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PAUL VI ON SCRIPTURE, TRADITION, AND MAGISTERIUM

by *Brian W. Harrison*

Part A: Pope Paul's Role in the Redaction of *Dei Verbum* 9

With this and the next issue of *Living Tradition* we will complete our study of Pope Paul VI's general teaching about Sacred Scripture, which has been the subject of ten previous issues of this publication.¹ Having considered in our last two issues Pope Paul's teaching about the revealed truth concerning the Bible's divine inspiration and inerrancy, we turn now to what he had to say about another truth known from divine revelation, namely, the relationship between Scripture, Tradition, and the Church's Magisterium in God's plan for the transmission of Christ's message. This question was debated at some length during Vatican Council II, and the Pope eventually saw the need to intervene. It will be convenient to consider first how this papal initiative came about as a result of divergences of view among the Fathers, and how it influenced the final text of *Dei Verbum*. Then, in Part B of this essay, we shall proceed to examine Pope Paul's personal teaching on this area of Catholic doctrine in other documents and discourses of his pontificate.

a) Background to the Council: Leading Scholars' Expectations

To appreciate the background to the conciliar debates over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition — one of the fundamental issues which has divided Christians since the time of the sixteenth-century Reformation — it will be useful to see what was currently being said about this question among the Church's most prominent theologians and biblical scholars. Some light is shed on the state of the question by the submissions of Roman Congregations and Catholic centres of higher education throughout the world to the Vatican II Antepreparatory Commission, which in 1959 had invited the Church's hierarchy and scholars to send in suggestions for the forthcoming Council's agenda. An analysis of these submissions suggests that on the eve of the Council, only a minority of Catholic scholars teaching the sacred sciences saw the relation between Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium as a pressing theological problem requiring attention by the imminent Ecumenical Council: of the forty-five Catholic Universities and theological faculties from Rome and around the world which sent in replies to the Antepreparatory Commission, only six raised the question of Scripture and Tradition, and of these six, three merely mentioned the topic as one needing attention, but without expounding it in any way.²

This handful of replies, however, is sufficient to demonstrate that the relationship between Scripture and Tradition had become a true *quaestio disputata*. On one side are those who express concern that the authority of Tradition is being unduly minimized by some contemporary writers. The theological faculty of the Catholic University of Ottawa, for instance, claims that some recent thought obscures the clear teaching of Vatican I. These Canadian scholars complain that, in the interests of reaching agreement with Protestants, certain theologians are now saying that Catholics too can

¹ Cf. *Living Tradition*, no. 153, July 2011; no. 154, September 2011; no. 155, November 2011; no. 156, January 2012; no. 157, March 2012; no. 158, May 2012; no. 159, July, 2012; no. 164, May 2013; no. 165, July 2013; no. 166, September 2013.

² Cf. the submissions of the University of Louvain (*Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano Apparando* (AD I, IV, II, 223); of the theological faculty of Montreal (*ibid.* 461); and of the Bonn theological faculty (*ibid.*, 773).

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legitimately speak of *Scriptura sola*, and that the role of Tradition and Magisterium is only that of giving a sound interpretation of the Bible.³ The Ottawa professors therefore feel it will be “most useful” if the Council explains clearly the true Catholic belief regarding the relationship between all three: Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium.⁴ Likewise, the theologians of the Pontifical University of Comillas (Spain), who raise this issue under a sub-heading entitled *De fontibus revelationis*, express the hope for a conciliar judgment on that “opinion of recent irenicists” (*sententia recentiorum irenicistarum*) according to which “the entire deposit of objective revelation is contained in Sacred Scripture, so that the role of divine Tradition is seen as that of merely transmitting, proposing and explaining the deposit of faith which is fully contained in Scripture alone.”⁵ The Holy Office also showed concern for clarity on this issue: it wanted the Council to teach that “Sacred Scripture should not be taken as a source of revelation either **exclusively** or **in itself** (without the Magisterium).”⁶ Although Tradition is not mentioned in this sentence, the affirmation that Scripture is “not . . . exclusively” a *fons revelationis* appears to mean that Tradition is another *fons* on the same level as Scripture.

Only one of these six replies from Catholic centres of higher learning expressed a contrary view from those just mentioned, but this was the longest and most comprehensive reply of all. It came, moreover, from the Church’s principal centre for the study of Sacred Scripture, the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, all of whose professors⁷ were concerned that the role of Scripture, not that of Tradition, was in danger of being underestimated. That the Biblical Institute considered the relation between Scripture and Tradition to be of maximum importance is indicated by the fact that this was placed first on the list of five doctrinal topics related to Scripture which these biblical experts wanted the Council to treat.⁸

The *Biblicum* set down its first specific recommendation (*votum*) under the heading “Scripture and Tradition” (*De Scriptura et Traditione*): “**It is recommended:** that the council propose more explicitly the Catholic doctrine regarding the mutual relations which obtain between Sacred Scripture and Tradition.”⁹ The authors then explain what they have in mind by this “more explicit” teaching: “It is hoped that the Church may declare that Scripture and Tradition do not constitute two completely independent and parallel sources of revelation.”¹⁰ The exegetes’ explanation for their repudiation of this position is as follows:

