

A PLAN FOR THE WHOLE COUNCIL

LÉON-JOSEF CARDINAL SUENENS

The German theologian Fr Joseph Ratzinger (personal peritus to Cardinal Frings of Cologne) judged that the failure of the Council to approve any text in its First Session was 'the great, astonishing and genuinely positive result' of that Session. He rightly attributed this result to 'the strong reaction against the spirit behind the preparatory work' – a reactionary spirit indeed which is now being termed 'restorationism', but was then called 'integralism'. Ratzinger called this circumstance 'the truly epoch-making character of the Council's First Session'.

But there was another major reason why the First Session failed to reach the goal of a promulgated text; a failure, despite a plethora of plans and preparatory papers, to formulate a radical strategy, a single main plan. Something of the evidence for this has been emerging recently through the colloquies held at the Istituto Paolo VI in Brescia (Pope Paul's birthplace), and notably a colloquy held on 23–25 September 1983, entitled: 'Giovanni Battista Montini, Arcivescovo di Milano, e il Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II; preparazione e primo periodo'. Among the Testimonianze was the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines/Brussels, Léon-Josef Suenens, who narrated that in a conversation in March 1962 – half a year before the Council opened – Pope John asked him, 'Who is attending to the making of an overall plan for the whole Council?' The Cardinal replied that, though some seventy-two schemata were in preparation, no one was thinking at that scale: 'Ça c'est le désordre total!' The Pope, reflecting, asked him: 'would you then like to make a plan?' So the Cardinal suggested that, before plans were made, one had to ask what a Council is and what it is not; then ask what it should concentrate upon; then make that more precise. Here he tells of that process.

Léon-Josef Suenens (b. 16 July 1904) was the son of a brewer, who died when he was not four years old. Educated by the Marist Brothers in Brussels and then at the Institut Sainte-Marie, run by diocesan priests, he was called to the priesthood. Cardinal Mercier sent him to do his studies at the Gregorian University, Rome, where he achieved doctorates in both philosophy and theology with a baccalaureate in canon law. Throughout his time in Rome he kept up a steady and intimate correspondence with Mercier, who had a lasting influence upon him. Ordained in 1927, he studied on until 1929, when he returned to his Institute in Brussels to teach. Then for ten years he was Professor of Philosophy at the Malines Seminary, teaching the history of philosophy and pedagogy, consolidating his own understanding and influencing the lives of future priests.

In 1940 he was appointed Vice-Rector of the University of Louvain. This is important, for its connection: there is a saying that the Council showed clearly that behind every great prelate is a great university – Vienna, Munich, Nijmegen, Louvain . . . Soon his Rector was imprisoned by the Nazis,

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and he quietly took on the task if not the office for the duration of the War. Among his initiatives was the foundation of the Institut des Sciences Religieuses there, since he had for a while shared the view that the religious education of the laity was never given sufficient attention at university levels.

On 16 December 1945 Suenens was consecrated bishop and made auxiliary to the then aging Cardinal van Roey. During this time the young Bishop Suenens discovered the international movement emanating from Dublin, The Legion of Mary. At once he saw the apostolic potential of such a movement for the laity; so on several occasions he journeyed to the Legion's headquarters in Dublin to confer with its founder, Frank Duff and to study the implications of the movement throughout the world. He then wrote a commentary on its promise, The theology of the apostolate of the Legion of Mary; and later he wrote a biography of one of the Legion's outstanding early members, Edel Quinn. He went on in 1956 to publish The Gospel to every creature, his own dominant ideas about the pastoral mission of the Church, ideas that he later developed piecemeal into other books – such as The nun in the world (1962, revised 1963), which engendered a strong renewal of apostolic activity among the women's orders.

In 1959 the Auxiliary represented the Cardinal of Belgium at the Catholic World Congress of Health. Addressing some three thousand members of the medical and allied professions, he asked them and their colleagues to devote their time to solving the problem of birth control. Equally he asked universities to pursue studies into the question of human fertility, so that Catholics might be better able to fulfil their marital duties while responding fully to their dignity and obligations as Christians. From this initiative there ensued a series of annual international meetings at Louvain, where in 1962 an Institut Universitaire des Sciences Familiales et Sexologiques was established. The Bishop's contribution was a book entitled Love & control (1961, revised 1962).

In December 1961 Léon-Josef became Archbishop of Malines, and the following March a Cardinal. During the Council he was closely involved as the paper below indicates. Since the Council he has been one of its most ardent protagonists and continues so today.

I have been asked to shed light on a historical matter involving the origins of the Council. It concerns the initial plan which I submitted to Pope John XXIII, and to which the then Cardinal Montini [Milan] referred in a letter to John XXIII (18 October 1962), a letter I gave to the Paul VI Institute in Brescia, which has published it in its Bulletin.¹

This is how it came about. During an audience with the Pope in March 1962, I complained to John XXIII about the number of schemata prepared for discussion at the forthcoming Council, which seemed quite excessive. There were, I believe, seventy-two of them, very uneven in value, and in any case so overwhelming in volume that *a priori* they prevented fruitful and worthwhile work at the Council itself. John XXIII asked me to clear the ground and submit to him a plan based on the prepared schemata.

After studying these documents, I sent him a preliminary note designed to cut out a lot of dead wood and set the Council on a truly pastoral course. The note was both negative and positive: *idem nolle* as well as *idem velle* were both needed as a basis for more detailed work to follow. This note is given below as Appendix I. John XXIII approved this verbally to me; and it then paved the way for future work.

