

THE ANTEPREPARATORY PERIOD

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Almost four months passed after Pope John's announcement of the Council before the first official notice was given of the steps to be taken to prepare for it. Not a great deal is known at this point about what went on in the meantime,¹ as the decisions were being made that would be announced by the Pope on Pentecost Sunday, May 17, 1959. It is quite likely that the Pope had consulted with Cardinal Tardini who may be assumed also to have proposed the structure and methods which were announced on that date. Whether Tardini was responsible for the four-month delay is not known, but Cardinal Frings later recalled that the Secretary of State's influence dampened rather than encouraged the project and he thus lived up to his name!²

Official Activity

On May 17, 1959, Pope John appointed an Antepreparatory Commission for the Council.³ It was to have the following tasks: (1) to contact the bishops of the world for their advice and suggestions, (2) to gather proposals from the dicasteries of the Roman Curia, (3) to learn the views of the theological and canonical faculties of Catholic universities, (4) to sketch the general lines of the topics to be discussed at the Council, and (5) to suggest various bodies (Commissions, Secretariats, etc.) to prepare the Council's agenda. The President of the Commission was Cardinal Tardini, the Pope's Secretary of State; the Secretary was Msgr. Pericle Felici, auditor in the Sacred Rota. The other ten members all held important posts in the various Curial Congregations:

¹ See Peter Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII: Shepherd of the Modern World* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), pp. 325-32, for mostly second-hand reports of what he calls "an epic struggle that concerned the very nature of the Council." In a letter, 16 April 1959, replying, it seems, to Congar's wonder at the silence about the Council, C.-J. Dumont summed up what he had learned in Rome: "In effect, it seems that the Pope has not so far been positively occupied with the Council he has launched. He is completely involved with the Roman Synod that he decided to preside over personally (instead of assigning this task to the Cardinal Vicar, as everyone expected). The general view is that he will devote himself to the preparation of the Council when the Synod is over, that is, no doubt, at the beginning of autumn...."

"The general view is that a commission of Cardinals will be named and charged with preparing the Council. This commission will in turn appoint working commissions. It seems that the Holy Father will see to it that these commissions represent a large gamut of tendencies. The superiors of Orders, of course, are busy drawing up lists of their own subjects whom they will present to the commission of Cardinals as soon as it is established.

"It is probable that the questions raised by the Roman Synod will play a great role in establishing the program of the Council and that, in general fashion, all the initiatives suggesting, in the journals, the important themes to address, will be encouraged...."

"That's all the principal news. In brief, I don't think we should be uneasy about the silence on the Council; the real work on it is also now beginning" (Congar Papers).

² *Für die Menschen Bestellt: Erinnerungen des Altbischofs von Köln Josef Kardinal Frings* (Köln: J.P. Bachem, 1973), p. 247. The Italian word for "sluggish, slow-moving," is *tardo*.

³ See *ADA*, I, pp. 22-23. For some reason, this body was called "una Commissione *Antipreparatoria*," rather than "*Antepreparatoria*." Svidercoschi, *Storia del Concilio*, p. 50, remarks: "Tardini would later explain it to mean 'before' the preparation, as in '*antipasto*;' but the objection would remain that 'anti-' is more appropriate in the sense of 'against,' as in 'anti-pope,' and the impression would remain that in the end it was a simple mistake."

Giuseppe Ferretto, Consistorial
Pietro Sigismondi, Propagation of the Faith
Antonio Samoré, Extraordinary Affairs
Acacio Coussa, Eastern Church
Cesare Zerba, Sacraments
Pietro Palazzini, Council
Arcadio Larraona, Religious
Dino Staffa, Seminaries and Universities
Enrico Dante, Rites
Paul Philippe, Holy Office.⁴

As Tardini himself would not later,⁵ the curial composition of the Antepreparatory Commission was criticized. At the end of the antepreparatory period, Pope John was to explain that the members were chosen from the Roman Curia "because, through their long habits of study and through their proven experience in the various problems affecting the life of the Church, they could make an important and enlightened contribution."⁶

Noting that this antepreparatory commission had no representation of the episcopate, which would be the protagonist of the Council, Alberigo hazards the hypothesis that its composition and structure were the price Pope John had to pay to overcome curial opposition to the Council.⁷ Giovanni Caprile vigorously denies this suspicion:

It was a question not of preparing the Council, but simply of getting its preparation under way. Given the purely organizational task of this Commission, consisting in arranging for the consultation of the episcopate and not in elaborating the ideological orientations of the future Council, it seemed more obvious to make use above all of the abilities available there and then. In fact, the Commission, composed of the Secretaries of the various Curial dicasteries, met only two times and only to discuss whether to send the bishops a questionnaire or to let each bishop propose materials with "a free wheel," the latter being the opinion that prevailed precisely in order to avoid the impression of wanting to limit the future conciliar Fathers in any way. The Curia, then, had nothing to do with this phase, since even the two or three assistants to the Secretariate were not chosen from among the personnel of the dicasteries, but were called in from outside. The Secretary, Msgr. P. Felici, had regular and direct contacts with the Pope and with the

⁴ Later, when Larraona was named a Cardinal, Philippe took his place as new secretary of the Congregation of Rites, so that the Holy Office was from then on represented by Pietro Parente.

⁵ See *AS App.*, p. 22. While denying the justice of the accusation, Tardini said it would have to be taken into account in establishing the membership of the preparatory commissions.

⁶ Caprile, I/1, p. 180.

