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Cardinal Bea's Unity Secretariat: Engine of Renewal and Reform at Vatican II

At the daily meetings of Vatican II in the transformed St. Peter's Basilica, the General Secretary began the proceedings by reading out the list of those who were scheduled to speak that day on the draft-text then being considered. When Cardinal Augustin Bea was to speak, his name came toward the middle, after other Cardinals and before bishops, since he had low seniority among Cardinals, having become a cardinal only recently—as last in Pope John XXIII's creation of new cardinals in December 1959. But it is a commonplace that when Bea's turn to speak did come, the coffee bars were empty and most of the Council members were at their places to hear Bea's interventions. Many Council members expected important contributions from Cardinal Bea, because of his special service as the ecumenical conscience of Vatican II.

Here, I will not go over Bea's Council discourses in St. Peter's, since information on them is accessible in Stjepan Schmidt's biography of the Cardinal.¹ Also they are all mentioned in their context of council debate in the volumes of the Alberigo-Komonchak *History of Vatican II*.

My point of departure is a new publication, Mauro Velati's 900-page compilation of texts and minutes of meetings of Bea's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity from late 1960 into early 1962, when the Secretariat functioned as one of the preparatory bodies producing drafts texts for the Council.² Velati presents, with helpful introductions, the genesis of texts—through initial drafting, a critical review by members and consultants, and final polishing—which the Secretariat sent on to one of two destinations, that is, either to other preparatory bodies, such as the Preparatory Theological Commission, as ecumenically helpful suggestions for the

¹ *Augustin Bea, the Cardinal of Unity* (New Rochelle, NY: New City, 1992), 536–70, giving testimonies to the impact of the Cardinal's nineteen interventions and relating what he said on Constitutions and Decrees other than those in the care of the Secretariat. Schmidt's Appendix 2, pp. 774–76, catalogues these interventions by Bea.

² Mauro Velati, ed., *Dialogo e rinnovamento. Verbali e testi del segretariato per l'unità dei cristiani nella preparazione del concilio Vaticano II (1960–1962)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011). This work is unique, since we do not have such a published record of the genesis of texts by any of the other Vatican II preparatory bodies. Their paper trail begins with the presentation of their completed draft texts to the Central Preparatory Commission during its meetings from November 1961 to June 1962.

work of the other body, or to the Central Preparatory Commission as schemas proposed by the Secretariat to be taken up by the whole Council.

This newly accessible record of the Secretariat fuses with earlier studies of the Secretariat to show even more convincingly that it was a significant “engine of renewal and reform” in the Council. Cardinal Bea had a central role here, being Pope John XXIII’s appointee as the Secretariat’s first President upon its founding in June 1960, from which time a remarkable communality of intention developed between the Pope and Bea.³ Bea began the Secretariat’s work, in concert with the “chief operations officer,” Johannes Willebrands, through the appointment of the Secretariat’s members and consultants. He then plotted the creation of sub-commissions to treat the topics by which the ecumenical cause would be honored—and not impeded—by the council and he intervened in influential ways in the 1960–62 meetings on amending the texts.⁴

This essay will relate, first, selected highlights of *ressourcement* theology in the Secretariat’s initial proposals for the Council.⁵ Second, I will treat Card. Bea’s role in the Central Preparatory Commission, where he became allied with a small but significant group of critics of many of the prepared schemas, especially of texts coming from the Theological Commission. Third, I will reflect on the ongoing historical significance of the documents that Bea’s Secretariat saw through the process leading to their approval. These texts include not only the Vatican II

³ On the founding of the Secretariat, see Jerome-Michael Vereb, C.P., “Because He Was a German!” *Cardinal Bea and the Origins of Roman Catholic Engagement in the Ecumenical Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

⁴ Velati gives a full listing of the members and initial consultants in *Dialogo e rinnovamento*, 103–10, adding the make-up the Secretariat’s initial fourteen sub-commissions on pp. 173–74. Willebrands was a key person, since he had coordinated the Catholic Conference on Ecumenical Questions, which since 1952 had brought together in yearly meetings the Catholic ecumenical experts, several of whom became members or consultants of the Secretariat. M. Velati treated the Conference in Chapters I–V of his monograph, *Una difficile transizione. Il cattolicesimo tra unionismo ed ecumenismo (1952–1964)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996).

