on the conciliar agenda.⁶³ On the other hand, *Veterum sapientia* was taken to require that the decree on that subject prepared by the Commission on Studies and Seminaries be withdrawn from the agenda of the Central Commission.⁶⁴

In the end, the Liturgical Commission's schema on the sacred liturgy *liturgia* sent to the Central Commission presented in #24 a general principle--"The use of Latin in the western liturgy is absolutely to be preserved"--which was much qualified, however, by the continued calls for the vernacular in the Mass, in the rituals, and in the Breviary. By the time this text came before the Central Commission, Cardinal Larraona had succeeded Cicognani as president of the Liturgical Commission. Larraona's lack of enthusiasm for the introduction of the vernacular became clear in his remarks to the Central Commission on the general principles set out in #24. Larraona said that the principle applied only for those strictly liturgical actions for which it had already been expressly conceded in certain regions. As for introducing other cases, he appealed to *Veterum sapientia* and its prohibition of further discussion of greater use of the vernacular in the liturgy.⁶⁵ This not very subtle reference, echoed at the meeting only by Spellman,⁶⁶ did not inhibit a discussion which revealed a clear division of opinion on the matter. The strongest support for the introduction of the vernacular came from Léger, who urged therefore that the text about Latin be changed from "must absolutely be preserved" to "should be preserved," and from Montini, who presented a long argument which even appealed to the statement in *Veterum sapientia* about the Church's use of the ancient liturgical languages.⁶⁷

The issue returned when the Central Commission considered the proposal to allow the use of the vernacular in the Divine Office. While support for this seems to have been great, there was also some sharp opposition, particularly to the statement that the Church should accommodate itself to the nearly universal decline in the knowledge of Latin. *Veterum sapientia* was explicitly appealed to by four cardinals, among them Ottaviani.⁶⁸ There is also an oblique

⁶³ See Caprile, I/2, 386, 538; R. Rouquette, *Etudes* 313 (April 1962) 104-107 (= *La fin d'une chrétienté*, I, 172-75). It is interesting to note that Staffa, in a speech given at The Catholic University of America on 9 July 1962 reached the same conclusion: "In no way does the Constitution settle the question of the use of the vernacular in the liturgy. For example, the use of the vernacular in the Mass of Catechumens, if it is proposed for their judgement, will be determined by the Fathers of the Council;" "De Constitutione Apostolica '*Veterum sapientia*' rite exsequenda," 435.

⁶⁴ By whom this decision was made is not known. It is worth remarking that when the Pope, less than a week after promulgating *Veterum sapientia*, addressed the Central Commission and reflected on the schema on seminaries it had just been studying, he made no reference to this document, even though he referred to the "solemn encounter" at which he had signed it; see *ADP* I 177-79.

⁶⁵ *ADP* II/3 63.

⁶⁶ *ADP* II/3 67.

⁶⁷ *ADP* II/3 70-71, 84-87.

⁶⁸ "What most horrifies me is the new wound being inflicted on Latin in the liturgy. The possibility is being insinuated of priests saying the Breviary in the vernacular. The reason would be that many do not understand Latin. I am astonished that anyone could be ordained a priest without knowing Latin well. And I especially regret that a

reference to it in the remarks of Alfrink who, after noting that about a third of his priests desire to say the Breviary in the vernacular, defended them against the charge that this made them "eager for novelties."⁶⁹

The many-sided controversy over Latin is of interest for several reasons. On an organizational level, it illustrates the complex relations that existed not only among the various preparatory commissions and between them and various Curial congregations but also between the Pope and the preparation of the Council and between the Curia and the Council itself. Substantively, a review of the controversies that preceded *Veterum sapientia* and of the commentaries on it, both favorable and critical, reveals how many important issues were considered to be at stake in the question of the Church's language. Space does not permit me here to do more than mention some of them: in ecclesiology, the contest between a universalistic notion of the Church, for which the universal primacy of the pope is the starting point, and a theology of the local Church, for which the relation between Church and culture is primary--for the first unity is so linked to universality that it threatens to be reduced to uniformity, while for the second the Church's unity is conceived within variety; in liturgy, besides the question of the relation between Latin and Gregorian chant, there are the questions of the relations between the roles of the clergy and the laity in liturgical activities and between the "latreutic" and salvific purposes of the liturgy; finally, on a larger cultural level, there is the question of the abiding normative character both of classical Latin culture and of the medieval Christendom of the West, the question that was perhaps most relevant to the desire of the Pope that the Council engage the Church in a new encounter with history and culture.

remedy should be suggested that is not in accord with the latest pontifical document, *Veterum sapientia*, and that consecrates by its concessions ignorance of the liturgical, scholastic, theological language of the Church itself;" *ADP* I/3 350-51.

⁶⁹ *ADP* II/3 349. The phrase "rerum novarum studiosi" had occurred in the warning of *Veterum sapientia* against speaking against the use of Latin in the liturgy.