⁷ "It is not perhaps far from the truth that the determination of John XXIII to put in motion the preparation of the Council was only able to overcome the resistance of the central apparatus by assuring it complete control over the preparation through the bureaucratic composition of the commission and, no less, through the predetermination of a grid of topics corresponding perfectly to the internal articulation of the Curia itself" (Alberigo, *Giovanni XXIII*, pp. 77-78).

Secretary of State, without passing through any Curial organ. Where, then, could there have been the feared 'new ways of distortion'?'⁸

Some light is thrown on this controversy by the recently published minutes of the meetings of the Antepreparatory Commission.⁹ The two meetings to which Caprile refers took place on May 26 and June 30, 1959. At the first of these, drafts of a letter and questionnaire to the future members of the Council were distributed and discussed but not very profoundly, and the decision not to send out a questionnaire appears to have been made *between* the first and second meetings, and without it being clear that this was a consensus of the Commission itself.

The staff for the Secretariate appears to have been chosen between the two meetings in 1959. It consisted of three men: Msgrs. Achille Lupi and Vincenzo Carbone and Fr. Nello Venturini,¹⁰ none of whom appears to have held a curial post. Since the Commission itself met so rarely in plenary session, it appears that it was the staff, no doubt in regular contact at least with Tardini, which made some crucial decisions and implemented them. These decisions were perhaps not as insignificant as Caprile could lead one to believe. The staff reviewed all the material sent in. In Felici's own words: "Those responses, more than 2000 of them, represented the material on which the Antepreparatory Commission had to carry out its work of selection, of ordering, of filing, reducing the individual proposals to a synthetic catalogue by topics."¹¹ Finally, if the *Quaestiones* given to the preparatory commissions as these began their work were the product of the Antepreparatory Commission or of the Secretariate, then the latter did orientate the preparation of the Council, even if the preparatory commissions were given full freedom to bring up other topics.¹² If Caprile is correct in pointing out data not taken into account by the Alberigos, he himself has rather oversimplified the issues involved.

The Meetings of the Antepreparatory Commission

The Commission met for the first time on May 26, 1959.¹³ After referring to the tasks given the Commission nine days earlier, Tardini urged the members to establish within their respective congregations "study-commissions, organizing committees, with the participation of the consultants, study-assistants, by which to be ready to furnish the preparatory commissions of the future Council

⁸Caprile, "Profilo di Giovanni XXIII," p. 395.

⁹*AS App.*, pp. 7-24.

¹⁰See *Annuario Pontificio per l'anno 1960* (Citta del Vaticano: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1960), p. 1011.

¹¹P. Felici, *Il lungo cammino del Concilio* (Milan: Ed. Ancora, 1967), p. 20.

¹²More study needs to be done also on the relationship between the Antepreparatory Commission and the curial congregations. The same men worked for both of these, and there are a few indications that the submissions by the congregations represented responses to and evaluations of the materials received from around the world. In other words, it may be legitimate to see the curial submissions as a moment in the proceedings of the Antepreparatory Commission itself. Caprile, however, is correct in noting the diversity of views represented within the Curia itself, which is visible not only in the initial responses of the curial Cardinals, noted by Caprile, but also in the *vota* of the congregations.

¹³*AS App.*, p. 7-14.

the proposals most suitable to the interests of the Church and of souls." He then distributed for their comment mimeographed drafts of a letter and a questionnaire to be sent to the future Fathers of the Council. He announced that the Council would be conducted in Latin, "language of the Church and a universal language." He ended by stating that the personnel of the Secretariate would be drawn from within the Curia and asked the members to propose names of people who could devote some time to the work.

The proposed letter to the future members of the Council, after referring to the establishment and membership of the Antepreparatory Commission, informs them that they will in due time be asked to make their suggestions about topics for the Council. Similar requests would be made to the dicasteries of the Roman Curia and to theological and canonical faculties of Catholic universities. It then went on:

When all this has been done satisfactorily, the Commission will take care to draw up the general lines of all the matters and topics which will be discussed in the ecumenical council; it will also offer appropriate suggestions and advice on the bodies (commissions, secretariates, etc.) which should be set up to see to the proximate preparation of the Council.

While informing your Excellency of all this, I strongly request that, after consulting those whom you may prudently think should be consulted, you communicate to this pontifical Commission suggestions, requests, and proposals on the matters which are sketched at some length in the enclosed folio. It will also be most welcome to us, however, if you were also to deal with other matters which you, taking into account the particular needs of the flock committed to you, in your pastoral concern may consider of very great usefulness to the Church.

All the suggestions and requests, all the advice and proposals will be of supreme assistance in revising the Code of Canon Law according to the august mind of the Supreme Pontiff.

The letter ends by requesting that the replies be written in Latin and that the bishops explain the meaning of the Council to their clergy and people and ask them to pray for its success.¹⁴

As this draft indicates, certain important decisions had already been made about the consultation which would precede the preparation of the Council. The most important of these was the decision to consult all those whom the Code of Canon Law acknowledged to have a right to attend and ecumenical council. This was not a matter that goes without saying. When considering reconvening Vatican I, Pius XI had asked the bishops only whether they considered this opportune; they were told that, if the Council were to be reopened, the topics to be discussed would be communicated to them. In the discussions about a Council that took place during the reign of Pius XII, it was intended to consult only a limited number of bishops.

The second draft Tardini proposed to the Antepreparatory Commission was a document entitled: "Draft of Questions about the Future Ecumenical Council to be Sent to the Bishops." Here is a translation:

I. Keeping the Faith Pure

1. What are the principal errors today in dogmatic but especially in moral matters? Whether and how they should be dealt with at the future ecumenical council.