⁵ *Ressourcement* indicates the process, flourishing in some European Catholic centers in the period 1945–60, of drawing upon Christian sources of Scripture, Church Fathers, and early liturgies, to adopt from them more vital formulations than were common in the doctrine and theology of the day. It is linked with *aggiornamento*, updating or modernizing, and with “development,” the progressive drawing out of implications from current teaching, to designate changes in Catholic teaching and practice brought to the fore by Vatican II. See John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 36–43.

Decree on Ecumenism, but as well—and especially—the Declarations on Religious Liberty and on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, especially to Judaism.

The conclusion will be that Bea's Secretariat deserves a central place in a satisfactory global interpretation of Vatican II, (1) because it proposed *ressourcement* theology during the preparation, (2) because Bea voiced critical judgments early on which in time echoed in many at interventions at Vatican II in the following months, and (3) because Bea's Secretariat saw through the council's complex process three documents which embody in unmistakable ways the reforming character of Vatican II. The council documents on religious liberty, *Dignitatis humanae*, and on non-Christian religions, *Nosta aetate*, along with the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, are part of what Joseph Ratzinger called a "counter-syllabus" reversing salient Catholic attitudes of critical opposition toward major developments of modern cultural, political, and religious history. Today the significance of the Secretariat's documents is emphatically underscored by Sacerdotal Society of St. Pius X, that is, the followers of Abp. Marcel Lefebvre, which takes them as prime examples of Vatican II's rupture with the age-old Catholic tradition.

1. *Bea's SPCU as Proponent of Ressourcement during Vatican II's Preparation*

In Vol. I of *History of Vatican II*, Joseph Komonchak worked out basic contrasts that emerged during Vatican II's 1960–62 preparation between the Preparatory Theological Commission, led by Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani and Fr. Sebastian Tromp, and the Bea–Willebrands Unity Secretariat.⁶ There is no need to belabor the broad fissure that separated these two Vatican II preparatory bodies. The Theological Commission's schemas massively referenced the papal encyclicals from Leo XIII to Pius XII, while drawing minimally on biblical and patristic theology. In the Commission's *De ecclesia*, the Church originates in decisions by God and by Christ, the divine founder, who instituted offices and conferred powers for directing the earthly ecclesial

⁶ See the sections on the SPCU and on "Doctrine and Dialogue," in Komonchak's Chapter III on Vatican II's preparation in G. Alberigo and J. Komonchak, eds. *History of Vatican II*, vol. 1, *Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II. Toward a New Era in Catholicism* (Maryknoll: Orbis, and Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 263–300.

society. Today, from Velati's volume, we can identify better the alternative to these traits that the Secretariat offered in its documents, notably those on the Church's hierarchical offices, on the priestly people, and on the word of God in the life of the Church.

First, we have the proposal in twelve points that the Unity Secretariat gave to the Theological Commission in May 1961 treating in an ecumenically positive manner the Church's structures of hierarchy and ministerial offices.⁷ The proposal begins by setting forth a particular Christology selected out of the range of New Testament possibilities. It drew especially on Ephesians and Colossians to show ecclesial offices and authority existing in subordination to the exalted Christ. The Christological starting point had the effect of setting ministries and hierarchy in a relation of derivation from and dependence upon Christ exalted. He is the present Head of the body, who has a wide-ranging saving influence to reconcile all things in himself, making peace on earth and in the heights (Col 1:18–20). The exalted Christ works through the Holy Spirit, who is the principle of Church unity and the source in it of growth in life, faith, and charity. Christ is not only Founder by historical decisions giving his followers a durable social structure, but he remains the influential Head as well as the cornerstone from whom the Temple and House of God grows (Eph 2:20–22). The risen and exalted Christ does not retire once the Apostles and their successors begin their mandated services. This is *ressourcement* ecclesiology, taken over from the biblical theology of Lucien Cerfaux on the Church and Christ in the Pauline corpus.⁸

⁷ Velati, *Dialogo e rinnovamento*, 342–46. The Secretariat's Sub-commission 2 prepared the proposal, under the direction of Abp. Lorenz Jaeger of Paderborn, with an important oral comment on the primacy of Christ made by Alberto Bellini of Bergamo (pp. 225). Even though the Theological Commission made little, if any, use of the proposal, its contents eventually entered Vatican II's *Lumen gentium* during its successive revisions, as shown by Eduard Stakemeier in "Leimotive der Kirchenkonstitution in einem Votum des Einheitssekretariats vom 20. April 1961," in Otto Semmelroth, ed., *Martyria – Liturgia – Diakonia. Festschrift für Hermann Volk* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1968), 386–98.

