The Unity of Scripture and Tradition

A Comparative Study of *De Revelatione* of Vatican II and the Second Section of the Faith and Order Conference of Montreal, 1963.

EMMANUEL E. JAMES

To begin with, we should note that there are at least three approaches to the problem of the relation between Scripture and Tradition, namely: (a) Tradition as opposed to Scripture, (b) Tradition *and* Scripture, and (c) the unity of Scripture and Tradition. Based upon the understanding of the unity of Bible and Tradition as it is given by the Constitution on Divine Revelation of the Second Vatican Council and by the second section of the Faith and Order Conference of Montreal, 1963, the position taken in this article is that there is unity of Scripture and Tradition. This issue of the relation between Scripture and Tradition is a historical necessity and even a logical necessity. The two documents mentioned above with which we shall be concerned are excellent examples of this. For when the non-Catholic examines *De Revelatione*, he is examined by it and when a Catholic examines the Montreal Report, he is examined by it.

An understanding of the unity of Bible and Tradition is to be understood in the following frame of reference. The work of God in Christ gives rise to an apostolic tradition stamped by the divine seal of revelation which makes it a valid tradition, instead of a human one. The existence of Christian tradition and its theological consideration is the result of the form given by God in His soteriological intervention. The Gospel is an act of God accomplished once-for-all in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This divine act (or series of acts) of revelation and redemption are not to be repeated. Since they are situated in the past, they can only be known through the attestation of those who witnessed them; an attestation which must be handed on after the death of the first witnesses, so that the work of divine salvation may continue to be proclaimed to the world and that the world might believe and be saved. After the death of the Apostles this tradition is crystallized in writing.

The object of tradition according to the New Testament, is the body of Christian teaching derived from the apostolic testimony to Jesus (Luke 1:2; 1 John 1:1; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 Peter 1:16: Jude 3). St. Paul develops the idea of tradition. He points out that the faith of the believers and their way of life i.e. faith and life of witnesses to Christ are determined by tradition (Romans 6:17; 1 Corinthians 11:2; Colossians 2:6 f.; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6). St. Paul affirms that tradition flows from the Lord (1 Cor. 11:23). We now find the tradition enshrined in Holy Scriptures. Just as the apostolic tradition alone is valid because it alone bears on the work of God in Christ of which it is the authentic commentary, so Scripture, which contains the apostolic *depositum*, is for the Church the sole authorised expression of tradition. By the work of the living Spirit, Christ remains the source and guarantor of the tradition which concerns His redeeming work. Thus tradition is closely related to the Scriptures which bears witness to the revelation, the revelation which tradition hands on.

I

De Revelatione

Along with the Constitution *De Ecclesia* (*Lumen Gentium*), the Constitution *De Revelatione* (*Dei Verbum*) is the most important and fundamental document produced by the Second Vatican Council. This document is of basic significance to the theologian. In order to understand it adequately, we should keep in mind the dramatic process this Constitution went through, ever since it was presented on November 14, 1962 during the First Session of the Vatican Council entitled: *De Fontibus Revelationis* (On the Sources of Revelation) to *De Divina Revelatione* (On the Divine Revelation) which was promulgated on November 18, 1965. Thus, the change in the title indicates an important shift in emphasis. It begins with the revealing act of God and when Tradition is mentioned, it points out basically the revelation of God in Christ, as it was and is handed down in the Church through the power and work of the Holy Spirit. The history of salvation and the Word of salvation make up the importance of this Constitution. In the light of this central event, the issue of the relation between Scripture and Tradition is second in importance, in *De Revelatione.*

The Second Vatican Council did not take sides among theologians who hold different views on the question of Scripture and Tradition such as: (a) that the entire Revelation is in Scripture and also in Tradition, or (b) that only a part of Revelation is in Scripture while all of it is in Tradition, or (c) as the original text *De Fontibus Revelationis* held that a part of Revelation is in Scripture and another part in Tradition

alone i.e. Tradition as a partial source of faith, complementary to and independent of Scripture.[1]