¹⁴*AS App.*, pp. 9-11.

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2. The most appropriate ways today of teaching the faithful the truths of Christian doctrine (catechism, preaching, pious conferences, etc.).

3. The modern inventions by which both truth and error are communicated and popularized; how the following can help the edification of the faithful: the press, radio and television, the cinema.

The Holiness and Apostolate of Clergy and Faithful

A) The Clergy

1. What are the means most appropriate in our age for promoting, encouraging, and properly educating priestly and religious vocations. In particular:

- the establishment and governance of seminaries;
- educating sacred students to meet today's needs;
- testing their chastity before they are ordained;
- the age for the reception of Holy Orders.

2. How today to inculcate and cultivate holiness in priests. In particular:

- the primacy of the interior and sacramental life;
- preserving ecclesiastical celibacy;
- avoiding naturalism, especially in the priestly life;
- the spirit of poverty: forbidding any kind of commerce;
- obedience to Pastors.

3. The most appropriate ways today for exercising pastoral zeal in various groups of the faithful.

4. Promoting the sacred liturgy.

5. The best ways for inviting the faithful to participate in liturgical worship. What errors on this matter are spreading today and need to be opposed.

B. The Faithful

1. What are the chief difficulties today in the Christian instruction and education of the young? Given today's needs, customs, and manners of life, what are the most fitting ways of helping them: in schools, in shops, in various social tasks, in sports?

2. What should be remarked about the various pious associations of the faithful and about their activity with regard to needs today? What do you suggest to help the older ones (Third Orders, Confraternities, Pious Unions) revive and work more effectively and so that the more recent and the new ones (Catholic Action, Secular Institutes, Marian Congregations, Scouts, etc.) may work together towards the goals they have set themselves.

3. The participation of the faithful in social and public life and activity.

4. The Church's social and charitable activity in defending workers and their rights and in protecting the poor and wretched. What appropriate suggestions? What are the chief difficulties? What dangers have to be met?

III. Ecclesiastical Discipline

1. What means do you propose so that ecclesiastical superiors may receive reverence and obedience from the clergy, religious, and faithful?

2. What might be remarked about ecclesiastical benefices.

3. Administering the goods of the Church: what can you suggest so that clerics and religious do not appear to be dealers in earthly matters?

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4. Should the fifth book of the Code of Canon Law, on crimes and penalties, be revised? How to increase the force and effectiveness of the established penalties?
5. The subjection of exempt religious to bishops in matters pertaining to the care of souls.
6. Relationships between bishops and legitimate civil authority: indicate the chief difficulties, suggest appropriate remedies.
7. How to preserve the holiness of Christian marriage and of the family and how to defend them powerfully against the dangers of our day (birth control, free love, divorce). And what do you have to say about the present canonical form of marriage, about impediments to marriage, about the right to bring a challenge against a marriage, and about marriage cases?

IV. Schools

1. Transmitting doctrine soundly and completely in Catholic universities and in other Catholic schools, with full deference to the supreme magisterium of the Church. Indicate dangers and difficulties; suggest ways of fully reaching this goal.
2. Stimulating, building, governing, and encouraging Catholic schools (elementary, secondary, university). Given the institutions and customs of the various countries, how can this goal be reached surely and effectively?

V. The Unity of the Church

1. Explain the chief difficulties which are impeding the return of the dissident brethren to the Roman Church. What hope for union is there in the various sects? What seems best suited to promote it?
2. The Missions. What is the chief obstacle today to the spread of the faith? What do you have to say about the constitution of the missions, about the missionary apostolate, about the participation of all the faithful in the missionary apostolate?¹⁵

The discussion at the first meeting of the Antepreparatory Commission is briefly summarized in the minutes.¹⁶ The only reference to the proposed letter and questionnaire appears in the remark of Dino Staffa that the latter should give priority to the defence of the truth. The other comments were about making use of some study-material available in the Holy Office,¹⁷ about establishing commissions immediately within the congregations (Palazzini), about the usefulness of topics raised for Vatican I but not addressed there (Palazzini, Coussa), about Catholic Action (Coussa and Dante, who suggested using the conclusions of the Roman Synod just held), and about the difficulties of each congregation respecting the limits of its own competence.

The surprising absence of discussion about the character and content of the proposed letter and questionnaire may be due to the fact that they had not been seen before being distributed at the meeting itself. Three days later, Cardinal Tardini addressed a letter to the members of the Antepreparatory Commission in which he enclosed printed copies of the materials (presumably the draft-documents) distributed at the meeting. Tardini then outlined two phases in the work of the congregations:

¹⁵ *AS App.*, pp. 11-14.

¹⁶ *AS App.*, pp. 7-9.

¹⁷ Philippe: this may be a reference to the materials prepared when Pius XII was entertaining the idea of a council.

The first, which is more immediate and requires an understandable speed, consists in revising the printed material now being consigned to your Excellency... [omission in text]

The other phase of the work, which should begin as soon as possible, entails instead a broad and deep study of all the problems within the competence of the individual congregations which are believed to be useful to bring under discussion or to make known to the future preparatory commissions of the ecumenical council. As is obvious, the study-commissions discussed in the meeting and which will be composed of consultors, advisers, study-assistants, etc. will have a part in this second phase and only in it.¹⁸

This distinction appears to represent an effort to separate the roles of those addressed as members of the Antepreparatory Commission and as members of the curial congregations. On the other hand, it also displays the difficulties of this distinction. Their work as members of the Commission (here consisting in commenting on the proposed letter and questionnaire) is described as a phase of the *Congregations'* work in preparation of the Council. This suggests that the second phase, involving study-commissions not to be involved in the first phase, is considered part of the Antepreparatory Commission's work itself.