The plan was ready at the end of April 1962. I had included, as far as I could, the themes dear to me, with a constant care to put forward the pastoral adaptations that seemed to me to be the most important considerations. Being confidential, the document remained strictly personal till I judged it appropriate to share it with some Cardinal friends of mine, including Cardinal Montini. In my files I have found a letter from Cardinal Liénart, who put his agreement in writing (Appendix II); the others expressed their agreement verbally.

For his part, John XXIII told the Secretary of State, Cardinal Cicognani, to send photocopies of this plan to a number of Cardinals, by way of information. This was done in May 1962.

John XXIII wanted to rally certain influential Cardinals behind the plan, so as to be able to present it with their support when the right moment came. To this end, he asked me to discuss it with certain Cardinals, whom he named to me.

An initial meeting was held at the Belgian College in early July 1962. I gave a report of this meeting to John XXIII in a letter dated 4 July (Appendix III). A second meeting took place, also at the Belgian College, shortly after the opening of the Council, at which Cardinal Montini was present, as were Siri [Genoa], Lercaro [Bologna] and others. Support for the project was general, since what was at stake was no more than establishing a general framework for subsequent discussion in the Council.

Appendix IV gives the final version of the plan I proposed. John XXIII had in the meantime thoroughly assimilated its general thrust. Hints of it can be seen in the memorable radio message of 12 September 1962,² announcing and presenting the Council that was to open a few weeks later. The *Osservatore Romano* of 12 September 1962 introduced the Council under the heading '*Ecclesia Christi, lumen gentium*'. John XXIII introduced it as a continuation of our Lord's commandment: 'Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you' (Mt. 28:19-20). These words formed the subject matter of the plan, and the Pope's speech also took over the distinction proposed between the Church '*ad intra*' and the Church '*ad extra*', on which the plan hinged.

The Council opened on 11 October 1962. John XXIII had said: 'In Council affairs we are all novices', and he left the Council to work out its first steps on its own. He had said to me: 'The Pope's first duty is to listen and keep silent to allow the Holy Spirit free play', and, showing me the plan in his desk drawer, told me he would use it at the appropriate moment. That, then, is what happened before the Council opened.

During the first few weeks, as we know, the Council had some difficulty in finding its way and direction. The state of the Pope's health, which was beginning to give cause for alarm, should also be remembered as bearing on the way things went. On 18 October 1962, Cardinal Montini, also worried about the general lack of direction, wrote a letter to John XXIII [through his Secretary of State] asking for a more definite structure and greater coherence in the Council proceedings, and at the end of this letter, he alluded to the plan I had prepared. The Pope sent me a photocopy of this letter (Appendix V): it is now public knowledge, and of particular interest to historians, as it already gives indications of certain aspects of Montini's forthcoming pontificate [the letter should be linked, as a study, with Paul VI's first encyclical, *Ecclesiam suam* (6 August 1963), discussed by Père Congar (below p. 129) and see editorial addendum [Ed.]].

With the state of the Pope's health becoming worse, I had a problem of conscience: should I take the initiative and put the plan forward officially, or keep quiet and wait, since John XXIII had said that he would choose the moment to make it public? As the ill Pope could not be approached direct, I sent him a letter of affection and sympathy without raising such questions, but I sent his secretary, then Mgr Loris Capovilla, a copy of the speech I was proposing to make the following day in the Council, in which I would put forward the basic elements of the plan. I told Mgr Capovilla to do as he saw fit with this, not imagining that the Pope would be in any state to take cognizance of it. To my surprise, Mgr Dell'Acqua [Archbishop Angelo Dell'Acqua of the Secretariat of State] called me to the Vatican early the following morning to tell me that John XXIII was not only fully in agreement with my text, but that he had read it and annotated it, writing some complementary observations in the margin in Italian. I asked Mgr Dell'Acqua to have these translated into Latin, so that I could be sure of not betraying the Holy Father's thoughts, and so I was able, with a completely clear conscience, to make the speech in the Aula which set out the central theme to which the Council rallied. This was on 4 December 1962. Support for the plan was greatly strengthened by the fact that the following day Cardinal Montini, who had been very reserved during this First Session, pronounced himself warmly in favour, as did Cardinal Lercaro.

This, as objectively as possible, was the sequence of events. The verdict of history will, I am sure, be that Vatican II was a Pentecostal blessing for which John XXIII did not pray in vain, and for which he offered up his sufferings and his life itself.

Subjects to be chosen

The announcement of the Council has raised great hopes among the faithful and in the world at large.

It must respond to this double level of expectation: this, it seems to me, means that it must deal with a double range of subjects.

The first would deal with the Church *ad extra*, that is the Church as it faces the world of today.

The second would deal with the Church *ad intra*, that is the Church in itself, but with the aim of helping it better to respond to its mission in the world.

Criteria of choice

May I, in all filial loyalty, be allowed to suggest what I believe should be criteria that should govern the choice of subjects to be brought forward for discussion:

Positively

It seems to me that the subjects to be studied by the Council should be:

matters of *major* importance

matters of *vital* importance

matters of importance *for the whole Church*

matters that relate to the desired *pastoral renewal*.

Negatively

It would be a great and painful disappointment for the Church and the world if the Council were to get bogged down in minor matters, when the world and the Church are anxiously awaiting the Council's response to problems of burning actuality.

The result of this would be that the wood could not be seen for the trees and that the Council would be stifled, in its vital outreach, by an excessive growth of secondary branches.