For: (a) The sacred books of the N.T. and ecclesiastical tradition arose from the same apostolic tradition; that is, they *have in common* “the universal source, both of saving truth and of moral discipline” (Council of Trent, Session IV, Denz. 783). This common source is the Gospel promulgated by Christ and preached by the Apostles; however we have more direct and immediate contact with Christ’s Gospel in the Scriptures than in the subsequent monuments of Church tradition. (b) Only Scripture was written under the inspiration of *the Holy Spirit*, for the Church does not enjoy inspiration in the true sense, but rather, the assistance of the Holy Spirit in the unfolding of revelation. Hence Scripture and Tradition are inter-connected, and indeed each has priority over the other in a certain respect. On the one hand, since only Scripture, and not ecclesiastical tradition, can be called the Word of God in the strict sense, this tradition should be subject to Scripture, holding fast to it as its norm; in other words, it is necessary that the developing tradition be referred back to Scripture, so that in its own progress it is guarded, vivified, and even renewed, if necessary, by Scripture. On the other hand, since the Church is, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, “the pillar and foundation of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15), Scripture must always be understood “in

³ Under the heading “The Proper Function of the Magisterium” (*Magisterii Propria Functio*) the Ottawa professors wrote: “This ought to be quite clear from Vatican I (Dz 1781, 1792, 1793, 1800, 1835-40). But the issue has been obscured considerably by recently published opinions regarding *tradition*. . . . The conclusion is drawn that ‘Scripture alone’ can also be legitimately professed by Catholics — although not without reference to sound interpretation — and it is claimed that Catholics and Protestants can agree on a certain renewed notion of Tradition (*ibid.* 487).

⁴ “*Perutiliter ergo in proponenda catholica veritate, quae Ecclesiam Christi spectat, enodabitur qua ratione sistere atque consistere haec tria creduntur: scriptura, traditio, magisterium*” (*ibid.*).

⁵ “. . . *integrum revelationis obiectivae depositum in sacris Scripturis contineri, adeo ut divinae Traditioni functio tribuatur mere transmittendi, proponendi et explicandi depositum fidei, in sola Scriptura plene contentum*” (*ibid.* 57-58).

⁶ “*S. Scriptura neque exclusive neque per se solam (sine Magisterio) tamquam fons revelationis sumenda est*” (AD I, III, 8, emphasis in original). This Holy Office submission went on to say that the Council should corroborate the “genuine notion” of Tradition and its relationship to the Magisterium, but gave no details as to what it considered this “notion” and “relationship” to be: “*Traditionis genuina notio firmetur; de Traditione additiva, de habitudine Magisterii ad Traditionem*” (*ibid.*, 9).

⁷ The covering letter of 24 April 1960 from the Rector, Fr. Ernest Vogt, S.J., stresses that the accompanying submission has been unanimously approved by all nineteen professors of the *Biblicum* (AD I, IV, I.1, 123).

⁸ It was preceded only by a general *votum preliminare* which noted that since the furthering of Christian unity had been announced by Pope John as an important aim of the Council, and since the study and reading of the Bible would be of great help in promoting concord and unity among Christians, the use of Scripture should be strongly encouraged by the Council (*ibid.*, 125).

⁹ “*In votis est: ut concilium magis explicite proponat doctrinam catholicam de relationibus mutuis quae vigent inter Scripturam Sacram et Traditionem*.” (*ibid.*, emphasis in original).

¹⁰ “. . . *optatur ut Ecclesia declaret Scripturam et Traditionem non constituere duos fontes revelationis prorsus independentes et parallelos*” (*ibid.*).

the Church,” that is, in living continuity with the authentic tradition of the Church and according to the norms of the ecclesiastical magisterium.¹¹

It is interesting to note that some of these ideas in fact emerged subsequently in the Council’s teaching: an emphasis on the unified origin of revelation, rather than on two “completely independent and parallel sources” composing it, is a prominent feature of *Dei Verbum*’s teaching,¹² and becomes explicit in art. 9, which affirms that “Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are in a close bond and in close mutual communication; for both of them, springing forth from the same divine source, flow together in a certain way and tend toward the same end.”¹³ Again, art. 10 affirms that together they form “the one sacred deposit of the word of God.”¹⁴ The *Biblicum* professors’ observation about the privileged status of Scripture — at least under a certain aspect — is also reflected in art. 9 of *Dei Verbum*, which affirms that while Tradition “transmits” (*transmittit*) the Word of God, Scripture “is” that divine Word itself (*est locutio Dei*),¹⁵ by virtue of the charism of inspiration which guarantees the actual words as well as the meaning or teaching they convey.

These emphases, however, did not constitute the central point of the controversy which came to light at the Council between opponents and defenders of the “two-source” theory, because the latter had no difficulty in admitting the essential unity of Revelation as the one *ultimate* “source.”¹⁶ The Council of Trent affirmed that Christian truth and moral discipline are contained “in the written books and unwritten traditions which, received from the mouth of Christ himself by the Apostles, or from the Apostles themselves under the Holy Spirit’s dictation, have come down to us as if passed on from hand to hand.”¹⁷ The real *quæstio disputata* was not whether we are to speak of ‘one’ or ‘two’ *fontes revelationis*, but whether Tradition was to be understood as having a “constitutive” role in revelation, or as having a merely “interpretative” function in regard to a revelation contained fully and integrally in Scripture. After four centuries in which Catholic theologians had understood the words “and unwritten traditions” in the Tridentine decree just cited to teach the “constitutive” view, some recent writers, notably J.R. Geiselmann, were challenging this consensus, and the validity or otherwise of such a re-reading of Trent was by the early 1960s becoming a focus of animated debate among Catholic scholars.¹⁸