No information is now available about the responses to the two drafts distributed to the Commission at its first meeting. All one can go on is the minutes of the second meeting of the body, held on June 30, 1959, in the presence of Pope John XXIII.¹⁹ Tardini opened the meeting by expressing gratitude to the Pope "for having chosen to entrust the important task of carrying out the acts preparatory to the Council to representatives of the sacred congregations of the Roman Curia, who, in virtue of their offices, are in a position to know in a special way the present needs, to give an adequate evaluation of the obstacles to be overcome, and to formulate appropriate suggestions." Till now, he went on, the Commission had not done much, but he then indicated an important decision made between the two meetings:

Nevertheless, during this time a study was made of the best means for addressing the episcopate and all those who will be the Fathers of the future ecumenical council. At first thought was given to sending them, along with the letter, a small draft of questions or topics on the basis of which they could, in complete freedom, formulate their desires, proposals, and suggestions. Something similar was done in 1867 by Cardinal Caterini, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, in view of the Vatican Council, even though it had not yet been announced. And this initiative had good results. But then it seemed better to send only a Circular Letter in which would be indicated, by the most essential hints, the questions to which the bishops would have to refer in their replies.

The text of the letter has been approved by the Holy Father, and the Secretariate is already arranging the mailing of the letters, all of them signed by the Cardinal President.

Tardini then noted that he had asked the heads of the curial dicasteries to establish "study-commissions, with the participation of consultors, officials, and scholars of various languages and nations, to formulate concrete proposals to present to the Fathers of the future ecumenical council. The work of the commissions is well on its way." Offices for the Secretariate had been found, he concluded, and "some willing priests" had been found to staff it. Pope John then gave a short address to encourage the Commission in its work.

¹⁸ *ADA*, III (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1960), p. x. The publication of the minutes of the meetings of the Antepreparatory Commission do not include an explanation of the omission in the text as published in *ADA* III.

¹⁹ *AS App.*, pp. 14-17.

The decision not to send the questionnaire to the bishops appears to have been made between the two meetings of the Commission. The minutes of the first meeting give no indication that the idea was opposed within the Commission, but we do not know what its members said in their written replies to Tardini's letter of May 29th. Nor is much more information to be found in the minutes of the second meeting. Msgr. Sigismondi remarked that the bishops would have found a questionnaire helpful, but that "especially from a psychological standpoint, the system adopted seems the best." Fr. Larraona also expressed his agreement with the decision not to send the questionnaire. Msgr. Dante noted that he had not sent observations on the draft because he had heard in the meanwhile from Msgr. Felici that only the circular letter would be sent and because he also felt that to formulate appropriate proposals it would be useful to await the replies of the bishops.

The official publications, then, leave it unclear when and by whom the decision was made not to make use of the questionnaire. Vincenzo Carbone, who worked on the Secretariate staff would later explain that the decision to give the bishops complete freedom was made "not only for psychological reasons, but also to establish immediately that climate of serene and open discussion which, by express will of the Pope, should govern the preparation and development of the Council. The accompanying risk of dispersion would be compensated by the advantage of knowing clearly the thought of the future Fathers."²⁰

Other remarks made by the members of the Commission at the second meeting indicate certain differences in expectation and emphasis. Sigismondi asked whether bishops in mission countries could respond in languages other than Latin. Tardini replies that if replies came in other languages, they would not be ignored, but it must be made clear that the Council would be conducted in Latin. Pope John expressed his approval of these remarks. Coussa stressed the importance of problems concerning the apostolate to dissidents. Zerba hoped that the norms of the Congregation of Sacraments, particularly those concerning Orders and Marriage, would be sanctioned by the Council. He also deplored the decline, even among the clergy, of the use of Latin, remarks echoed by Staffa and Philippe. Larraona hoped the Council would address above all the internal life of the Church. Staffa argued that "confronting the doctrinal careenings [*sbandamenti*] of our days, the future ecumenical council will have the providential role of clarifying and confirming the immutable principles of the Church's tradition." Philippe thanked the Pope for permitting use of the study-material found in the Holy Office. Msgr. Dante remarked that liturgical laws were little respected almost everywhere, and hoped that important liturgical questions such as language and concelebration could be addressed by the Council. Larraona and Philippe also indicated that commissions had already been established within their congregations.

On July 3, 1959, Tardini and Felici met with the rectors of the Roman universities. The Cardinal explained that the Council would be an internal affair of the Catholic Church, "practical

²⁰ *Le Concile Vatican II* (Paris: Apostolat des Editions, 1966), pp. 61-62; Caprile, I/I, pp. 165-66. Cardinal Siri saw in the unlimited freedom and scope of the request to the bishops an indirect cause why so much in the Church was eventually to be considered subject to discussion; see Cardinale Giuseppe Siri, *La giovinezza della Chiesa: Testimonianze, documenti e studi sul Concilio Vaticano II* (Pisa: Giardini, 1983), p.177.

rather than dogmatic, pastoral rather than ideological, giving norms rather than definitions."²¹ Two weeks later, he repeated this description to the deans of three theological faculties in Rome, adding that two days earlier the Pope had decided to call it "Vatican Council II."²²

The only other plenary meeting of the Antepreparatory Commission was held on April 8, 1960, but since this was devoted to a discussion of plans for the preparatory period, we may postpone a discussion of it until later.