⁸ See Lucien Cerfaux's *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959; in French, 1942), pp. 300–56, on the "mystery of Christ" and the Church in this mystery—from Ephesians and Colossians. Also Cerfaux's *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959; in French, 1954), especially pp. 397–432.

Second, the Secretariat promoted a specific kind of “people of God” ecclesiology which it also forwarded to the Theological Commission.⁹ Believers are united by faith and charity into a “sphere of the action of the Holy Spirit” in which separated Christians also move and act. But taking account of Protestant criticisms led the Secretariat to feature the dignity and responsibilities of the “royal priesthood,” which this people is, as affirmed in First Peter, Hebrews, and Revelation. They are implanted in Christ and sanctified for priestly service in the midst of the nations. The ministerial priesthood serves the priestly people who have from Christ their roles of “spiritual worship” and bold witness to the truth of God’s word. In the midst of creation, the royal priesthood carries out a redeeming, unifying, and humanizing mission to the glory of God. The glorified Christ continues his own priestly, prophetic, and royal office or task in and through the people who participate in his work and action.

Third, the Secretariat sought to promote a pastorally comprehensive biblical movement among Catholics. The effort was concentrated in a concise and elegant schema *De verbo Dei*, for submission to the Council itself, a text aiming to ground and foster a biblically enriched spirituality and care of souls permeated by God’s word.¹⁰ By this word the content and saving power of God’s revelation enters minds and hearts. This word has its witnesses in written, oral, and vital forms, from which the word echoes constantly in the Church’s worship and life. By its power, it truly becomes for believers in Christ a vital source of sturdiness in faith and of a characteristic spirituality, so as to give the Church support and strength—as *Dei Verbum* will say in its Ch. VI on Scripture in the life of the Church. Theological work should be done in the closest

⁹ Velati, *Dialogo e rinnovamento*, 369–72. Again, Lucien Cerfaux contributed a base from which to work, namely, his “Regale sacerdotium,” in *Recueil Lucien Cerfaux*, 3 vols. (Gembloux: Duculot, 1954), 2: 283–315, originally published in 1939. The text came from Sub-commission 4, from work by Bp. Emiel-Josef De Smedt, who consulted with the Louvain theologians, Gustave Thils, Gérard Philips, and L. Cerfaux himself.

¹⁰ Velati, *Dialogo e rinnovamento*, 872–83 (longer draft in French), 883–89 (condensed Latin draft, with changes introduced). The main drafter was Hermann Volk of Münster. The text received by the Central Commission in June 1962 is “De verbo Dei – Schema decreti pastoralis,” given in *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando*, Ser. II (Praeparatoria), Vol. II (Acta Comm. Praep. Centralis), Part 4 (Vatican City: Typis Vaticanis, DATE), 816–19, and in Vol. III (Acta commissionum et secretariatum), Part 2 (1969), 454–57.

possible proximity to Scripture, while pastors must lead their people in the frequent practice of devout Scripture reading, from which the whole church will receive new spiritual impulses.

Here are three theological positions articulating biblical *ressourcement* theologies for the enrichment of ecclesiology and Christian life. This is a part of the Vatican II reality, both in the conciliar event and in its documents—a part which deserves to be raised up for fresh consideration and emphasis as we re-receive the Council at its 50th anniversary.