The last view mentioned above is the generally accepted Tridentine view. The Council of Trent found it difficult to clearly define the difference between traditions which merely witnessed to ancient usages in the Church and those which represented the revelation of Christ. Though theologians and Church historians have tried to clarify the point, all questions involved are not solved. Prof. Geiselmann has pointed out that in the decree of the Council of Trent about Scripture and tradition the *et* between *libris scriptis* and *sine scripto traditionibus*,[2] does not mean *partim-partim*, but that it is *neutral* (cf. Geiselmann, J.: *Die heilige Schrift und die Tradition*, Freiburg, 1962). In contrast to this Fr. Georges Tavard suggests that *et* has a *conjunctive* sense, inseparably joining Scripture and Tradition (the mutual inherence) so that neither can be understood without the other.[3] Tavard also points out that Trent reserved the word "source" to the Gospel, and accordingly maintained its singularity; in the second, this source was not a source 'of Revelation,' since its was the Gospel, that is, the Revelation itself. The first Council of the Vatican was aware of this: in its Constitution *de Fide Catholica* (April 24, 1870) it repeated the Tridentine formulation, simply replacing the word *fons* ("source") and the expression *haec veritas et disciplina* by the phrase *haec supernaturalis revelatio*, thus identifying the one source of faith with Revelation itself (Denz. 1787)."[4]

The Second Vatican Council still maintains the distinction between Scripture and Tradition, made by the Council of Trent as can be seen in the oft repeated references to it in *De Revelatione*. But it is placed in a new context. This newly formulated concept of Tradition opens the possibility of a new way of looking at things. Scripture and tradition are not explicitly distinguished as separate "sources". Scripture together with Tradition is the supreme rule of faith (cf. Article 21). According to Tavard, "on the extension of Revelation in Scripture and Tradition, the stress is put on the necessary unity of the two and on their value as channels of transmission of the Gospel."[5] In *De Revelatione* we do not find any reference to Scripture as superior to tradition in the sense that Scripture

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[1] cf. *De Revelatione*, Art. 7, Fn. 15, p. 115.

[2] Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 783. For the non-Latinist, we may point out that *et* means 'and', in the phrase "books of Scripture '*(libris scriptis)* and unwritten Traditions (sine scripto traditionibus).'" *Partim-partim*: 'partly in both.'

[3] Tavard: *Holy Writ or Holy Church* (London, 1959). Also cf. Skydsgaard, K. E.,: "Scripture and Tradition", in: *Scottish Journal of Theology* 9, 1956, pp. 357-8; and Persson, P. E., *Roman and Evangelical*, pp. 22-24.

[4] Baum, G. (ed.), *Ecumenical Theology Today*, p. 21.

[5] Tavard, G. H., Commentary on *De Revelatione*, p. 15.

alone contains the Word of God independently of Tradition. Tradition has not been swallowed up into an interpretative function with regard to Scripture. In the continuation of God's manifestation, this transmission is identical with the divine act of speaking in history. There is an indissoluble link between Scripture and tradition as acts of God's speaking to man. They both together make revelation.

The Holy Tradition and Holy Scripture are connected and communicated with each other very closely. Both of them flow from the same divine source, make up so to speak only a unity and tend towards the same goal. The Scripture is the act of the Word of God inasmuch as it is written down in writing through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Tradition transmits fully the Word of God (*verbum Dei*) entrusted to the Apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Tradition hands this on to the successors of the Apostles so that led by the Spirit of Truth the successors can transmit (preach) it faithfully. Hence it follows that the Church does not draw its certainty from Scripture alone. On this basis, Pope Paul VI added the formula (at the last moment): "Consequently, it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed"[6] The footnote to this draws our attention to the end of Article 12 of *De Revelatione* where there is a reference to the relation of the Magisterium to Scripture and Tradition which will be developed shortly.

Article 8 of *De Revelatione* describes the concept of Tradition endorsed by Vatican II. Revelation takes place both by words and deeds. Similarly tradition is transmitted not only by words but also gestures and realities (cf. Article 8). According to Fr. Y. Congar,[7] Tradition is the educational or instructional part of the life of the Church—living Tradition is the living communication of style of life, of truths you cannot grasp but the sole guarantor of which is the Holy Spirit. Tradition in its relation to Scriptures, is a continuous tradition of understanding and explanation, preserves and re-expresses their meaning, applies them, and at times solves the new problems that arise. With regard to the transmission of Tradition, it is not only a matter of teaching but as the Article points out, is a matter of "teaching, life and worship."