The Letters to the Future Members

On June 18, 1959, Tardini sent a letter to all Cardinals, archbishops, bishops (both residential and titular), and superiors general of clerical religious orders, asking them to submit their views on the Council by September 1st. The letter read:

I am pleased to communicate to Your Excellency that the Supreme Pontiff, John XXIII, happily reigning, on May 17, 1959, the Feast of Pentecost, established an Antepreparatory Commission, which I have the honor of chairing, for the forthcoming Ecumenical Council.

The august Pontiff first wishes to know the opinions and views and to gather the advice and recommendations of the bishops and prelates who by right are called to take part in an Ecumenical Council (c. 223). His Holiness attaches the greatest importance to the views, advice and recommendations of the future Fathers of the Council, which will be most useful in preparing topics for the Council.

Therefore, I strongly ask Your Excellency, in complete freedom and honesty, to send to this Pontifical Commission whatever views, advice and recommendations your pastoral care and zeal for souls may suggest to Your Excellency with regard to the material and topics which might be discussed at the next Council. Such topics may concern points of doctrine, the discipline of the clergy and the Christian people, the various activities which engage the Church today, the major problems which it must confront today, and whatever else Your Excellency may consider it opportune to present and develop.

In this effort, Your Excellency may make discreet use of the advice of prudent and expert churchmen.

This Pontifical Commission, for its part, will welcome with deep consideration and submission whatever You consider useful for the good of the Church and of souls.

The responses, to be written in Latin, should be sent to the Pontifical Commission as soon as possible and not later than September 1st of this year.²³

On July 18, a similar letter was sent to Catholic universities and all faculties of theology, asking for their advice by April 20, 1960 (the longer time for them was explained by the fact that Tardini suggested that they might want to send him draft texts).²⁴ The Roman Congregations, in turn, were asked to establish commissions which would prepare to treat the matters received through the consultation, including as well their own ideas about the conciliar agenda. Before the Congregations made their responses, they were regularly sent summaries of the materials received

²¹*AS App.*, p. 18.

²²*AS App.*, p. 20.

²³Caprile, *I/1*, pp. 166-67.

²⁴See *AD-A*, I, p. 161.

from the bishops, which was a discreet way of indicating that they should be taken into account by the Congregations as they prepared their suggestions.

In all, over 2700 bishops and superiors general and sixty-two academic institutions were consulted. The number of responses was around 2100, 76.4% of those requested. Caprile gives the following breakdown: Europe 79.9%; Asia 70.2%; Africa 83.3%; North America 72.2%; Central America 88.1%; South America 75.7%; Oceania 68.5%. 77% of the bishops responded, 64.7% of the superiors general, and 82.2% of the academic institutions.²⁵ In these astonishingly high percentages, Pope John was able to read a confirmation of his intention, and at the conclusion of the antepreparatory period he was able to say that "no Ecumenical Council was preceded by as vast a consultation of the episcopate, the Roman Curia, and the Catholic universities as has been conducted for the future Council."²⁶ That said, it should also be noted that the invitations were sent only to members of "the teaching Church," that women religious and the laity were not consulted, and that the invitations were addressed individually to bishops with no expectation that they would respond in regional or national groupings. During the preparatory period, many objections would be raised to the fact that lay people had so little opportunity to have their voices heard.

Sorting the Responses

Wiltgen gives the following description of the work of the Antepreparatory Commission:

Monsignor Felici worked quietly with nine assistants in a ten-room office in the shadow of St. Peter's. Their job was to classify and summarize the recommendations which came in through the mails. The letters were first photostatted and then the originals were filed. The photostats were cut into sections and classified according to subject matter.²⁷

Caprile gives a little more detail: Large files were prepared for each general topic. Each submission and its author were briefly noted, and if the suggestion was too long for easy summary, it was photostatted and included in the file. The filing system followed the usual order of topics in theological manuals and in the Code of Canon Law. These files were then used in drawing up both the particular synthetic reports indicating the orientations of different countries and continents and the final synthesis which presented the topics most widely suggested.²⁸ Caprile does not indicate who made the decision to organize the responses according to the divisions of typical textbooks and of the Code.

The responses received were collected and published as the *Acta et Documenta...Series Prima: Antepreparatoria*, four volumes in sixteen tomes. The first volume was devoted to the speeches of Pope John on the Council. The second volume, in ten tomes, published the responses from the episcopate: two volumes from Europe, one from Italy, one from Asia, one from Africa, one from North and Central America, and one from South America and Oceania. One tome contained

²⁵Caprile, I/1, pp. 171-72.

²⁶Caprile, I/1, p. 180; on p. 173, Caprile calls it a "plebiscite."

²⁷Ralph M. Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: The Unknown Council* (New York: Hawthorn, 1967), p. 21.

²⁸Caprile, I/1, p. 173. See also *Council Daybook*, I, p. 3.

the responses from religious. Finally, there were two tomes providing an analytical overview of the responses in the form of 9,348 brief propositions. The first tome contained proposals on doctrinal questions, canon law, the discipline of the clergy, seminaries and lay people; while the second treated proposals on the sacraments, sacred places, the precepts of the Church, divine worship, the magisterium, benefices and the temporal goods of the Church, procedures, delicts, and penalties, the missions, ecumenism, and the Church's charitable and social activity.