Cut out dead wood

So it seems to me that we must mercilessly cut out everything that is secondary, minor, of local concern, purely canonical or administrative in import. Specifically, may I say, in all filial frankness, that eight tenths of the schemata, in their present form, do not strike me as 'Council material'. One only has to read them to see that they abound in secondary matters.

Referral to Commissions

I think examination of these texts – on which, it must be said, there was wide disagreement in the Central Commission – should be referred *either* to the Commission for the Reform of Canon Law, *or* to special post-conciliar Commissions, of which more later.

Mark out avenues

It seems to me that if the Second Vatican Council wants to avoid the painful hesitations which marked the first acts of Vatican I, it has to mark out some wide avenues through the forest and to bring certain major matters to the forefront of the Fathers' consideration.

Usefulness of a restricted Commission

In order to proceed to a first selection of these matters – the final and definitive choice belonging in the last resort to His Holiness the Pope – it would seem opportune and practical for the Holy Father to set up, for his personal and private use, a restricted Commission – a sort of 'brains trust' – of a few members whose task would be to suggest to him what these major concerns – according to the criteria set out above – are.

Choice in terms of length of time available

The choice of these questions must inevitably be limited according to how long it is envisaged that the Council should last. At all costs, we must avoid the bishops having the impression that they did not have time to deal seriously with the matters put before them because the Council had got bogged down in details.

Post-conciliar Commissions

Whatever the outcome, and however long the Council lasts, there would seem to be a need to envisage, and to announce fairly quickly, the setting-up of post-conciliar Commissions.

Aim:

These Commissions would, after the Council, be charged with:

1. continuing examination of matters not tackled or unresolved by the Council, or even new questions;
2. monitoring the practical outcome of the decisions taken by the Council on different subjects.

Composition:

These post-conciliar Commissions would de-congest the Council; and setting them up would give the feeling of serious intent to our endeavours that the whole world expects to see. These post-conciliar Commissions should be made up of bishops representing the various continents, to be named by the Holy See. They should not be too numerous. Experts could be called in in a consultative capacity.

These Commissions could carry on the work of the pre-conciliar Commissions, on a new basis, taking account of the basic directives emerging from the Council itself.

Attachment to various Congregations

It would seem to be of extreme benefit for the good of souls if these Commissions became permanent bodies, attached to each Congregation of the Roman Curia. This would create a sort of breath of life blowing between the Centre and the periphery at the heart of each Congregation, and would allow the diocesan bishops to make their pastoral concerns known, and so to rethink the problems tackled by each Congregation in a pastoral way,

while at present the Congregations are by the nature of things more attuned to the canonical and administrative aspects of their work.

Furthermore, these Commissions could receive from the Holy Father the mandate to work out the reform of the Roman Curia that the bishops of the whole world want and which is essential if a real, specific, lasting pastoral renewal is to be achieved.

A Council which proclaimed a few great truths without setting up the means to oversee their implementation after the Council would be like a short spring not leading to a summer or to any harvest.

Decentralization through Bishops' Conferences

One of the Council's great difficulties, not on the dogmatic level, at which absolute unity is easy, but on the pastoral level, will be to set out rulings that are at one and the same time applicable to all and supple in their implementation.

Would it be possible to hope that, for the good of the Church, some specific adaptations, on the level of pastoral application, should be reserved to the Bishops' Conferences, naturally subject to the final approval of the Holy See?

The danger of immobilism

Efforts at pastoral renewal have not been felt with the same intensity in different countries. There are grounds for fearing that the bishops who have most experience in these matters will not be sufficiently numerous to make their wishes prevail within the Council. The experience of what has happened in the Central Commission shows that there is a strong current of integralism opposed to any pastoral renewal of any real importance. May the Holy Spirit enlighten His Holiness the Pope so that the immobilist tendency, even if it proves numerically stronger, may not in the end prevail.

A pastoral Council

If I might be permitted to express one wish at the end of this note, it is that the Council may be above all a pastoral, that is an apostolic Council. What an immense benefit it would be for the Church if it could define the broad outlines of how the whole Church could be put into a state of mission, and at all levels: lay people, clergy, bishops and Roman Congregations! What a splendid Pentecostal grace this would be for the Church, just as our beloved Head wished for with so much heart and Christian hope!

APPENDIX II: LETTER FROM CARDINAL ACHILLE LIÉNART

Diocese of Lille
68 rue Royale
Rome, 14 June 1962

His Eminence Cardinal Suenens,
Archbishop of Malines-Brussels

Your Eminence,
I have just learned of the plan you have drawn up to fuse all the valuable elements brought together by the Preparatory Commissions into a whole capable of showing the modern world what the true Church of Jesus Christ is and what response it can make to that world.

I am absolutely delighted by your project and don't want to wait till this evening to tell you so just on the telephone. I fully approve the apostolic spirit in which you have conceived the project, the appreciation of the various main topics you have made and the breadth of the perspectives you have opened up.

At a time when the Church is really the matter under discussion, I believe the Council cannot do better than concentrate on showing it in all its reality, its rich complexity, its constructive dynamism and its broad openness to all mankind.

There is still much to do if this wish of the Holy Father's is to be carried out by the Council. But I keenly hope your plan will be accepted and that we can resolutely set out on this road without further delay.

Your Eminence, please accept my thanks and the assurance of my respectful and fraternal devotion.