2. Cardinal Bea's Impact in the Central Preparatory Commission, Nov. 1961–June 1962

Beginning in November 1961, the Central Preparatory Commission of ca. 90 Cardinals and Archbishops evaluated each draft text that the preparatory commissions and secretariats had completed. This was a moment of judgment on the adequacy of these drafts for distribution to the future Council members and their formal treatment in sessions in St. Peter's. Cardinal Bea made several incisive interventions on necessary ecumenical considerations not found in the drafts and on improving the use of Scripture texts in the texts.¹¹ Bea's contributions linked him with ten other Commission members who regularly intervened critically, who were then a dissatisfied minority but who became during Vatican II became leaders of the reforming majority.¹² In two dramatic confrontations, Bea anticipated many criticisms that would later rain down on the Theological Commission's draft texts on the sources of revelation and on the nature of the church during Vatican II's First Period in November and December 1962.

¹¹ Bea's biographer Stjepan Schmidt gives an account of Bea's Central Commission interventions in *Augustin Bea, the Cardinal of Unity*, 363–79, adding that the Commission met on sixty mornings during its six ten-day sessions from Nov. 1961 to June 1962, and that Bea missed only five meetings because of other commitments. Schmidt's Appendix 2 lists thirteen interventions by Bea, to which should be added his many brief remarks when he voted on the texts, that is, either to approve, reject, or approve with reservations (pp. 773–74).

¹² With Bea these included Cardinals Alfrink (Utrecht), König (Vienna), Frings (Cologne), Döpfner (Munich), Liénart (Lille), Léger (Montréal), and Suenens (Malines), who were joined by Maximos IV (Melkite Patriarch), and D. Hurley (Abp. Durban, South Africa). On two significant occasions, Card. Montini (Milan) spoke forcefully against schemas of the Preparatory Theology Commission, namely *De ordine morali* and *De tolerantia* on Church and State.

On Nov. 10, 1961, Bea treated incisively the Theological Commission's dogmatic schema, *De fontibus revelationis*, offering first nineteen corrections of inept wordings of the schema, on biblical inspiration and interpretation, and then giving a general evaluation that concluded that the text must go back for a revision, both to make it agree more completely with Pius XII's *Divino afflante Spiritu* (1943) and to relate it to issues of the day by consultation of Catholic exegetes of France, USA, Germany, and Austria.¹³

During further meetings of the Central Commission, Bea intervened less provocatively to call for reformulations introducing considerations of separated Christians, for example, by presenting the moral order in a way more intelligible to them and by urging pastors to include them in some way in their pastoral care.¹⁴ The draft on seminary studies was unilateral in its recommendation of St. Thomas, especially in consideration of the Eastern Churches. Bea reminded the Commission that Vatican II will be an ecumenical Council, not "a general synod of the Latin Church".¹⁵ Bea joined the chorus of praise for the schema on renewal of the liturgy, while adding specific backing for introducing communion under both forms and concelebration, while calling for a revised Lectionary to let the people hear much more of the Bible at mass.¹⁶

A second Bea-Ottaviani confrontation came on May 8, 1962, when the Theological Commission presented its schema on the nature of the church and on Church membership.¹⁷ Bea first remarked that these topics were of importance both for Catholics and for separated Christians and so the Secretariat had treated them in detail and even requested the formation of a mixed commission with the Theological, for collaborative work on that Commission's dogmatic schema *De ecclesia*. When this was refused, the Secretariat sent over its proposals,

¹³ *Acta et Documenta*, II, II, 1, pp. 541–48. In the subsequent voting on the schema, fifty-five other members of the Central Commission indicated their backing for Bea's critical intervention. On Dec. 15, 1961, Bea sent to the head of the Sub-Commission on amendments a further statement on *De fontibus*, adding criticism on Scripture/tradition and the Bible in the life of the Church. *Acta et Documenta*, II, IV, III/1, 33–45.

¹⁴ *Acta et Documenta*, II, II, 2, 85 and 606 (with a ten-line proposal of reformulation).

¹⁵ *Acta et Documenta*, II, II, 2, 792–93, and 4, 190 (cited).

¹⁶ *Acta et Documenta*, II, II, 3, 96 and 140.

¹⁷ Bea's incisive comments are in *Acta et Documenta*, II, II, 3, 1012–16.

but the schema before the Central Commission shows that the proposals received no serious consideration. Therefore, to inform the Central Commission and gain backing for amendments, Bea will recall certain of the Secretariat suggestions not adopted by the Theological Commission.