Volume III contained the responses of the Roman Congregations, while the fourth, in three tomes, gave the 49 responses from Catholic universities and ecclesiastical faculties: the first to the Gregorian, Lateran and Urban, the second to other Roman institutions, and the third to the 37 institutions outside of Rome. There was a final index-volume.²⁹

Only the first volume of these *Acta et Documenta* was made available to the general public. The others were all placed under the pontifical seal of secrecy, for the exclusive use of the preparatory commissions.³⁰ The following explanation of this decision was given: "Those who expressed their thoughts and desires wanted in general to be in contact with the Holy Father and his collaborators in preparing for the Council without exposing themselves to publicity. Furthermore, there are subjects, which, by reason of their nature or of circumstances, require a certain reserve; and it goes without saying that those who are working within the Commissions need a serenity sheltered from the stormy interventions of the press."³¹ This decision, of course, was not welcomed by everyone, including the press, and complaints about the secrecy of the preparatory stage were to be constant.

The Doctrinal Proposals

The first part of the "Analyticus Conspectus" contained 230 pages of "Doctrinae Capita", distributed in the following order and number of proposals:

Theological Speculation	13
Catholic Faith	17
The Symbols of Faith	9
Apologetics	23
Sacred Scripture	
Historicity	9
Inspiration	7
Inerrancy	1
Translations	14
Interpretation	29

²⁹All this information was published in *OR*, March 29, 1961, translated in *DC* 58 (1961), 661-66.

³⁰See *OR* Jan. 18, 1961; *DC* 58 (1961), 152.

³¹Fiorello Cavalli, *OR* Oct. 15, 1960; *DC*, 57 (1960), 1456.

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The Use of the Bible by the Faithful	13
	Sub-total 90
Catholic Tradition	12
The Church	
Constitution	50
Authority	9
Papal Authority and Magisterium	15
Object of Papal Infallibility	8
Divine Assistance to Papal Teaching	1
Authority of Encyclicals	3
Assent Due to Papal Documents	4
Need for a Synthesis of Recent Papal Documents	3
Authority of Bishops	12
Origin of Episcopal Authority	10
Bishop as Pastor of a Diocese	3
Relations between Episcopal and Papal Authority	7
Relations between Bishops and Presbyters	2
Magisterium of the Church	19
Development of Dogmas	6
New Dogmatic Definitions	5
New Dogmatic Definitions Inopportune	10
The Properties of the Church	18
The Mystical Body of Christ	22
Identity between Mystical Body and the Church	5
The Mystical Body and the Communion of Saints	3
Members of the Mystical Body	4
The Mystical Body and Non-Catholics	8
Need for a Synopsis on the Mystical Body	2
Members of the Church	6
"Outside the Church No Salvation"	8
Relation between Universal and Particular Church	3
Church and Sciences	4
	Sub-total 250

The Antepreparatory Period - 13

Church and State	
Need to Discuss the Question	28
Concordats	3
Mixed Matters	1
Particular Questions	2
Tolerance	8
"Healthy Secularity"	4
The Confessional State	5
Separation of Church and State	4
International Relations	21
The Church and the International Community	8
The Right of Nations	1
The "Indirect Power"	10
The Church's Rights in Social Matters	6
The Church's Rights in Political Matters	10
Need for a Synthesis of Public Church Law	4
	Sub-total 115
The Church's Social Teaching	
Relevance of the Question	32
Origin of Social Authority	3
Rights of a Person in Civil Society	24
Right to Property	11
Work	7
Unions	5
Just Wage	3
Family Wage	3
Social Justice	6
Rights and Duties of Workers and Employers	6
Strikes	5
Need for a "Summa" of Church's Social Teaching	4
	Sub-total 109
The Triune God	
	14
The God of Creation and Grace	
Creation of the World	3
Human Nature	16
Supernatural Order	6
Original Sin	6
	Sub-total 31

The Antepreparatory Period - 14

The Incarnate Word	
Christology	8
Primacy of Christ	2
Kingship of Christ	6
Doctrine of Salvation	15
	Sub-total 31
Mariology	
Mariology in General	10
Spiritual Motherhood	7
Physical Integrity	2
Queenship	5
Death	1
Universal Mediation	18
Co-redemption	6
New Definitions Inopportune	10
	Sub-total 59
The Privileges of St. Joseph	
	15
Grace	
Grace in General	18
Faith and Justification	7
Indwelling of the Holy Spirit	2
Theological Virtues	3
	Sub-total 30
The Sacraments	
The Sacraments in General	14
Sacred Character	1
Baptism	8
Confirmation	10
Holy Eucharist	
Holy Communion	4
Holy Sacrifice of the Mass	30
Penance	2
Indulgences	3
Extreme Unction	4
Holy Orders	
Priesthood in General	11
The Order of Bishops	7
Relation between Episcopate and Presbyterate	7

The Antepreparatory Period - 15

Marriage	
Marriage in General	9
Purpose of Marriage	27
Properties of Marriage	12
Rights of Family in Education of Children	5
Grace of Marriage	2
Sins against Marriage	9
	Sub-total 165
The Last Things	
In General	7
Purgatory	2
Limbo	3
Resurrection of the Flesh	2
Hell	5
	Sub-total 19
Moral Theology	
Human Acts	20
Laws	7
Sins	7
Need for a new Moral "Summa"	10
"Professional Morality"	7
Second Commandment	1
Fourth Commandment	4
Fifth Commandment	18
Sixth Commandment	14
Seventh Commandment	22
Eighth Commandment	21
	Sub-total 121

This gives a grand-total of 873 propositions. The list of these doctrinal topics was followed by a list of sixty-nine "Errors to Be Condemned," which began with "Adventists, Seventh Day" and ended with "Utilitarianism." The great majority of these had only one summary proposition to describe them, but some of the errors were considered under two of more rubrics:

- 2: Euthanasia and Birth Control; Rationalism; Socialism
- 3: Existentialism; Nationalism
- 4: Polygenism; Dogmatic Relativism
- 5: Atheism; Situation Ethics; Liberalism; Naturalism

6: Free Masonry

8: Evolutionism

10: Protestantism

12: Modernism

13: Materialism

16: Laicism

29: Communism (to which might be added the two propositions each on Marxism and the one on Socialism).