(signed) Achille Cardinal Liénart
Bishop of Lille

APPENDIX III: LETTER FROM CARDINAL SUENENS TO JOHN XXIII

Malines, 4 July 1962

Most Holy Father,
Your Holiness asked me to inform you directly of the reactions of the various Cardinals who have studied the general plan I submitted to you.

We have had a very friendly and relaxed meeting at the Belgian College. At the beginning of this, Cardinal Döpfner [Munich] proposed that it might perhaps be better to let the schemata go forward for discussion at the Council without an overall plan, but he quickly agreed to the unanimous and insistent views of Cardinals Montini, Siri and Liénart, who very warmly supported the plan put forward and strongly underlined the need for a broad and coherent overall plan.

All agreed in wishing that the Council should start with a doctrinal section that would form the matter of the first session, with the pastoral section occupying the further session or sessions.

Everyone wanted this doctrinal section to start with a study of the Church: '*De Ecclesiae Christi mysterio*', that is the Church in its essence, in its specific components.

We were unanimous in not wanting the Council Secretariat to send the different schemata already prepared out to the bishops pell-mell: it would make a bad impression on the world outside to see the Council beginning with secondary matters which failed to allow the central idea to be seen.

This concern to begin with a constitution on the Church - in the hope that the second Vatican Council might really be the Council *De Ecclesia* - is even shared in the Orthodox world. On a separate sheet I have transcribed a recent text by Professor Florovsky, who is one of the most noted Orthodox theologians of the present time. A Catholic would put things differently, but the convergence on the central idea seems striking to me, and this is why I am drawing it to your attention.

We now need to work out a more detailed plan showing where and how the finished schemata could find a place in the overall framework as set out. As the Cardinals I have mentioned wanted me to do this, I have set to work on my return here, using the existing schemata to the greatest practical extent. On a separate sheet I attach some considerations on the general picture by way of clarification and indication of the overall tenor.

After which, Most Holy Father, I shall only have to deliver all this to Your Wisdom and pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you in setting out the final guidelines.

I have just read Fr Dehon's *Il diario del Concilio Vaticano I*, which your Holiness recommended me to do: it is full of interest and life and at the same time indications of what should be done . . . and what should not be done. It is throughout a glorification of the Holy Spirit, who works through human instruments who are always defective and often so poor in their humanity.

With, Most Holy Father, my feelings of deepest filial piety, with which I have the honour to be Your Holiness' humble and obedient servant.

APPENDIX IV: THE PLAN SUBMITTED TO JOHN XXIII

Introduction

The plan which follows has been conceived in such a manner as to give the Council a pastoral, coherent overall direction, and one that all can easily grasp. It is put together like a triptych, its three parts being: a basic introduction, the major themes grouped under four main headings, and a final message which would be a sort of apotheosis of the Council.

Response to expectations

The themes highlighted are, we believe, those that most concern the faithful and the world. We have tried to respond to expectations and situate the Council fully in the life of the Church and the world, and not in a closed vessel.

Convergence around four centres of interest

These subjects gather around four centres of interest the subjects which the schemata drawn up by so many different people dealt with in discontinuous order and sometimes from opposing viewpoints.

Use made of work done

These themes allow maximum possible use of the schemata drawn up: a massive and important amount of work has been done which we must take advantage of, while removing its fragmentary and mosaic character, breathing a soul into it. Most of these schemata are lifeless skeletons due to their juridical, canonical and sometimes repressive approach. [Cf the 'dry bones' (of Ezekiel) so well applied by Bishop Donal Lamont (p. 270) [Ed.].] We will try in our plan to give them some life and breadth of approach and make them contribute to an overall whole.

Suitable for the learned and the faithful as a whole

The themes which stand out and are easy to remember are as appropriate to bishops and theologians as to ordinary Christians who, thanks to this easily popularized plan, will be able to follow the phases of the Council, and respond to the rhythm of the Church [*suiuire les phases . . . vivre au rythme*]. They will be totally suited to the preaching of pastors; they are such as to strike the imagination through their simplicity and clarity.

An instrument of pastoral progress

These themes will allow us to deal, as we go, with the chief errors of the time, either *ad intra* in the bosom of the Church, or *ad extra* in the world. But they deal with them in a positive and constructive way, without anathemas. They thereby allow us to take account of certain gaps in our own pastoral teaching and to remedy these.

*Overall approach of the plan**Schema 'De Ecclesiae Christi mysterio' as a starting-point*

As a start, it seems necessary to link the Second Vatican Council to the First. The best way of doing this would be to begin the Council with discussion of a schema *De Ecclesiae Christi mysterio*.

Reasons

(a) *Continuity with Vatican I*. The First Vatican Council had prepared a schema *De Ecclesia*, of which it was able to define only one part: papal primacy and infallibility. It did not have time to 'place' the bishops or the laity in the mystery of the Church.

(b) *Better doctrinal balance*. This would be both a work of continuity and the achievement of a better balance, since the mystery of the Church would thereby appear in its fullness and in complete harmony.

(c) *A step towards our separated brethren*. The Orthodox reproach the Church with not giving bishops their due place; the Protestants reproach it for not giving the laity their proper place. In this schema *De Ecclesiae Christi mysterio* we could well reply to their objections in a positive manner by showing the link between the Papacy and the Body of the Church, by demonstrating the place and meaning of the episcopal college and by stressing the role of the laity (all this will be dealt with in more detail later).