The schema treats extensively the internal essence of the Church, but treats minimally Christ and his intentions, which is fundamental in discussion with Protestants and the Orthodox. Similarly, there is much on the hierarchy, but little on roles of the Christian people, which does come later in Ch. IV on the laity but in fact pertains to the whole people of God. The title of Ch. I, *De ecclesia militante* (On the Church Militant) obscures essential ecclesial activities other than battling Satan and the world. Far better would be *De ecclesia peregrinante in terris* (On the Pilgrim Church on Earth). The schema moves too quickly to treat juridical bonds within the Church, neglecting the communication of life in the Lord. These and other revisions would make the draft more biblical and more intelligible to separated Christians.

On the *De ecclesia* schema's Ch. II, on Church members, Bea began with the commonplace that a majority of humans living today can be saved outside the Catholic Church. But the schema attributes this to them having a sincere desire (*votum*) of doing God's will; but this is ambiguous, since it has to apply with quite different meanings to non-Christian pagans, to Jews, to Protestants, and to Orthodox Christians.¹⁸ The account neglects the objective means of saving communion with Christ given to other Christians by baptism and by other means of grace, which the separated bodies share with Catholics.¹⁹ This part of the schema's chapter is fixated on the notion of *membrum* (member), because it sees the church only as a *corpus* or Mystical Body. But the New Testament presents other designations, such as, kingdom, vine, family, house, etc. Anyway, the schema's distinction between membership *in re / in voto* (in

¹⁸ This is drawn from the work of the Secretariat's Sub-Commission 1, in which Jerome Hamer, OP, had formulated the basic text on different ways of being related to the Church and on the elements of union with Christ. See Velati, *Dialogo e rinnovamento*, 326–29. The position became foundational for LG 15, UR 3, and all of UR Ch. III.

¹⁹ Cardinal Bea cited, without giving the author's identity, the criticism of the *votum* concept and lament over Pius XII's non-consideration of non-Catholic baptism voiced by the Heidelberg professor of Lutheran dogmatics, Peter Brunner. *Acta et Documenta*, II, II, 3, 1014, for which S. Schmidt supplied the source in a 1961 article by Brunner. *Augustin Cardinal Bea*, 366.

reality / by desire) is not a matter of full consensus in Catholic theology, and so is out of place in a dogmatic constitution of a Council.

Because of the time-constraint I will not go on to the final Central Preparatory Commission's meetings in June 1962, at which the Cardinal finally presented the Secretariat's schemas intended for treatment by the Council, namely, on religious liberty, on the Catholic practice of ecumenism, on the need of prayer for unity, and on the word of God in the Church's life. The first two were presented in tandem with chapters of the Theological Commission's *De ecclesia* and so they occasioned further Bea-Ottaviani clashes in the closing hours of work of the Central Preparatory Commission.

In the Central Preparatory Commission, Bea was a major contributor well before the Council's formal opening in October 1962 to subsequent early decisions of great importance at Vatican II. He gave evidence that discredited the Preparatory Theological Commission in the eyes of many, because that Commission had refused to cooperate with the Secretariat—which Pope John had founded. As well, Bea contributed, along with others, portions of *ressourcement* theology, which were alternatives to the Theological Commission's schemas on the sources of revelation and on the Church, which were both held by that commission to be essential in its contribution to Vatican II, but which the Council declined to accept—agreeing with Bea's judgments of months before in the Central Preparatory Commission's meetings.

3. *The Secretariat's Documents in Vatican II's "Counter-syllabus"*

In a passage seldom cited, Joseph Ratzinger linked Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, with two other Council texts, the Declarations on religious liberty, *Dignitatis humanae*, and on world religions especially on Judaism, *Nostra aetate*. The latter two arose in the Bea Secretariat and were with no little effort shepherded by it through the Council's process to the conclusion of their being approved as Council documents.²⁰ Ratzinger said that this set of texts constitutes the Catholic Church's

²⁰ On *Dignitatis humanae*, Silvia Scatena has related the tortuous itinerary from preparatory work in the Secretariat through several Aula debates and text-revisions to its final approval. *La fatica della libertà, L'elaborazione della dichiarazione "Dignitatis humanae" sulla libertà religiosa del Vaticano II* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2003), which I