Speculations

During the antepreparatory period, very little information was officially released. This, of course, left a great deal of room for speculation. Some of the areas about which a good deal of rumor and disagreement spread were: the date of the Council, its primary purpose, its ecumenical implications, the participation of non-Catholics, its length, the language that would be used.

On February 11, 1959, Msgr. Antonio Bacci published an article in *Osservatore Romano*, entitled "What Language Will be Spoken at the Forthcoming Ecumenical Council?" He noted that from various places, particularly from America, people were suggesting the use of popular languages and of simultaneous translations in order to overcome the difficulties that many bishops have in speaking Latin or in understanding it when it is pronounced in so many different ways. Bacci acknowledged some merit in these objections, but to admit them would be for the Church, despite its beautiful humanistic traditions and its constant support for the study of Latin, to contribute to its decline. Modern languages could be used in conversations and small meetings, but in the solemn and general meetings the Church's official language should be used.

If the professors and students at the Gregorian University and other Roman institutions can make use of Latin, Bacci went on, surely the members of the Council will be able to do it. Granted that there will probably not be many of them who will speak it perfectly and classically, but they will have to speak scientifically, precisely, and clearly, and for this scholastic Latin is wonderfully apt. Moreover, there are loftier reasons also: Latin is an instrument of the Church's universality. It has not remained in a Ciceronian ivory-tower, but has developed Latin to serve its needs over the centuries.

As for how to pronounce it, Bacci noted that in the Church it is usually pronounced in the Roman rather than the classical fashion, and the act by which Pius X mandated this for the sake of uniformity should be followed in the Council. As for problems because of the various accents with which it would be spoken, they could be dealt with by providing the texts of the speeches. In addition, machinery for simultaneous translations could be used. In short, "I think it appropriate to retain intact the principle that Latin is the official language of the Church, and this also because it would be difficult to find in the popular languages formulas as concise as those which the sacred

canons, the theologians, and the traditional teaching have long since consecrated in order to give faithful expression to the dogmas of Christian doctrine."³²

At a time when many commentators were suggesting that the Council would be of very short duration, Roger Aubert made some very prescient remarks:

The number of members of the forthcoming Council will be more than double that of the Vatican Council... This obviously poses practical problems for the organization of the discussions. But, with the technological progress made today, it seems that the problems will be fewer than they were in 1870. Congresses with 2000 participants are no longer rare today; loudspeakers eliminate the problem of acoustics; simultaneous translations by microphone can easily resolve the problem of languages (for no one should have any illusions about the *actual* knowledge of Latin among a good number of non-mediterranean bishops). And the present rapidity of transportation and the experience of U.N. assemblies could perhaps suggest some ways to proceed: spacing out the sessions, separated by periods when the work is done in commissions while the bishops could return to their dioceses. Thus a rather long Council could be envisaged without its disrupting the life of the local Churches.³³

And when Aubert described the human side, or "historicity" of Councils, he again made some prophetic remarks:

Councils are not timeless manifestations; they represent aspects of that insertion of God in history which marks the Catholic system, for the covenant of God and the Church is lived out in a human history subject to the limitations of all that is human. The papal delegates charged with sorting out the proposals could have limited horizons and set aside liberating suggestions in favor of secondary questions, objects of discussions among specialists. The theologians who comprise the preparatory commissions could be mediocre and prepare disappointing *schemata*, poorly adapted to the expected goals, or unbalanced, as happened at the Vatican Council with the first *schema De fide* or the *schema De Ecclesia*, which encountered quite severe but well-justified criticisms from the Fathers. In the course of the discussions, the Fathers, carried away by the importance of the problems at stake, could become so excited that they lose their composure. At the Council of Trent there was one bishop who became so angry that he grabbed the beard of a colleague who disagreed with him! While less violent, some of the meetings of the Vatican Council still leave a rather painful impression. The discussions could also continue outside the council hall and sometimes take on the appearance of intrigues, once more evoking the life of parliaments with their back-room maneuverings. It could also happen that governments would try to put pressure on the assembly to make it avoid certain questions or to settle it in a particular way, and that one group of bishops or another could allow themselves to play the games of these civil authorities.³⁴

Some Official Explanations

On October 30, 1959, Cardinal Tardini broke the official silence with a press conference before about a hundred reporters.³⁵ Tardini announced that the Council would be called "Vatican II" and would have as its chief aim "to foster the growth of the Catholic faith, a healthy renewal of the Christian people's practice, and an updating of Church discipline according to the needs of the

³² Antonio Bacci, "In quale lingua si parlerà nel futuro Concilio ecumenico?" *Osservatore Romano*, February 11, 1959.

³³ Roger Aubert, "Qu'est-ce qu'un Concile," *La Revue Nouvelle*, 30 (1959), 481-98, at p. 493n.