(d) *Operari sequitur esse*. Before devoting the Council's efforts to 'the Church at work', it would seem essential to preface these efforts with a major doctrinal declaration on the Church in itself: *operari sequitur esse*. The Church must define: *quid dicis de teipso?*

(e) *The Church is Jesus Christ 'communicated and spread'*. We would thus straight away put the stress on the essential: the Church is Christ living today in his mystical body; it is Christ, our contemporary.

The one question that sums up all the others for the bishops of 1962 is whether or not we are faithfully continuing the work our Master entrusted to us, the work He wishes to carry out, through us.

The basic idea

The Council falls naturally into two main fields:

that of the Church *ad intra*;
that of the Church *ad extra*.

The schema we propose introduces the collective examination of conscience on their mission which the bishops want to make. The basic question they face, and which could be the central question for the whole Council, the cross-roads from which its main avenues open out, could be this:

How is the Church of the twentieth century measuring up to the Master's last command:

Go, therefore
Make disciples of all the nations
Baptize them
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
And teach them to observe all the commands I gave you.

Which leads naturally to the following plan:

Section A: *Ecclesia 'ad intra'*

As a basis for division into parts, one could take the text from St Matthew just quoted:

Go, therefore: *Ecclesia evangelizans* (or *salvificans*)
 Make disciples of all nations: *Ecclesia docens*
 Baptize them: *Ecclesia sanctificans*
 In the name of the Father . . . : *Ecclesia orans*.

Section B: *Ecclesia 'ad extra'*

Under this general heading several major problems (detailed later) could be grouped together, falling comfortably into the scope of 'and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you'.

Making use of the schemata already prepared

This schema *De Ecclesiae Christi mysterio* already has some groundwork done in the shape of existing schemata, such as *De Ecclesiae militantis natura* and *De membris Ecclesiae* . . . (Prepared by Cardinal Ottaviani, Holy Office). It would be enough for these to be re-worked according to the observations of the members of the Central Commission. Because they would serve as an introduction to the whole, the existing texts could be amplified here and there, but once they have been re-worked they would be substantially usable as an introduction.

Section A

Ecclesia 'ad intra'

I. *Ecclesia evangelizans* (or *salvificans*)

Go, therefore. To respond to the Saviour's command, the whole Church must be put 'on a mission footing'. This is the sector of *missionary pastoral work*.

A doctrinal declaration

The Central Commission has, virtually unanimously, adopted the wish expressed by one of its members to see the Council work out a major declaration on the missionary duty of the members of the Church, both *ad extra*, in relation to non-Christian peoples, and *ad intra*, in relation to those who minimize or even seek to eliminate all efforts directed toward 'conversion', claiming that 'life witness' is enough, that the apostolate is an intrusion into and an assault on the consciences of others, that all opinions are valid if they are sincere, that good faith in itself makes up for lack of theological faith. This is of course the opposite [*contre-pied*] of the Gospel and undermines all efforts to 'carry the Good News to all creation'.

Let us now take the *Ecclesia evangelizans*, on its different levels:

A. *On the episcopal level*

It is natural for the examination of conscience and of pastoral renewal of any apostolate to start with those who are apostles as of divine right and, as such, heads of the pastoral work in their dioceses.

Major questions:

1. There is a need for a major declaration on the subject of the apostolic college and the role of bishops at the heart of the Church. This schema *de episcopis* would, in passing, be of the greatest use *vis-à-vis* our Eastern separated brethren, who reproach the Church with strongly minimizing their [bishops?] role in the Church. This schema *de episcopis* exists under the

title *De episcopis residentialibus* (prepared by Cardinal Ottaviani). This would need to be re-worked according to observations made by members of the Central Commission, particularly those of Cardinals Richaud [Bordeaux], Döpfner and Bea [SPCU].

2. There is a need for a clear statement of the role proper to the bishop as head of the overall pastoral work in his diocese.

3. There is a need to study the 'care of souls' [Cf the Bishop of Lancaster's chapter *De Cura Animarum* (p. 255) [Ed.]] from the viewpoint of the duties of a bishop. This schema exists: *De Cura animarum in genere*, first part (prepared by Cardinal Marella [S. Congregation for maintenance of St Peter's]).

4. In the light of the principles stated, the following would emerge as practical corollaries:

(a) The strengthening of the powers of bishops *in se* [in themselves, as such]. The Schema *de episcopis* prepared by the Bishops' Commission would have to be put together with the schema prepared by the Eastern Commission, since they complement each other.

(b) The strengthening of the powers of bishops *quoad religiosos exemptos individualiter* [in relation to individual exempt religious].

(c) The strengthening of the powers of bishops *quoad religiosos exemptos collective prout adunantur in Unionibus Superiorum Maioriam* [in relation to exempt religious collectively, in that they are incardinated in congregations under major superiors].

B. *On the level of secular and regular clergy*

This is the place to deal with matters affecting the clergy: vocation, seminary and scholastic training, after-ordination care, and the eventual help provided by a permanent diaconate, and so forth.

(a) The Council of Trent set its seal on *Seminaries*. St Charles Borromeo [1538-84] gave them a lasting form. Unfortunately, as time went by, seminaries became more and more centres of piety and study, so losing a certain practical pastoral aspect which the Council of Trent had intended them to have.

We must create a new type of seminary, or, more precisely, fill out the idea of seminaries conceived exclusively as places of piety and study, by giving them an additional role as centres of practical pastoral initiation - the methodology of which can be worked out later.

This reform would have incalculable consequences, since apostolic renewal of the clergy affects everything.