“revision of the *Syllabus [of Errors]* of Pius IX,” they make up “a kind of counter-syllabus.”²¹ Ratzinger ascribes to Vatican II a corrective and reforming action by contrasting the Council’s work with Pius IX’s encyclical of 1864, *Quanta cura*, which included an appended list, a “syllabus,” of eighty erroneous views on doctrine, philosophy, ethics, political and social policy, and especially on the rights of the Catholic Church. This emblematic Catholic text of the mid-nineteenth century did not state new censures and condemnations, but instead it collected and listed those already scattered through Pius IX’s discourses and encyclical letters of the previous seventeen years.²² Ratzinger explained that “the *Syllabus* established a line of demarcation against the determining forces of the nineteenth century: against the scientific and political world view of liberalism.” But much changed between 1864 and 1965 and during this time the one-sidedness of the *Syllabus* was gradually corrected by Catholics through practical adaptations to the modern world. While this was done “along the road of actions” (“*via facti*”), it remained for Vatican II to make a basic statement of the changed relationship—which it did in its three texts on public and social issues of the modern world, including two on which the Secretariat functioned at the responsible commission.²³

The two topics of the religions, with Judaism, and of religious liberty extended the original conception of a Secretariat for Promoting the Unity of Christians. Yves Congar wrote in

presented in “New Light on Vatican Council II,” *Catholic Historical Review* 92 (2006), 609–28, at 621–28. *Nostra aetate* awaits a complete monographic treatment of its genesis

²¹ *Principles of Catholic Theology. Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987; original German edition, 1982), 381. The passage cited is from a text originating in 1975.

²² Pius IX’s *Quanta cura* and *Syllabus* were well known and taken as normative by Abp. Marcel Lefebvre. See the citations given by Gilles Routhier, “The Hermeneutic of Reform as a Task for Theology,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (2012), 219–41, on 221.

²³ Ratzinger’s “counter-syllabus” thesis of 1975 harmonizes well with what he said as Pope Benedict in the much discussed discourse of December 22, 2005. The later text offers “the hermeneutic of reform” (combining discontinuity with a deeper continuity) as an adequate global reading of Vatican Council II. See the text in *Origins* 35, no. 32 (January 26, 2006), 534–39, and the recent analyses by John W. O’Malley, “The Hermeneutic of Reform: A Historical Analysis,” *Theological Studies* 73 (September 2012), 517–46, and Joseph Komonchak, “Interpreting the Council and Its Consequences,” in *After Vatican II. Trajectories and Hermeneutics*, ed. James L. Heft with John W. O’Malley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 164–72, at 164–69.

his diary that to give religious liberty its proper doctrinal context the place to treat it was not in conjunction with ecumenism, where it started, but instead with the sections on human dignity in the schema on the Church and the modern world. Similarly, a council statement on the Jewish people would have its proper theological place in the early part of *De ecclesia* on “the people of God.”²⁴ But the Secretariat took over both topics over when it was asked to do so. First, Pope John XXIII asked Cardinal Bea to have his body review Catholic doctrine on the Church’s relation to Jews and to prepare a Council condemnation of anti-Semitism.²⁵ Second, the doctrine and practice of religious freedom was urged upon Vatican II through the Secretariat, by the World Council of Churches, which saw a Catholic development in this area as an essential condition for Catholic participation in the existing ecumenical movement. So the Secretariat worked on these questions and recruited teams of experts to develop them adequately into Council Declarations.

J. Ratzinger’s original idea of Vatican II’s “counter-syllabus” was principally focused on the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, which speaks, in a manner sharply contrasting with Pius IX’s *Syllabus*, about mutually helpful relations of Church and world, saying for example “it [the Catholic Church] is convinced that there is a great variety of help that it can receive from the world in preparing the ground for the gospel, both from individuals and from society as a whole, by their talents and activity” (GS 40). Shortly after, this statement expands into a 50-line account of “What the Church Receives from the Modern World” (GS 44).

Today, we can read Vatican II documents synchronically in their interrelations, and it is easy to show the close relation between *Gaudium et spes* and *Dignitatis humanae*. The latter’s affirmation of the inviolability of conscience and the limits of government has obvious roots in *Gaudium et spes*’s account of the dignity of the human person, especially on conscience as “the most secret core and sanctuary of the human person” (GS 16). The next paragraph expands this to speak of the excellence of actions done out of free choice and not by blind impulse or by

²⁴ Diary entry of February 6, 1964, in Y. Congar, *My Journal of the Council* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2012), 484.