Article 9 to which reference has already been made, insists on the functional unity of Scripture and Tradition, following from the divine source. "On the basis of this radical unity of Scripture and Tradition, the Vatican Council is led to endorse the formula of the Council of Trent: 'Equal pious affection and reverence' (*pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia*) are due to both."[8]

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[6] *De Revelatione* (Abbott, W. M. (ed.), Art. 9, cf. Fn. 21, p. 117.
[7] Congar, Y. M-J., *The Meaning of Tradition*, (New York, 1964).
[8] Tavard, G. H., Commentary on *De Revelatione*, p. 17.

Now let us consider Article 10 which emphasises the co-ordination and interplay of Scripture, tradition and magisterium (the teaching office of the Church). In theory the separate values of Scripture and Tradition may be answered but in practise all three function together, as they are essential for the life of the Church. Here the duad of Scripture and Tradition becomes a trilogy, where the Magisterium becomes the third term. Magisterium's task is to authentically interpret the deposit of the Word of God (which includes Scripture and Tradition). Magisterium is not above the Word of God but it "serves it" (*magisterium Scripturae ministrat*). It has been pointed out that the danger of committing an error is avoided by the Church's magisterium by the indwelling presence of Christ's Spirit. "It is perhaps, here that one has to try to explain the anxiety that the text betrays as it seeks to find a clear criterion of authority alongside the Scripture and the Tradition and declare that 'in order to keep the Gospel forever whole and alive within the Church the Apostles left Bishops as their successors, handing over to them the authority to teach in their own place' and see in this succession solely the foundation of 'sacred Tradition'" (Art. 17).[9]

In the future development of theology, it is essential to develop fully the common responsibility of the Church as a whole. The identification between the "living teaching office" and the clergy is no longer necessary in modern times, in our times. When these issues are honestly and sincerely confronted, the need to de-clericalise the magisterium and the significance of *Consensus fidelium* (the consensus of the faithful) can be brought about.

The question of interpretation as a function of the magisterium exposes the problem of Hermeneutics which will be taken up in Section III.

II

The Montreal Report

The Second Section of the report of the Faith and Order Conference of Montreal, 1963 entitled: "Scripture, Tradition, and Traditions" is a useful and promising document underlying the terminology and approach to our subject. It gives a very clear and distinct description of Tradition.

Tradition (with a capital *T*) as denoting the essential content of God's revelation in Jesus Christ means "the Gospel itself, transmitted from generation to generation in and by the Church, Christ himself present in the life of the Church." By *tradition* (with small *t*) is meant "the traditionary process". By *traditions* is meant: (a) diversity of forms of expression and

[9] Nissiotis, N. A., *Report on the Second Vatican Council*, p. 194.

(b) our confessional and denominational traditions (cf. Para39). It must be noted that the term *traditions* is also use to denote cultural traditions—acculturation of traditions (cf. Para 64 f.). This is the basis or groundwork on which the usage of these terms are determined in this document.

This is a very helpful and clear formulation but at the same time some difficulties are involved here. First of all, we notice a problem where tradition is equated with the Gospel and with Christ, and these two are certainly not the same things. Can we say that Tradition with capital T, equals Gospel, equals Christ? Secondly, the identification of the Gospel and the living Christ present in the Church and the identification of both with tradition (with small *t*) is unacceptable to many.

In spite of these comments, the insight into the meaning of tradition offers a new breakthrough in our whole understanding of the place of tradition in the life of the Church. This reminds us of the place occupied by Tradition in the life of the Church, as something upon which we all are dependent and as something which operated from the very beginning of the Church's history, even before the New Testament Scriptures were written. It indicates the dialectical relationship between our expressions of Faith and their embodiment in confessional structures, and the Tradition (with capital T).

This makes possible a new understanding of the relation between Scripture and Tradition and the possibility of escaping from the polemical impasse where the one is simply opposed to the other. At the same time, it should not be taken to mean that all that is involved now is a simple sum in addition, scripture + tradition, or tradition + scripture; or a simple substitution of *sola traditione* for *sola scriptura* (cf. Para 45).

The Montreal Report admits clearly that the Bible itself is the result of a process of tradition (cf. Para 42), i.e. Tradition precedes Scripture. Without doubt this fact was always remembered by Protestants but due to anti-Roman Catholic polemics one did not always draw the full consequences from this fact. The Bible is inserted in the living process of tradition. It should be noted in passing that there are problems for apologetics today where sometimes some do not want traditionalism, where some want to get things from the future instead of the past.