¹¹ “*Etenim: (a) libri sacri N.T. et traditio ecclesiastica orta sunt ex eadem traditione apostolica seu communem habent ‘fontem omnis et salutaris veritatis et morum disciplinæ’ (Conc. Trid. Sess. IV, Denz. 783), scilicet illud Evangelium quod promulgatum est a Christo et ab Apostolis prædicatum; hoc autem Evangelium Christi atque hanc traditionem apostolicam magis directe et immediate attingimus in Scripturis quam in monumentis traditionis ecclesiasticæ posterioris; (b) Scriptura sola conscripta est inspirante Spiritu Sancto; Ecclesia autem gaudet non inspiratione proprie dicta, sed assistentia Spiritu Sancti ad revelationem evolvendam. Unde Scriptura et Traditione mutue inter se connectuntur, immo alio atque alio respectu inter se prioritatem habent:*

— *ex una parte, cum Scriptura sola, non autem traditio ecclesiastica, dicenda sit verbum Dei sensu stricto, debet hæc traditio se Sacræ Scripturæ submittere eamque constanter tenere ut normam sui; scilicet, necessarium est ut traditio in evolutione sua se referat ad Scripturam, ut in proprio suo progressu ab ipsa custodiatur, vivificetur, immo etiam, si casus fert, ab ipsa renovetur;*

— *ex altera parte, cum Ecclesia sit ‘columna et firmamentum veritatis’ (I Tim., 3,15) propter assistentiam Spiritus Sancti, Scriptura semper est intelligenda ‘in Ecclesia’, id est in continuitate viva cum traditione authentica Ecclesiæ et secundum normas magisterii ecclesiastici” (ibid., 125-126).*

¹² Cf. F. Castro Aguayo, *Relación entre Sagrada Escritura y Tradición según la Constitución “Dei Verbum”* (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 1987) 123-127.

¹³ “*Sacra Traditio ergo et Sacra Scriptura arte inter se connectuntur atque communicant. Nam ambæ, ex eadem divina scaturigine promanantes, in unum quodammodo coalescunt et in eundem finem tendunt*” (AAS 58 [1966] 821).

¹⁴ “. . . unum verbi Dei sacrum depositum constituunt” (ibid., 822).

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ This was precisely the point made by Archbishop Pietro Parente, Assessor of the Holy Office, in defending the original conciliar schema which spoke of the “twofold source” (*duplex fons*) of revelation. He agreed that it is obvious that Trent presents the Gospel of Christ and the Apostles as the unique source of saving truth, but recalled that the same Council also teaches that this truth “reaches us by two ways, namely, ‘written books and unwritten traditions’ (*ad nos pervenit duabus viis, scilicet ‘libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus’*)” (AS I, III, 133; GH 264-265). Parente went on to use the alternate expression “two streams” (*duos rivus*) (AS *loc. cit.*; GH 265). Another helpful explanation, with which nearly all protagonists in the conciliar debate would probably have agreed, was given by Cardinal Frings, who observed that “in the order of knowing it is true that there are two sources of revelation; . . . [but] in the order of being there is only one source, Revelation itself, out of which flow two streams (*ex quo duo rivuli emanant*), namely, Sacred Scripture and Tradition” (AS I, III, 139).

¹⁷ “. . . hanc veritatem et disciplinam contineri in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus, quæ ab ipsius Christi ore ab Apostolis acceptæ, aut ab ipsis Apostolis Spiritu Sancto dictante, quasi per manus traditæ, ad nos usque pervenerunt” (DS 1501).

¹⁸ The original draft of the Tridentine decree clearly implied the ‘constitutive’ role of Tradition, since it stated that the saving truths of faith and morals were contained “partly” in Scripture and “partly” in Tradition (*partim et partim*). Although these words were eventually replaced by a simple “and” (*et*) (cf. n. 17 above), Catholic theologians (including leading participants in the Council of Trent itself) were unanimous for four centuries in understanding the Council to teach exactly what had been spelt out in the first draft, in spite of the amendment (cf. AS I, III, 134 [GH 265-266] for citations given at Vatican II in defence of the ‘insufficiency’ position by Archbishop P. Parente). The Catechism of Trent also understood the Council in this way: its *Proemium* (no. 12) says that the Word of God, containing all Christian doctrine, is “distributed” between Scripture and Tradition (. . . *quod in Scripturam Traditionesque distributum est*). Beginning in the 1950s, however, some scholars have argued not only that Trent intended

From our present standpoint, the importance of this brief survey of submissions to the Antepreparatory Commission is that of a representative ‘sampling’ of Catholic scholarly opinion on the eve of the Council. On the one hand, it suggests that many of the Church’s leading Scripture scholars were now leaning toward the view which had recently been put forward by Geiselman and others. For, given that the Biblicum professors spoke unanimously of Tradition only as a guide for interpreting Scripture (i.e., not as containing certain revealed truths independently of Scripture), and given their leading position in the world of Catholic biblical scholarship, it seems unlikely that theirs was a minority position among their peers. On the other hand, it seems probable that most dogmatic theologians and bishops at that time continued to believe in a ‘constitutive’ as well as an interpretative function for Sacred Tradition. For (apart from the Pontifical Biblical Institute) not even one Catholic theological faculty in the world expressed the hope that the Council would teach the ‘material sufficiency’ of Scripture (i.e., the view that all revealed truth is materially contained therein)¹⁹ and Castro’s analysis of the pre-conciliar submissions from individual bishops likewise indicates that of those many prelates who expressed the hope that this issue would be discussed at the Council, only a few showed sympathy for the exegetes’ innovative understanding of the Tridentine decree.²⁰ (This ‘disconnect’ between biblical scholarship and systematic theology has unfortunately continued up till the present time, and was identified as a serious problem for the Catholic academy by Pope Benedict XVI in a discourse he addressed to the 2008 Synod of Bishops on “The Word of God”).²¹