²⁵ The Pope requested Bea to take up the Jews and antisemitism shortly after the institution of the Secretariat, on June 18, 1960. On the Secretariat’s first steps in this area, see Velati, *Dialogo e rinnovamento*, 46–55.

external constraint (GS 17). The latter threat to religious freedom is of course a main concern of the Declaration on Religious Liberty.

Nostra aetate, on the religions and especially the Jews, obviously expands *Lumen gentium*, the Constitution on the Church, from no. 16, which treats those who have not yet accepted the Gospel in their various relations to the people of God, with brief mention of Jews, Muslims, and followers of other religions. But there is a *Gaudium et spes* connection too. For when *Nostra aetate* urges Catholics to enter respectful dialogue with followers of other religions, it begins with a foundational affirmation of the single human community of all peoples (NA 1) and ends with an expanded repudiation of discrimination against any group of persons, for all are created in God's image (NA 5). At its beginning and end, *Nostra aetate* is applying *Gaudium et spes* on the human community and the essentially social character of human life and development (GS 26 and 28).

If the Secretariat gave Vatican II two parts of Ratzinger's "counter-syllabus," we also have to ascribe a "counter" and "corrective" character to *Unitatis redintegratio*, the Council's charter for Catholic engagement in the ecumenical movement. This Decree clearly revises the Catholic approach to separated Christians expressed in papal encyclicals, namely, Pope Leo XIII's *Satis cognitum* (1896) and Pope Pius XI's *Mortalium animos* (1928), both of which envision Christian unity solely as the return to the Catholic communion of those Christians whose forebears sadly departed into schism and heresy—a concept definitely not adopted in the Decree on Ecumenism.

The Vatican II documents that the Secretariat prepared and laboriously revised during the Council years are at the cutting edge of the Catholic Church's reconsideration of its earlier teaching and world-outlook and the preparation of statements in a new key for a new era.

Finally, the profoundly reforming character of the Vatican II documents cared for by the Secretariat is confirmed by their place in the texts central to Abp. Lefebvre's 1985 explanation of the dissenting position of his Sacerdotal Society of Pius X.

Accepting that the Declaration of Religious Freedom is contrary to the Magisterium of the Church, we demand a total revision of this text. Equally indispensable is a significant

revision of documents such as: *The Church in the World, Non-Christian Religions, Ecumenism*, and clarifications in numerous texts which lead to confusion.²⁶

Cardinal Bea and his Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity thus gave to Vatican II a small complex of texts, one Decree and two Declarations, which today make defining contributions to authentic Catholic identity—as acknowledged from both sides of the divide across which Joseph Ratzinger / Pope Benedict and the Sacerdotal Society of Pius X face each other.²⁷ Both implicitly admit, while evaluating the results in diametrically opposed ways, that the Secretariat of Cardinal Bea was an important Vatican II “engine of renewal and reform.” – When we re-receive Vatican II at its fiftieth anniversary, accuracy demands an awareness of central contributions to its body of doctrine and indicated practice of its ecumenical Secretariat.

²⁶ “Lettre de Mgr Lefebvre au cardinal Ratzinger,” of April 17, 1985, cited by Routhier, “The Hermeneutic of Reform,” 229. Card. Ratzinger declared this unacceptable in his answer of May 29, 1985. The present Superior of the SSPX, Bp. Bernard Felley, spoke of the newly elected Pope Benedict XVI in an interview of June 13, 2005, as marked by a principal failing of being attached to the Council. “For us, our position on the council is that one finds errors in it, ambiguities which lead to other errors which are worse.” Routhier, 236–37.

²⁷ As I write on Sept. 24, 2012, I am assuming that the negotiations have run aground which were recently undertaken by the Holy See to end the Lefebvrite schism, principally through the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and now focused in an office headed by Abp. Augustine Di Noia, OP. The failure, if it is the case, is in all likelihood due to reaffirmations of the standing in the Catholic body of doctrine of GS, UR, DH, and NA