On the more specialized question of religious, this would be the place to examine all questions of adaptation to the apostolate raised for the active orders by the rules of the religious life, and also questions relating to better collaboration between regular and secular clergy in the framework of present-day apostolic needs. Several existing schemas could be used here, such as: *De sacrorum alumnis formandis*, *De vocationibus ecclesiasticis fovendis* (both by Cardinal Pizzardo [Prefect, S. Congregation of Seminaries & Universities]), and *Quaestiones de religiosis*, *Disciplina de renovatione vitae et spiritus* (Cardinal Valeri [President of the Commission on Religious]).

(b) On the question of *permanent deacons*: would it not be possible to leave open the possibility, in some countries at least, of trying out the experiment of permanent deacons, who would be so useful if we really want the message - and the sacraments - to reach everyone?

A special Commission could look into the conditions for this. If the Council does not want to see permanent deacons as a universal feature, then let it allow experiments on a limited basis. The question would in any case seem to merit examination by the Council.

C. *On the level of nuns and lay brothers*

The Church has more than a million nuns and a large number of lay brothers. These huge resources are not being used a hundred per cent for apostolic purposes. They could benefit from a re-appraisal which would ask for a great effort at *aggiornamento* of nuns' rules and habits (and those of lay brothers), bringing them into line with the needs of the present-day apostolate. And strong stress should be placed on the role they could play – with proper formation – as animators of the adult laity.

D. *On the level of lay people*

(a) A doctrinal declaration

There is a need for a major statement on the position of lay people in the Church. The Code of Canon Law devotes a mere three lines to them! A schema *de laicis* has been prepared [Cf the Archbishop of Liverpool's chapter, 'Toil in the Lord' (p. 237) [Ed.]] but it needs rewriting to give it some life and breadth of vision. It should also be brought into line with that prepared by the Commission for the lay apostolate.

Our separated brethren reproach us for sins of clericalization, for stifling the laity. They believe in the 'priesthood of the faithful' and assign an important role to them. Often, when a Catholic leaves the Church and joins a sect, he will say that he has found there a religion in which he is more respected and finds more to do.

In view of all this, we need to work out a major statement, warm and fatherly in tone towards lay people, recognizing their rights and duties by virtue of their baptism, which incorporates them into the Church.

(b) A 'catholic' terminology for Catholic Action

We should tackle the question posed to the World Congress on the Lay Apostolate by Pope Pius XII in 1957 on the 'generic' meaning to be retained for, or as Pius XII said, 'restored' to the term 'Catholic Action'. After the Pope's explicit appeal to this Congress we cannot, it would seem, leave the question unanswered.

Existing schemata could be used: *De laicis* (Cardinal Ottaviani) and those on the lay apostolate prepared by the Commission presided over by Cardinal Cento [Roman Curia].

II. *Ecclesia docens*

We must go out to those who do not know the Saviour and take them his message, the whole content of his message, so as to make 'the whole of the Gospel' available to 'the whole of life'. This is the purpose of *pastoral catechesis* in the broadest sense of the term.

We must make the Gospel known to people of every condition by every possible means.

Of every condition

– We need to study the religious teaching given at the different levels of education, up to and including university.

– We must study the question of a universal *catechism*. Should there be just one catechism or would a simpler 'directory' do? And what would we want to see as the content of such a directory, from the apostolic point of view for example?

– We must look carefully at the transmission of the Word of God through preaching.

These questions are dealt with in various schemata, such as: *De catechismo et catechetica institutione* (Cardinal Cicognani i.e. Secretary of State Cardinal Amleto Cicognani. His brother, Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani, was President of the Liturgical Preparatory Commission [Ed.]), *De catechetica populi christiani institutione* (Cardinal Ciriaci) and *De Verbo Dei* (Cardinal Bea).

By every possible means

Here would be the place for examining the various communications media: press, radio, TV, cinema, and incorporating the usable portions of the schema prepared on social communications [Cf also the Bishop of Limburg's chapter (p. 195) [Ed.].]

III. *Ecclesia sanctificans*

This would be the place to discuss major matters concerning the *pastoral aspects of the sacraments*. Cf for example, the schemata: *De Ecclesiae sacramentis* (Cardinal Cicognani), *De sacramento poenitentiae* (Cardinal Marella), *De sacramento ordinis* (Cardinal Marella), and so forth.

IV. *Ecclesia orans*

This is the place for the whole question of *pastoral liturgy*.

We could use the schema *De sacra liturgia* drawn up by the Commission on the subject, clearing away some of its accretions in order to examine some major questions selected for their importance for the whole Church, both Western and Eastern. Cf the schemata: *De usu linguarum vernacularum in liturgiis* (Cardinal Cicognani), *De officio divino (idem)*.

Section B
Ecclesia 'ad extra'

This section could be placed under the text from St Matthew following the words 'Go, therefore . . .': 'And teach them to observe all the commands I gave you'.

The world's expectation

The Church should carry Christ to the world. This world has its own problems, and is in anguished quest for solutions to them; some of these problems are obstacles to the spread of truth and grace.

Here are a few major problems that can be put together in this way:

– What do men look for? Answer: they look for love in the bosom of their families, daily bread for themselves and their families, peace within and between nations. These are basic aspirations. Can the Church bring them anything on these different levels?

Answers

We might suggest that the Council should concentrate its attention on the following four questions:

(a) The Church and *family society*, particularly conjugal society.

There is a particular threat to the state of grace of souls in the matter of conjugal morality. We are here faced with a crucial problem: that of birth control. In the light of new problems, the essence of *Casti Connubii* needs to be recast, using certain pronouncements of Pius XII and balancing the duties of spouses with their parental responsibilities.