(b) Scripture and Tradition in the First Two Conciliar Schemas

As matters turned out, the clear preference expressed by the Holy Office’s submission to the Antepreparatory Commission was reflected in the schema presented to the Vatican II Fathers soon after the Council opened. The plurality expressed in the very title of the entire schema, “The Sources of Revelation” (*De Fontibus Revelationis*), and of Chapter

to leave this question open, but also that patristic and pre-Reformation tradition was not unanimous on this question, and that some early Fathers believed all revealed truths to be objectively contained in Scripture. A revival of this view among Catholics has been desired by such scholars as being potentially fruitful for ecumenism as well as correct in itself. A leading work arguing for this view is J.R. Geiselman, *Die heilige Schrift und die Tradition* (Freiburg 1962), published in English as *The Meaning of Tradition* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966). Similar arguments have been put forward in G. Moran, *Scripture and Tradition* (New York 1963), G.H. Tavad, *Holy Writ or Holy Church?* (New York: Harper, 1959), Y. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (London: Burnes and Oates, 1966), R.P.C. Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church* (London: SCM Press, 1962), and summaries of the arguments for this position can be found in the article “Tradition” by G.H. Tavad, in J.A. Komonchak *et al* (eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987, 1038-1041), and the article “Scripture and Tradition” by Karl Rahner in K. Rahner (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Theology: the Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (London: Burns & Oates, 1975 [3rd impression 1986] 1549-1554). Against the novel interpretation of Trent underlying this view, the ‘constitutive’ role of Tradition was upheld as that Council’s true teaching in three articles by H. Lennerz in reply to Geiselman: “Scriptura sola?” (*Gregorianum* 40 [1959] 38-53); “Sine scripto traditiones” (*ibid.*, 624-635), and “Scriptura et traditio in decreto 4. sessionis Concilii Tridentini” (*Gregorianum* 42 [1961] 517-522). In fact, if some early Fathers (such as Jerome) seemed to assume that all revealed truth was in some way contained in Scripture, other Fathers taught or implied the contrary, as Archbishop Parente showed in his intervention at Vatican II by quotations from Irenæus, Tertullian, Basil, and Augustine, citing also more recent Doctors of the Church such as Bonaventure, Aquinas and Bellarmine (*AS* I, III, 135-136; *GH* 266). Parente also pointed out that a virtual unanimity of the Tridentine Fathers agreed with the *partim et partim* terminology, i.e., the view that part of revealed truth is contained exclusively in Tradition. That terminology was opposed by only one Father, the Servite General, P. Bonuccio (cf. *ibid.*, 265, and Lennerz, “Scriptura sola?,” *op. cit.*, 48-50). Parente was particularly severe with Geiselman, whom he accused of “torturing the Tridentine text in order to favour the Lutheran *sola Scriptura* formula, which he has the affrontery to ascribe to the Council Fathers” (*ibid.* 265-266). For a good account of the Vatican II debates and teaching on this point, cf. F. Castro Aguayo, *op. cit.* (cited above, n. 12).

¹⁹ It must be admitted, however, that the *status questionis* on this point does not emerge with complete clarity from the pre-conciliar submissions. For one thing, most of the theological faculties and bishops are silent on this issue, so we do not know what they thought about it. Also, even the Biblical Institute’s submission does not present the question with total clarity. As can be seen from our citation of its submission (cf. above, n. 11), when the Biblicum professors speak of “tradition” here they are referring mainly to “ecclesiastical tradition,” as distinct from **apostolic** tradition. But it is only the latter for which anyone in the Catholic Church has ever claimed a constitutive role in revelation.

²⁰ Cf. F. Castro Aguayo, *op. cit.*, 103-104.

²¹ In his discourse to the Synod Fathers of October 14, 2008, Pope Benedict voiced his deep concern that in much contemporary exegesis, “the three theological elements mentioned in *Dei Verbum*, appear almost absent. And this has rather grave consequences. The first consequence of the absence of this second methodological level is that the Bible becomes solely a history book . . . and exegesis is no longer truly theological but instead becomes purely historiographical, literary history. . . . The second consequence is even graver: where the hermeneutics of faith explained in *Dei Verbum* disappear, another type of hermeneutics will appear by necessity: a hermeneutics that is secularist, positivist, the key fundamental of which is the conviction that the Divine does not appear in human history. According to this hermeneutics, when there seems to be a divine element, the source of that impression must be explained, thus reducing everything to the human element. . . . Today the exegetical ‘mainstream’ in Germany, for example, denies that the Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist and says that Jesus’ corpse remained in the tomb. . . . Therefore for the life and mission of the Church, for the future of faith, it is absolutely necessary to overcome this dualism between exegesis and theology.” Accessible online at http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/october/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20081014_sinodo.html

1, “The Twofold Source of Revelation” (*De Duplici Fonte Revelationis*)²² suggested that a stand was being taken for the ‘material insufficiency’ of Scripture.