The Protestant theologians at Montreal recognised that Scripture alone could not be true criterion of true tradition. Scriptures themselves are indispensable but they are not sufficient in themselves, independently of the hermeneutical act by which they are interpreted. While mentioning the hermeneutic act, it is not the special hermeneutic of Cullmann, or Ebeling or Fuchs that is meant, but though they are also included, it must be viewed in the greater reality of the life of the Church. For instance, we read in Para 49: "For the post-apostolic Church the appeal to the Tradition received from the apostles

became the criterion. As this Tradition was embodied in the apostolic writings, it became natural to use those writings as an authority for determining where the true Tradition was to be found. In the midst of all tradition, these early records of divine revelation have a special value, because of their apostolic character. But the Gnostic crisis in the second century shows that the mere existence of apostolic writings did not solve the problem. The question of interpretation arose as soon as the appeal to written documents made its appearance." The Gnostics also relied upon the Bible for their position. So the question that Tertullian tried to solve in *De Prescriptione*. The real question is: How do you have the capacity of interpreting the Scriptures?

Having pointed out the meaning of Tradition as it is related to the past, "to the once-for-all event of Christ's coming in the flesh, his death and resurrection and to the continuing work of the Holy Spirit within the Church" in the first two chapters of Section II, the Montreal Report proceeds to apply it to the present and future with reference to the missionary perspective (cf. Chapter 3, Para 64 f.). First of all, we should notice the missionary character of the Tradition—the vitally dynamic character of the missionary obligation as belonging to the very life of the Church. Secondly, we should note the actualities of history in which and in the context of which the Tradition has to be brought. Culture, language, nation, racial group, civilization etc.—these are the abiding and concrete realities to which the word of the Gospel must ever be related. Thirdly, mention is also made of the question of indigenisation taken in its broad sense. Fourthly, we see them struggling with the categories of *catholicity* (as both a gift and a task) and the *una sancta*, and these two raise the ultimate questions for our confessional structures. Finally, we notice the *eschatological dimension* of the Tradition: (a) The relevance of the eschatological perspective for the Church's own life and structure; (b) The recognition of the Holy Spirit in the Church as an eschatological reality; and (c) The eschatological perspective as the criterion by which we can distinguish between evangelism and propaganda.

It is painful to note how the Montreal Report struggles at places to express itself due to the "Churches with many different backgrounds and many different histories".[10] This becomes painfully evident in Para 47 and especially, Para 48. Due to such existential conditions, many W.C.C. documents are diluted in their final form!

III

Mutual Conformity and Difference

After examining very briefly the Montreal Report and *De*

[10] cf. Opening sentence of Para 38, Montreal Report, 1963.

Revelatione, we shall now see where they agree and differ from each other.

First of all, let us see a very interesting phenomenon. There are six chapters in *De Revelatione* out of which four chapters (chapters 3 to 6) are devoted to the Scriptures. This is extraordinary for a Roman Catholic document. And when we read Section II of the Montreal Report, though the title is: "Scripture, Tradition and Traditions", the report devotes itself mostly to the problem of Tradition. This is extraordinary for a Protestant document. Thus both documents start from different positions but arrive at a balanced view of the relation between Scripture and Tradition. At least an attempt is made in that direction and it is an encouraging sign.

The basic convergence can be seen where both the documents begin from salvation history prepared in the history of Israel and reaching its fulness in Jesus Christ. Here is a specific ecumenical framework determined by the epiphany of Christ fulfilling the covenant of God in Israel and inaugurating the economy of the renewed covenant which from thenceforward is definitive.

Both the documents emphasise the close connection between Scripture and Tradition. For instance, we can compare Article 9 and especially the first part of Article 10 of *De Revelatione* with Para 45 of Montreal Report. We start from the fact that we all live in a Tradition "which goes back to our Lord and has its roots in the Old Testament, and are all indebted to that tradition inasmuch as we have received the revealed truth, the Gospel, through its being transmitted from one generation to another. Thus we can say that we exist as Christians by the Tradition of the Gospel (the *paradosis* of the *kerygma*) testified in Scripture, transmitted in and by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit". The first sentence of Article 10 of *De Revelatione* reads: "Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, which is committed to the Church".