What could be done with the encyclical *Casti Connubii* [1930] is what was done for *Rerum Novarum* [1891] in its review in *Quadragesimo Anno* [1931] and its bringing up to date by *Mater et Magistra* [1961].

There are several schemata prepared, such as *De matrimonio et familia* (Cardinal Ottaviani).

(b) The Church and *economic society*

The Church is expected to condemn atheistic *Communism*. What is most important is that it

should pick out the *true part* of Communism, and strongly condemn injustices and social inequalities in the distribution of wealth. In the eyes of the underdeveloped countries, the Church must appear to be the Church of all and above all of the poor. Moralists have devoted thousands of volumes to every detail of the sixth commandment: there is practically nothing written on the obligation to give one's surplus to others, nor the social application of goods created for the use of everyone. The social and communitary implications of genuine Christianity must be vigorously pointed out.

(c) The Church and *civil society*

We are faced with a new political world. This poses particular problems for Church-State relations. One of the main problems in this respect is the religious freedom which the Church claims for itself. What should its attitude be toward the religious freedom of others?

Cf e.g. the schema *De libertate religiosa* (Cardinal Bea). [Cf chapters by Cardinal König and Mgr John Tracy Ellis (pp. 283ff.) [Ed.].]

(d) The Church and *international society*

The world of today, which has known the horrors of two world wars, has a deep aspiration to *peace* on the international level and is very sensitive to anything that threatens this. It would be good to show the world that the Church is, above all, an instrument of peace.

The Church is expected to take a stand on war, the atom bomb, the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and so forth. These are delicate problems, but they must be tackled, without fail, one way or another.

Message to the World

It would seem desirable for the Council to address a final and solemn message to the world.

This message, in brief, could be addressed:

first to our separated Orthodox brethren;
then to our separated Protestant brethren;
next to all those in the world who believe in God;
finally to atheists, pointing out the meaning of God and his presence.

It could end by evoking Christ in glory, King of humanity and Master of the universe, 'Pantocrator', Beginning and End of the whole cosmos, in a vision dear to men of today.

Its final words could be a sort of collective act of faith in Christ living in his Church, according to his promise: 'And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'

An eschatological vision in which the Church takes stock of its state as 'a pilgrim Church, on the way', and in which it addresses itself to the Lord vowing to be humbly and courageously faithful, 'Till he come, till the day of the coming of the Lord.'

APPENDIX V: LETTER FROM CARDINAL J.-B. MONTINI TO
CARDINAL AMLETO CICOGNANI, SECRETARY OF STATE

The Vatican, 18 October 1962

Your most reverend Eminence,

It is with the deepest humility, that, at the instance of other bishops whose wisdom I cannot doubt, including my venerable brethren of the bishoprics of Lombardy, I venture to draw your attention to something that seems very serious to me and to other Council Fathers: the lack, or at least the failure to announce the existence of, an organic, thought-out and logical

programme for the Council which has happily been inaugurated and which is followed by the eyes of the whole Church, as well as by those of the secular world. It has been announced that the schema on the Sacred Liturgy will be discussed first, whereas in the volume distributed, this schema did not have any precedence over the others, nor would there seem to be any need to put it first; this seems to me to confirm the fears that the Council has no pre-set programme of work. If this is the case, as it would seem to be, its development will be decided, and perhaps compromised, by arguments outside the subjects the Council should be concerning itself with; there is no organic structure to reflect the great aims the Holy Father has assigned, by way of justification, to the holding of this extraordinary event. This is dangerous for the outcome of the Council; it diminishes its significance; it makes it lose, in the eyes of the world, that vigour of thought and intelligibility on which its efficacy will to a large extent depend. The material that has been prepared does not seem to have a harmonious and unified overall form; it hardly shines out like a beacon over the age and the world.

This is why I, the least, dare to remind your Eminence that several months ago and at your personal invitation, a few Cardinals met to discuss the need for the Council to form not an accumulation of loose, disconnected blocks, but a monument whose construction would respond to a guiding thought. We reached certain conclusions which seemed to me right, and which in the judgement of other judicious ecclesiastics, were excellent.

So I make equally bold to point out to you what the programme for the Council that has just opened *must*, if I may say so, still be.

1. The second Vatican Council should be centred around one sole theme: Holy Church [*la santa Chiesa*]. This is required to give continuity with the first Vatican Council, which was interrupted while dealing with the subject. This is what all the bishops want, so as to know exactly what their powers are, following the definition of papal powers, and what the relations are between one and the other. It is what is needed, it seems to me, in view of the maturity reached by the doctrine on the Church since the encyclical *Mystici corporis* [1943], and the extraordinary riches offered by this doctrine not only to theologians and canonists, but also for the prayer and present life of the Church. It is what men of our time seem to want; they regard the fact of the Church above all else in our religion and often to the exclusion of all else. Holy Church: this should be the one and all-embracing theme of this Council; and the vast body of material prepared should be organized around what is obviously its sublime centre.

2. In view of this, the Council should begin by turning its thoughts to Jesus Christ, our Lord. It is He who should appear as the principle of the Church, since this is both his emanation and his continuation. The image of Christ, like the Pantocrator in the ancient basilicas, should dominate his Church gathered around Him and before Him. The act of faith has already been pronounced, and this is good. But the hymn addressed to Christ should attach his mystical and historical body to the celestial and invisible Head, as this body goes through a time of total plenitude. A prayer would perhaps suffice, an act of praise from the whole Council to Christ the Lord, but a deliberate, solemn, conscious act, which would determine the whole further development of the Council.