Hence, especially in view of the hopes and expectations of many leading Catholic Scripture scholars, it is not surprising that objections were raised immediately. Indeed, article 5 of the schema bore a defensive tone which seemed to be directed against the prevalent thinking among such scholars:

Therefore, let no one on that account dare to undervalue Tradition, or distrust it. For although Sacred Scripture, being inspired, presents us with a divine instrument for formulating and illuminating the truths of faith, nevertheless its meaning cannot be understood or expounded **fully** and **with certitude** except through apostolic Tradition. Indeed, Tradition is the one and only way in which certain revealed truths are made clear and become known to the Church — above all, those truths concerning the inspiration, canonicity and integrity of each and all of the sacred books.²³

It is noteworthy that this first schema did not limit the truths known only through Tradition to those concerning the nature of the Bible itself. It specifies these truths about Scripture — its inspiration, canonicity and integrity — as being the most important in this category, but says that there are others in it as well, although without naming them. This was to become a sharply disputed point in the debates which followed — one on which the Pope’s personal intervention was eventually sought, as we shall see.

After the initial schema was rejected as a basis for discussion by the majority of Fathers at the beginning of the Council, subsequent drafts did not manifest such a marked apologetic emphasis on Tradition in relation to Scripture. Indeed, when a second schema was introduced two years later, at the beginning of the Council’s third session in 1964, no reference at all was made to any doctrines being known only through Tradition — not even those regarding the biblical books themselves which the first schema had singled out for special mention.²⁴ However, the third draft restored a brief affirmation that “It is also through the same Tradition that the Sacred Writings themselves become known with absolute certainty to the Church”,²⁵ and the fourth draft replaced this by a more specific affirmation: “By means of the same Tradition the complete canon of the sacred books is made known to the Church.”²⁶

This statement remained in article 8 of the final definitive text. Nevertheless, some Fathers were anxious to have a more general and explicit statement to the effect that Scripture and Tradition are two *independent* ways by which the one deposit of faith is transmitted to us. The essential question at issue was once again that of the ‘material sufficiency’ (or insufficiency) of Scripture. All the Council Fathers were agreed that Tradition must be taken into account when interpreting the Scriptures. But are all Catholic beliefs (prescinding from those concerning Scripture itself) at least materially contained in Scripture? Since it became clear quite early on that there was no possibility of arriving at a consensus on this disputed point, the drafting Commission, which was divided within itself over this issue,²⁷ decided to

²² AS I, III, 14.

²³ “*Nemo ergo Traditionem exinde minoris facere aut ei fidem denegare audeat. Licet enim Sacra Scriptura, cum sit inspirata, ad enuntiandas et illustrandas veritates fidei instrumentum præbeat divinum, eius nihilominus sensus nonnisi Traditione apostolica certe et plene intellegi potest; immo Traditio, eaque sola, via est qua quædam veritates revelatæ, eæ imprimis quæ ad inspirationem, canonicitatem et integritatem omnium et singulorum sacrorum librorum spectant, clarescunt et Ecclesie innotescunt*” (*ibid.*, 16, emphasis in original).

²⁴ AS III, III, 79-81.

²⁵ “*Per eandem Traditionem et ipsæ Sacræ Litteræ absoluta certitudine Ecclesie innotescunt*” (*ibid.*, 80).

²⁶ AS IV, I, 349. As the *relator*, Archbishop Florit, explained in regard to this change, “The relevance of Tradition with respect to Scripture is still more clearly emphasised when, in accordance with the request of many Fathers, it is stated that the integral **canon** of the sacred books is made known to the Church through that same Tradition. (*Momentum Traditionis respectu ad Scripturam adhuc apertius extollitur cum asseratur per eandem Traditionem integrum librorum sacrorum canonem Ecclesie innotescere, prouti non pauci postularunt Patres*)” (*ibid.*, 379, emphasis in original). The removal of the words “with absolute certainty” eliminated the possible insinuation that without Tradition the Church might still be able to reach a **moral** certainty as to which books are inspired by God. Also, the mention of canonicity clarified the statement, since the importance of Tradition here was not so much that of enabling the Church to know the sacred books themselves, but rather, of enabling her to know that they were of divine rather than merely human authorship, hence qualifying as canonical.

²⁷ Cf. AS III, III, 124-129 for a separate *relatio* given by Bishop F. Franic when the third draft of the schema was presented to the assembled Fathers. Franic was speaking on behalf of the minority on the doctrinal Commission, consisting of those members who strongly desired an explicit statement of the constitutive role of Tradition. His *relatio* was followed by that of Archbishop Ermengildo Florit, who expressed the majority view that the Council should not favour either party in this dispute (*ibid.*, 132-133, 137-138). A major point in Florit’s argument was that whether or not in theory some Catholic doctrine might be found to depend exclusively on Tradition, the Church’s Magisterium had never in practice acknowledged any concrete instance of this. He asserted: “Up till now the Magisterium has not declared any [doctrine] to be without any basis in Scripture, and she has never defined any [doctrine] as being contained in Tradition alone. (*Pro nulla enim Magisterium hucusque declaravit omni carere in Scriptura fundamento, nullamque uti in sola Traditione contentam unquam definivit*)” (*ibid.*, 138). It appears that Florit was factually mistaken in his second affirmation here. The Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787) found no Scriptural support for the veneration of images and based their condemnation of the iconoclast heresy exclusively on “the divinely inspired Magisterium of our holy Fathers and the tradition of the Catholic Church (*divinitus inspiratum sanctorum Patrum nostrorum magisterium, et catholicæ traditionem Ecclesie*)” (DS 600, cf. also 602). The only

avoid carefully either one opinion or the other, so as to leave the matter completely free for further discussion by theologians.