However, while the Montreal document made a more determined effort to try to explain the different meanings of the term tradition reflecting the complexity of reality that the text has in view, *De Revelatione* has not defined what it means by the term tradition in its various usages of that term. Though *De Revelatione* does not explain this in such a conceptual and theological way, one can distinguish the following meanings of tradition, in Chapter II: (a) The reality of Tradition which is the very essence of revelation the aim of which is to be transmitted (cf. Art. 7); (b) The tradition as an act of transmission worked by the Apostles transmitting the contents of the Gospel, (cf. Art. 8, first and second paragraphs); and (c) Tradition as an act of transmission concerning canonical

[11] cf. Para 45, Montreal Report, 1963.

Scriptures (Art. 8, paragraph 3, ... where we see, there is a progress in the awareness of revelation). In Article 7, second paragraph and Article 9, the successors of the Apostles play an essential role as the magisterium of the Church which alone is entrusted with the true interpretation (cf. Art. 10, second paragraph). Here we encounter an extraordinary complication of the problem of tradition.

Even so, the two documents agree (if you leave aside the question of confessional traditions which are not mentioned in *De Revelatione*), there are two principal forms or modes of Tradition: (a) Tradition as the Gospel transmitted, namely the contents of tradition—TRADITUM; and (b) Tradition as an act of transmission and of interpretation—ACTUS TRADENDI.

The whole problematic of the whole question of Christian Tradition can be summed up as: the relation between what is transmitted—the *traditum* and the act itself of transmitting—*actus tradendi*. The relations between these two have many aspects out of which: (a) the problem of the intimate relation between the ontology of the *traditum* and the noetic of *actus tradendi*; (b) the problem of the progress of tradition; and (c) the problem of the magisterium, should be noted.

The convergences mentioned above, however, do not disguise the fact that the differences are yet to be overcome. These are particularly evident when we ask about the relationship between Scripture and the life of the Church (which is the deposit of Scripture and tradition). In the view presented in *De Revelatione*, it is difficult to understand whether the Apostolic witness collected in the Scriptures is really genuine. It seems that instead of giving place for the full development of the Apostolic witness, the life and even the vitality of the Church are given more importance, and this blocks or stands in the way of the full development of the Apostolic witness. The differences become even clearer when we ask in what way the Apostolic witness can and must be interpreted by the Church. Even if all churches acknowledge the necessity of interpretation and give the Church a large role in this task, nevertheless, none of them may agree to the function of the Magisterium in the same way. The peculiar bond existing between the life of the Church and the Magisterium exercised by the successor of St. Peter remains, in the future also, as a source of differences.

The problem of Hermeneutics is implied in the foregoing paragraph. Both the documents raise this issue but they did not find the way in which the tradition, the apostolic tradition, the body is actualised in such a way that the actualisation does not constitute an augmentation, a change in the primary body of the tradition. How does *actus tradendi* not have its effect upon *traditum*? This is a very important question. How can a fact of the past have a present meaning? How can the meaning which emerges later, or how can the

later discovered meaning do justice to what was and what remains? These are important hermeneutical questions, and in this context we find Montreal Report pointing out the necessity for a hermeneutical principle.[12] As far as the Roman Catholic Church is concerned, there seems to be a dualism of exegesis and dogmatics in contemporary Roman Catholicism. Two noted Roman Catholic centres for these studies are: "Ecole Biblique de Jerusalem" and the "Institutum Biblicum" in Rome. The exegetical questions are raised in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of *De Revelatione*. These chapters should be read along with Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943). The hermeneutical problem raises the issues of Inspiration (cf. Art. 11); Interpretation (cf. Articles 12, 16, 21, 23, 24 and 25); Texts and translations (cf. Art. 25) and of course the important question of the *Canon*. *De Revelatione* does not mention the significance of the event of the formation of the Canon. The formation of canon is an important step in the history of salvation but this is not taken into consideration in the *De Revelatione*.

Finally, let us look at an important point of difference. In contrast to the biblical trend in the Roman Catholic Church, we also notice the development of Mariology in our time, especially since the promulgation, in 1950, of the dogma of Mary's assumption. This again takes us back to the historical causes of the origin of the Canon. During the beginning of second century, some apocryphal Gospels (in contrast to the canonical Gospels) played an important role in the tradition of the Church. For instance, the proto-Gospel of James is to a large extent responsible for the development of Mariology. In the context of the relation of Scripture and Tradition, if *De Revelatione* had said something about the claims for such dogmas or doctrines such as the Assumption of Mary, as based upon living tradition, it would have been very helpful. To me, the problem arises when this kind of dogma or doctrine is promulgated on par with, on the same level as, for instance the doctrine of the Trinity which is implicit in the New Testament. Can such a doctrine be declared a matter of Christian faith? Here we see the danger of tradition becoming a dogma without reference to the Holy Scriptures. Under these circumstances, one is tempted to ask what is the role of tradition in salvation? Is it the tradition or the Gospel or Christ that saves? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in this?