³⁴ Aubert, "Qu'est-ce qu'un Concile," p. 494.

³⁵ The report which appeared in *OR* is reproduced in *ADA*, I, pp. 154-58; see also *The Tablet*, 213 (1959), 972.

day."³⁶ While it would be "an internal affair of the Catholic Church," it would "represent so marvelous a spectacle of truth, unity, and love as to constitute, even for those alienated from the Apostolic See, an invitation to seek and to achieve that unity to which many of them aspire." Whether non-Catholics would be invited as observers was a matter under discussion.

The preparations were well underway, Tardini reported. Eighty per-cent of the residential bishops had already submitted recommendations, and it was likely to require a full three years of further work before the Council could meet.³⁷ He expected that it would not be of long duration, both so that bishops would not be absent from their sees too long and because of the highly organized preparations. "An immense correspondence with Bishops all over the world will be carried as far as possible before it meets: 'we will already be agreed on many things by the time the Council meets.'"³⁸ Jérôme Hamer summarized these remarks in a letter to Congar:

The Cardinal gave us to understand that a great part of the work prior to the Council could take place by correspondence, thus shortening the presence of the Fathers in Rome. Here is the outline he presented: a document prepared in Rome by one of the preparatory commissions to be named; sent to the bishops; registering their reactions (refusal, simple acceptance or with amendments); redaction of a new document or reworking of the previous one; finally, meeting of the Fathers in the Vatican to take a stance on a document that has already been reworked and would have received an initial rather general approval in the way indicated above.³⁹

The Council would probably be conducted in Latin, "the Church's language," because of its particular ability to render theological notions precisely, clearly and concisely. Simultaneous translation by earphones was not now being considered, since "in matters of faith, a word poorly or at least inexactly translated could generate confusion."⁴⁰

Three months later, Tardini was interviewed on French television and repeated much he had already said in the earlier meeting with reporters.⁴¹ At the moment, he said, it was expected that the chief aim of the Council would be "ecclesiastical discipline, modifications in the Code of Canon Law, and then the whole ensemble of Catholic practice." It would be "a Council, I would say, of a

³⁶"This Council...is not directed against anyone.' Those who have written or said that it plans to condemn someone or something are mistaken" (*The Tablet*, 972).

³⁷The Cardinal noted that Pius XII had considered calling a council and that the work he had commissioned could be used in preparing Vatican II (*ADA*, I, p. 157).

³⁸*The Tablet*, p. 972. Asked why a Council should have been called when the Pope has been declared to be infallible, Tardini gave a long response which ended with a recollection of the consultation of the worldwide episcopate by Pius XII on the Assumption. "Only after this preparatory work did he proceed to the definition. In brief, the Pope virtually convoked an Ecumenical Council, without giving it juridical form" (*ADA*, I, p. 156).

³⁹Hamer to Congar, 7 november 1959 (Congar Papers). Congar wrote in the margin next to this paragraph: "It's a prefabricated Council. It's the procedure followed for the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. This wouldn't be a real Council!"

⁴⁰*ADA*, I, p. 157. According to *The Tablet*, the Cardinal added with a smile: "there is one advantage in holding the debates in Latin; everything will be considerably shorter.' He paused, still smiling, and added, 'What I mean, of course, is that Latin is a very concise language'" (p. 972).

⁴¹A transcription of the interview can be found in *ADA*, I, pp. 159-63.

real and practical order, rather than a Council of the doctrinal order." But the matter will really depend on the bishops' desires.

Almost 2000 replies, he went on, had already been received, concerned *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*. The more urgent, more important, and most commonly mentioned topics will be chosen for conciliar discussion. The universities have been given a longer time to answer because they were also asked to propose texts showing how they think topics might be treated by the Council. It is hoped that all the antepreparatory work could be completed by July.

Meanwhile, Tardini was giving some thought to the commissions which would carry out the immense work of immediate preparation. "There would be, for example, in my own view, a commission or even two or three commissions for the dogmatic or theological part, for the moral part, and other commissions for Church discipline, sociology, Catholic Action, the apostolic activity of lay people."

The Council, he repeated, would be "an internal affair of the Council," which would exclude the participation of non-Catholics. "But I think that if some of them want to be present, they could come to the Council, not obviously as members, but as observers, because we have nothing to hide."

Episcopal Responses

As far as is known, not much consultation, at least of an official sort, was attempted by the bishops in preparing their submissions to Rome. A clear exception were the German bishops who as early as March 1959 met in an extraordinary session at Buhl to prepare some collective requests to be presented to the Council. In the fall of that year at Fulda they discussed some proposals for the antepreparatory commission. In response to a report on that meeting, Pope John wrote to the German bishops noting their eager acceptance of the Council and their appointment of three commissions to prepare proposals for the Council.⁴²

In August 1959, the annual Synod of the Melkite-Greek hierarchy was devoted to preparing a collective response to the Vatican consultation. They submitted two texts, one on rapprochement between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches and the other on particular points concerning the universal Church and especially the Eastern churches.⁴³

⁴²See Caprile, I/1, p. 133 and p. 110-11, quoting *AAS*, 52 (1960), 36-38. See Klaus Wittstadt, "L'episcopato tedesco e il Vaticano II: preparazione e prima sessione," in *Giovanni XXIII: transizione del Papato e della Chiesa*, ed. G. Alberigo (Rome: Borla, 1988), pp. 104-22.

⁴³See *Irenikon*, 33 (1960), 58-59.