Nevertheless, a significant minority of Fathers continued to urge strongly that the text should explicitly dissociate the Church's position from the '*sola Scriptura*' principle of the Reformation; and as the debates drew to a close in September 1965, 111 Fathers asked the Commission to insert between the words *diffundant* and *Quapropter* in article 9 (dealing with the relation between Scripture and Tradition) a clause asserting that not every Catholic doctrine could be directly proved from Scripture.²⁸

(c) Paul VI's Intervention: an Explicit Denial of "*Sola Scriptura*"

Pope Paul himself was personally in agreement with the minority in the Commission on this disputed issue. In a letter dated 24 September 1965, over the signature of Archbishop Pericle Felici, Secretary-General of the Council, the President of the Doctrinal Commission, Cardinal Ottaviani, was informed: ". . . it is the will of the Holy Father that, at the most convenient place in the text, the *constitutive* nature of Tradition, as a font of Revelation, be mentioned more clearly and more explicitly." This translation of the Italian text of the letter reflects the categorical tone in which the message was written.²⁹ In support of this position, the letter concluded with a citation from St. Augustine, mentioning the source: "There are many things which the universal Church holds, and therefore rightly believes to have been taught by the Apostles, even though they are not found written down."³⁰

After the Council had concluded, it eventually became known that this very important letter inexplicably (and scandalously) never reached Cardinal Ottaviani, to whom it was addressed.³¹ Nevertheless, the content of the subsequent letter embodying a papal intervention (that of 18 October 1965 which we have already discussed in an earlier article³²) seems to suggest that during the intervening three weeks further advice or personal reflection had persuaded Pope Paul that it would be best not to insist on that view of Tradition which he thought was the correct one. For although the second letter makes it clear that the Holy Father considered this issue, like the other controversial amendments under discussion, to be of the "greatest importance," he now only requested that the re-convoked Commission "kindly, but freely consider" his suggestions on this and the other two points. In fact, the Pope explicitly made known in this letter, as we saw, that he found himself "more perplexed" by the problems arising from the words *veritatem salutarem* in article 11 than by this dispute over Scripture and Tradition, which was mentioned first. In regard to the latter question, the October 18 letter referred to an appended page containing seven possible formulas stressing the importance of Tradition, as against the *sola Scriptura* principle. The Pope was suggesting to the Commission that one of these formulas, any one of which would be acceptable to him, be inserted in the schema.

In order to see more clearly the terms in which the Pope himself saw this question, it will be worthwhile noting these formulas. The first one suggested was, "whence it is that not every Catholic doctrine can be proved from Sacred Scripture alone."³³ The second was identical with the first except that "directly" was added after "proved."³⁴ Then came

biblical verse these Nicene Fathers could find to support their case was precisely that one (2 Thess. 2: 14) which insists that orally transmitted as well as written traditions were to be guarded by the faithful (cf. DS 602).

²⁸ Cf. Caprile, *op. cit.*, 217. This suggestion, as Caprile points out, was accepted by a sub-commission examining the *modi* (suggested amendments). An explanation noted the point of the word *directe*: "Everything, however, can be proved indirectly from Scripture, insofar as Scripture openly teaches the existence of a Magisterium and the Church's indefectibility. (*Omnia autem indirecte ex Scriptura demonstrari possunt, in quantum Scriptura aperte docet existentiam Magisterii et indefectibilitatis Ecclesiae*)" (*ibid.*).

²⁹ Caprile describes the letter as being, merely "a simple invitation to consider the question — just as had happened in other cases and in analogous circumstances (*un semplice invito — com'era accaduto in altri casi ed in circostanze analoghe — a considerare la questione*)" (Caprile, *op. cit.*, 220). To this writer, who was kindly permitted by the Vatican II archivist, Msgr. Vincenzo Carbone, to inspect the original manuscript, the letter seems more like a command than a "simple invitation." (The cataloguing details and original text cannot be quoted, since this document, at the time the present writer was given permission to inspect it, had not been released for general use and comment by scholars.) In view of the strong wording of this letter, it seems all the more puzzling that a message of such great doctrinal and ecumenical importance never reached its destination! This is what has been revealed by Caprile, writing only several months after these events took place. He says, "At any rate, this text, having been punctually delivered to the person responsible, was never shown to the Commission or noted by it. The reason for this is not clear. (*Ad ogni modo, puntualmente trasmesso a chi di dovere, questo testo — non si comprende bene il perché — non venne mai mostrato e notificata alla Commissione*)" (*loc. cit.*). Nor is it clearly understood who this "responsible person" was who failed to forward the letter: Cardinal Ottaviani, to whom it was addressed? Or perhaps some intermediary whom Archbishop Felici entrusted with handing it to Ottaviani?

³⁰ "*Sunt multa quae universa tenet Ecclesia, et ob hoc ab Apostolis praecipua bene creduntur, quamquam scripta non reperiantur*" (*De Baptismo c. Donat.*, V, 23,31: PL 43, 192).

³¹ Cf. above, n. 29.

³² Cf. *Living Tradition*, no. 166, September 2013, sections 3(a) and 4(a).

³³ ". . . *quo fit ut non omnis doctrina catholica ex sola Sacra Scriptura probari queat.*" Since these and the other formulæ do not form part of the unpublished letter itself sent in the Pope's name, permission has been granted for these formulæ to be cited in their original Latin.