"It is vitally important that the distinction between the substance of a dogma and the linguistic form should gain ground in the Roman Catholic Church. In tradition there must be an endeavour, a struggle, to find adequate linguistic forms, which no church can evade. But this is not merely a matter of linguistic expressions. The Word of God can throw

[12] cf. Paras 52-55 of Montreal Report, 1963.

critical light on a whole doctrinal tradition and force the Church into a radical process of revaluation".[13]

IV

Scope for Ecumenical Dialogue

The Ecumenical Dialogue should have the vertical and the horizontal dimensions to it because it is the dialogue initiated by God. If not agreement, at least the understanding of the relationship between the Roman Catholics' (cf. *De Revelatione*) and the Protestants' (cf. Montreal Report) position is a step towards unity.

There is no doubt that we are living at a time when the possibilities of ecumenical dialogue have become a reality and the spirit of the two documents under our consideration are valid proofs for this. In the emphasis of *De Revelatione* on the importance of the Scriptures and the emphasis of Montreal Report on the significance of Tradition, a promising development has been initiated.

De Revelatione also recommends and encourages the study of the Bible (Art. 26). It also encourages Biblical studies and historic-critical investigation. Chapter 6 of *De Revelatione* must become the reality in the life of the Church. This is a great promise to the Roman Catholic Church and the ecumenical movement.

Both the documents indicate the awareness of the need to re-examine the respective conceptions or beliefs in tradition cf. footnote for Art. 7, paragrph two of *De Revelatione* and Para 55 of Montreal Report. Thus on the ecumenical level, the dialogue on the problem of tradition is making progress.

As Vatican II did not endorse the two source theory of Revelation, there is a good chance of Catholic-Protestant ecumenical dialogue as a step towards an ecumenical consensus. In dealing with these problems, it is not a matter of going back to the Reformation and starting tracing or picking up the threads from there, as some do, it calls for a fresh study, a re-examination, a renewal in the Catholic-Protestant approach so that they may begin with where it all began namely, in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the golden age of Apostolic Christianity.

De Revelatione in the last sentence of Article 22, calls for the translation of the Scriptures into local languages, and recommends for this new task cooperative work with the separated brethren. Cooperative translations have already begun in some places.

However, the Protestant-Catholic dialogue still has many

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[13] Minear, P. S. (ed.), Report of the European Section in—*Faith and Order Findings*, p. 54.

problems to solve and hurdles to cross. For instance, speaking about the "separated brethren", note Article 21 (footnotes 73 and 74, p. 363) of *De Ecumenismo*: "Calling upon the Holy Spirit, they *seek* in these sacred Scriptures God as He speaks to them in Christ...". This should be read in relation to the last sentence of Article 22 of *De Revelatione*: "And if, given the opportunity and the approval of Church authority, these translations are produced in cooperation with the separated brethren as well, all Christians will be able to use them". However, the original text of Article 21 of *De Ecumenismo* read: "Moved by the Holy Spirit, they (the separated brethren) *find* in these very Scriptures God speaking to them in Christ..." (italics mine). Here again we see that the change is a Papal modification at the last moment. The original text corresponded with Article 7 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. "However, the fact of the change and the difference between the texts which speak about Protestants in reference to this matter and those which speak about Catholics is objectionable, especially as the wording places Protestants in questionable proximity to the Athenians in Acts 17:27: 'that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him'".[14]

In spite of that, it is possible that we can now pursue a dialogue because it takes place in the Christian framework and it can be conducted in the spirit of faith, hope, love and the sign of truth. The ecumenical dialogue started in the sign of love must also meet the demands of truth.

It is true that at this moment, the breakthrough is more in terms of promise than an achievement and that the new insights already disclosed will require time and courageous application if they are to prove effective in the life of the churches.

[14] Cullmann, O., "The Bible in the Council", in: *The Dialogue on the Way*, p. 143.