3. The Council should also, still at its outset, perform a unanimous and joyous act of homage, faithfulness, love and obedience to the Vicar of Christ. After the definition of the primacy and infallibility of the Pope, there were some defections, some hesitations and then some docile acceptances. Now the Church rejoices to recognize in Peter, in the person of his Successor, this fullness of powers which constitutes the secret of its unity, strength, and mysterious power to defy the times and make mankind into a 'Church'. Why not say so?

Why does the Council not give expression to this certainty that has been achieved? Why, when it is due to discuss the powers of bishops, does it not put any sort of temptation away from itself and remove any sort of doubt from the minds of others, as to the slightest possibility of seeing the sovereign grandeur and solidity of this truth called into question once more? Here again, a simple, short act would suffice, but it must be solemn and from the heart.

4. Then the Council concentrates on the 'mystery of the Church'. That means that it orders, elaborates and expresses doctrines concerning itself: bishops, priests, religious, laity, the various forms of ecclesial life, the different ages of life, young people, women, etc. If indeed it needs to go as far as this. The Church takes full cognizance of itself, shows that it genuinely stems from the Gospel, renews the composition of its cadres, its organs, its hierarchies; in other words, it defines its constitutional laws, not only in its juridical aspect as a perfect society, but also in other aspects proper to it, those of a humanity living on faith and charity, animated by the Holy Spirit, loved as the Bride of Christ, one and catholic, holy and making holy. I think this was the Pope's original intention in announcing the Council. And it is on this chapter, 'What is the Church?', that the First Session should close, bringing together the numerous schemata that exist on this subject.

5. The Second Session should then consider the mission of the Church: what the Church does (*Operari sequitur esse*). And in my view it would be both good and easy to take up the various activities of the Church in different chapters: *Ecclesia orans* (this would be the place to deal with the Sacred Liturgy); *Ecclesia regens* (that is, engaged in the various tasks of pastoral life); *Ecclesia patiens*, and so forth. All questions of morals, dogma (related to the needs of our age), works of charity, missionary activity, etc, could be studied in their due place in this second stage of the Council.

6. Finally, a Third Session will be needed, to deal with the relationship between the Church and the world which surrounds it, which is outside it and removed from it. This comprises: 1. relations with our separated brethren (discussing this question at the beginning of the Council seems to me to risk compromising the outcome); 2. relations with civil society (peace, dealings with States, etc); 3. relations with the world of learning, art, science . . . ; 4. relations with the world of work, the economy, etc; 5. relations with other religions; 6. relations with the enemies of the Church, etc. These subjects, of the greatest interest to men of our time, believers and unbelievers alike, cannot be dealt with in the same style as the preceding ones, but should take the form of 'Messages'³ sent by the Church to humanity living and acting outside its ambit, messages in which the Church's own principles would ring out strongly, and which, with a certain prophetic spirit, would sound an appeal, in each sector of humanity to which they were addressed, to welcome in a new and sympathetic way the light and salvation of which the catholic Church is the only source.

7. The Council should as a conclusion*celebrate the communion of saints (through a canonization, or a ceremony of propitiation) and some charitable gesture (an offering, help to the Missions, a pardon, a foundation, or whatever) should be found to round off all the good words of the Council with good deeds. Post-conciliar Commissions should be set up shortly, so as to assure the actual execution of the decrees and good intentions produced by this great effort of renewal.

Perhaps all this is a fantasy, to be added to those that abound at this time of great spiritual ferment. Your Eminence will be the judge of that. Sending it to you spares me the remorse that would have come from keeping silent, and gives me the occasion to confirm my feelings of devotion to the Pope, to the Church and to the Council. And to humbly kiss your hand while remaining your most devoted servant.

J.-B. Cardinal Montini, Archbishop

PS

1. The plan set out above is in very summary form and does not take the content of the schemata into consideration. They need to be looked at again, to see what should be added or cut out or modified. What I was aiming at here was an ideal scheme and the order to be followed in distributing the material.

2. The structure, following the suggestion made by H.E. Cardinal Suenens, could be derived from the last words of Christ in St Matthew's gospel 28:18-20: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me . . .'

J.-B. M.

NOTES

1. *Istituto Paolo VI. Notiziario* no 7, November 1983, 11-18. *Ibid*, Pubblicazioni 3 (Brescia 1985), 181-4. The Italian text was also published in a special supplement in *Osservatore Romano* of 26 January 1984. The version at Appendix V is translated from that together with the French version given by Cardinal Suenens in *Nouvelle Revue théologique*, 107/1, Jan-Feb 1985, 18-21. [This letter is discussed in Peter Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII, Pope of the Council* (Geoffrey Chapman 1984), 442-4. Ed.]
2. For the substance of this radio message, cf. L. Capovilla, 'Thoughts on the opening of the Council . . .' in this volume; for fuller portions of the text cf. his note 20.
3. The closing messages of the Council [8 December 1965] in fact followed this suggestion fairly closely. Cf. Ed W. M. Abbott, SJ, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 728-37. [Paul VI to the Council Fathers. To Rulers (read by three Cardinals). To Men of Thought & Science (*ibid*). To Artists (*ibid*). To Women (*ibid*). To the Poor, the Sick and the Suffering (*ibid*). To Workers (*ibid*). To Youth (*ibid*).]