³⁴ That is, "*directe*" after "*Scriptura.*"

another pair of almost identical clauses: the third was that which was finally adopted by the Commission, thereby becoming the definitive conciliar text: “hence it is not from Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty regarding all that has been revealed.”³⁵ The fourth replaced “all that has been revealed” in this formula by “all revealed truths.”³⁶

The fifth formula tended to favour those who held to the ‘material sufficiency’ of Scripture, although without quite stating that theory unambiguously: “The Sacred Scriptures express the Christian mystery in a global way, though not all the revealed truths are expressly stated in them.”³⁷ The sixth was very similar: “The Sacred Scriptures contain the Christian mystery in a global way, though not all the revealed truths can be proved from Scripture alone.”³⁸ Finally, a suggestion made by Cardinal Döpfner of Munich was added — apparently at the last moment. It was much the same as the third and fourth in content, except that it specified the two other sources of the Church’s certainty in addition to Scripture. It said that the Church “cannot draw all Catholic truth with certainty from Scripture alone, without the aid of Tradition and the Magisterium.”³⁹

Caprile records that the third formula received an absolute majority on the first ballot in the Commission. It then gained the required two-thirds majority (19 out of 28) on the second ballot, with eight votes going to the first formula (the one which most closely approximated to the view of Tradition as ‘constitutive’ of revelation), and one vote going to the fifth, which leaned more towards the opposing opinion.

The fact that Paul VI, in this unpublished letter, declared himself in advance ready to accept any one of those formulas which the Commission might agree upon shows a certain flexibility here, even though it might be argued that he insinuated his personal preference for the ‘constitutive’ view by placing the formula closest to that view first on the list. Nevertheless all the proposed formulas still left open the question of the material sufficiency or insufficiency of Scripture, and the one finally chosen probably preserves best the complete neutrality on this point which the majority on the Commission had consistently desired to maintain.

(d) Significance of the Papal Intervention in Article 9

Why, then, did Pope Paul feel it important to add one of these formulas? After all, his request that such an addition be considered came after the Commission had initially decided against making such an insertion; and this surely shows a certain insistence on the part of the Pope, in spite of the gentle and non-peremptory language of the letter of October 18. The letter itself did not spell out the Pope’s reasons for wanting such an amendment to be made; but light is shed on this question by the final *relatio* of Archbishop Florit, explaining this addition. First, he said, it explains the surrounding context in article 9 more clearly. “On the one hand some explanation is [now] given of the words a little further up which state that Tradition **hands on integrally** God’s Word . . .; on the other hand, additional justification is given for the words which immediately follow, affirming that Scripture and Tradition are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence.”⁴⁰

Secondly, the *relatio* pointed out that this addition to the text made clear the **decisive** role that Tradition could play in arriving at certainty with regard to some Catholic doctrines: “This safeguards the Catholic doctrine — hallowed by the constant praxis of the Church — according to which she can draw her certainty about what is revealed in Scripture only when Scripture is united with Tradition. Therefore, in cases where Scripture alone is insufficient for attaining that certainty, Tradition can furnish the decisive argument.”⁴¹

In these observations of the *relator*, no doubt, we can see reflected the principal reason why Paul VI wanted to see this kind of insertion — particularly if we keep in mind the urgent requests he had received less than a month earlier from Fathers who held the ‘material insufficiency’ or ‘constitutive-Tradition’ view of revelation.⁴² In the effort to avoid taking sides on this question of the material sufficiency or insufficiency of Scripture as a repository of the Christian mysteries, the schema had left only implicit (at best) the truth which all orthodox Catholics agreed on, but which had been rejected

³⁵ “. . . quo fit ut Ecclesia certitudinem suam non de omnibus revelatis per solam Scripturam hauriat.”

³⁶ That is, “*veritatibus*” was added before “*revelatis*.”

³⁷ “*Sacrae Scripturae complexum mysterii christiani referunt, quin omnes veritates revelatae in eis expresse enuntiantur.*”

³⁸ “*Sacrae Scripturae complexum mysterii christiani continent, quin omnes veritates revelatae ex ipsis solis probari queant.*”

³⁹ “. . . non omnem veritatem catholicam ex sola Scriptura sine adiutorio Traditionis et Magisterii certo hauriri posse.”

⁴⁰ AS IV, V, 740.

⁴¹ “*In tuto ponitur doctrina catholica, constanti Ecclesiae praxi sancita, iuxta quam Ecclesia certitudinem suam de revelatis haurit per sacram Scripturam non nisi cum Traditione coniunctam; quapropter, ubi ad illam certitudinem assequendam Scriptura sola non sufficit, Traditio decisivum afferre potest argumentum*” (*ibid.*, 740-741). Archbishop Florit also added another reassurance to the Fathers that this latest insertion still left open the disputed point: “Two things are clear: Tradition is not presented as a quantitative supplement to Sacred Scripture; but neither is Scripture presented as a codification of revelation in its entirety. (. . . *patet: nec Traditionem praesentari veluti quantitativum S. Scripturae supplementum; nec S. Scripturam praesentari veluti integrae revelationis codificationem.*”) (*ibid.*, 741).

⁴² Cf. above, end of section 1(b) of this essay.

by the Protestant Reformers in urging their *sola Scriptura* norm: that is, the truth that Tradition can be *decisive* in giving us certainty about some aspects of revealed truth.

It will be convenient to reproduce here the entire text of article 9, preceded by that amended passage in article 8 referring to the canon of Scripture which we have already discussed.⁴³ Regular type is used for what was carried through from the second schema, and bold type for the subsequently amended or added statements:

[8] . . . **Through the same Tradition the complete canon of the Sacred Books is made known to the Church, and the Sacred Writings themselves are unceasingly activated in her and more deeply understood.** . . . [9] Hence there is a close connection and communication between Sacred **Tradition** and Sacred **Scripture**, since both of them, flowing from the same source, coalesce together in a certain way and tend toward the same goal. **For Sacred Scripture consists of the very words of God insofar as they are put in writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit; while through Sacred Tradition the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles is transmitted intact to their successors, so that in their preaching they can faithfully guard, expound, and diffuse that word under the illumination of the Spirit of truth. Consequently, it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty regarding all that has been revealed.** Hence, both Scripture and Tradition are to be received and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence.⁴⁴

It can be seen from a comparison of the above passages with the corresponding parts of the initial, rejected schema that much of the substance of the latter was eventually restored in the final text of *Dei Verbum*, although in a less apologetic and more pastoral style. The titles of this chapter and of the whole document no longer speak of two *fontes* of revelation; on the other hand, by specifying Tradition as our means of knowing the complete canon of Scripture, the text clearly leans toward the view — although without rigorously implying it — that this revealed truth, at least, comes to us exclusively through Tradition.⁴⁵ And this identification of the canonical books was the same truth which the initial 1962 schema had singled out to illustrate its affirmation that “Tradition is the one and only way in which certain revealed truths are made clear and become known to the Church.”⁴⁶

Hence, the main difference between the first schema and the final text is that the former asserted the existence of other revealed truths (unspecified, but distinct from the question of the canon) which are known exclusively through Tradition, while the latter does not pass judgement on that point. Thanks to Pope Paul’s timely intervention, however, the final text stressed that the Church’s “certainty” about her articles of faith does not always come from “Scripture alone.” Without the insertion he requested, the text might well have been open to the ‘protestantizing’ interpretation that the Church may need to revise her *certainty* regarding a number of doctrines — including even solemnly defined ones such as the Blessed Virgin’s bodily Assumption or the legitimacy of venerating images — which, by common consent, are not taught clearly or explicitly in Scripture. We can thus see in Paul’s intervention in the conciliar proceedings an important historical instance of Peter ‘confirming his brethren in the faith’ (cf. Lk. 22: 32) at a time when a false and dangerous idea had gained considerable influence at high levels of the world’s Catholic academy and episcopate.

⁴³ Cf. above, section 1(b) of this essay.

⁴⁴ “[8] . . . *Per eandem Traditionem integer Sacrorum Librorum canon Ecclesiae innotescit, ipsaeque Sacrae Litterae in ea penitius intelleguntur et indesinenter actuosae redduntur;* . . . [9] *Sacra Traditio ergo et Sacra Scriptura arte inter se connectuntur et communicant. Nam ambae ex eadem scaturigine promanantes, in unum quodammodo coalescunt et in eundem finem tendunt. Etenim Sacra Scriptura est locutio Dei quatenus divino afflante Spiritu scripto consignatur; Sacra autem Traditio verbum Dei, a Christo Domino et a Spiritu Sancto Apostolis concreditum, successoribus eorum integre transmittit, ut illud, prae lucente Spiritu veritatis, praeconio suo fideliter servent, exponant atque diffundant; quo fit ut Ecclesia certitudinem suam de omnibus revelatis non per solam Sacram Scripturam hauriat. Quapropter utraque pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia suscipienda et veneranda est*” (AAS 58 [1966] 821). (At the beginning of article 9 the order of the words *Traditio* and *Scriptura* in the definitive text is the reverse of that in *Schema II*.)

⁴⁵ Karl Rahner has argued that even the canon of Scripture is not known exclusively from Tradition. He writes: “When the Council says that the extent of the canon of Scripture is known from tradition, it must be noted that the formulation of the proposition is positive, not exclusive” (*op. cit.*, 1551 [cited above, n. 17]). On the basis of an argument whose logic seems far from clear to this writer, Rahner goes on to maintain that the canon is known from Scripture as well as Tradition, in the sense that “Scripture attests itself as canonical for the *Church* itself” (*ibid.*, 1553, emphasis in original). What seems to be lacking in this and other recent attempts to establish the ‘material sufficiency’ of Scripture is an awareness of the problem of ‘self-referential’ refutation which has been highlighted in modern British philosophy. If the proposition P — “All revealed truth is contained in Scripture” — is true, it could only be a revealed truth, not a naturally knowable truth. But in that case, P itself must be contained in Scripture if it is to be true. But since this is plainly **not** true (for no passage of Scripture teaches or implies that all revealed truth is contained in “Scripture,” meaning either the 66 books of the Protestant canon or the 73 of the Catholic canon), P is therefore false. This argument is developed in B.W. Harrison, “Logic and the Foundations of Protestantism” (*Faith & Reason*, 16 [Fall 1990], 233-250). Cf. also above, n. 26 regarding the attitude of the Second Council of Nicaea.

⁴⁶ Cf. above, n. 22. The initial schema had, in this context, specified not only the canon of the biblical books, but also their inspiration and integrity. However the omission of these two words from the final text is not particularly significant. Inspiration is part of the very definition of canonicity, while the “integrity” of the sacred books is also arguably implicit in the guarantee of their canonicity.