

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION  
ACCORDING TO THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

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I have examined the final copy of the thesis submitted by Matthew L. Selby and determined that the author has incorporated all of the changes and modifications requested. I hereby verify that the proposed thesis meets the requirements of the Master of Arts in Theology.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

On April 8, 1546, the Council of Trent in its Fourth Session on Scripture and Tradition decreed, “This truth and rule [of the Gospel] are contained in written books and [et] in unwritten traditions.”<sup>1</sup> With this dogmatic statement, Trent affirmed that the Gospel (i.e. revelation) is contained in both Scripture and Tradition, in contradistinction to the Protestant claim that it is contained in Scripture alone (i.e. *sola scriptura*). Yet, the decree remained rather ambiguous on exactly *how* revelation is contained in both of them, begging the question of what the Council affirmed, if anything, about the nature of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. As a result of this ambiguity, this topic has become a focal point of theological debate among Catholic scholars. The debate reached its climax in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Interestingly, the original draft of the decree, presented on March 22, 1546, was more explicit on this matter by stating, “This truth [of the Gospel] is contained *partly* [*partim*] in written books, *partly* [*partim*] in unwritten traditions.”<sup>2</sup> For reasons unknown, however, the Council Fathers changed the *partim-partim* formulation to a simple *et* in the final decree. Much ink has been spilled trying to explain this change. In fact, in many regards, the change has

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1. Council of Trent, *Concilium Tridentinum diariorum, actorum, epistularum, tractatum nova collection*, ed. Societas Goerriesiana, 13 vols. (Freiberg: Herder, 1901-2001), 5:91 (henceforth, *CT*). Latin: “hanc veritatem *et* disciplinam contineri in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus” (emphasis mine). The translation here is mine, as will be others throughout this study, unless noted otherwise.

2. *CT* 5:31. “hanc veritatem *partim* contineri in libris scriptis, *partim* sine scripto traditionibus” (emphasis mine).

become the principal issue of the debate over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, since understanding the intention behind the change sheds significant light on how to correctly interpret the definitive decree. As will be shown below, different understandings of the change have led to rather drastically different interpretations of the Tridentine decree, resulting in Catholic theologians coming to theologically incompatible conclusions regarding the relationship between Scripture and Tradition.

In the debate that peaked in the late 1950s and early 1960s, two sides clearly emerged. On the one side, there were proponents of what has been termed the “one-source theory” of revelation. These theologians claimed that the Tridentine decree, as a result of the change, allowed for a belief in the material sufficiency of Scripture, leaving Tradition as merely the authoritative interpretive context for Scripture. Thus, Scripture, as the one source of revelation, contains all truths necessary for salvation. On the other side, there were proponents of the “two-source theory” of revelation. These theologians contended that Trent explicitly excluded belief in the sufficiency of Scripture, arguing that the final decree still retained the meaning of the *partim-partim* formulation, despite the change in wording. Thus, they believed Scripture and Tradition function as two distinct sources of revelation. For them, Tradition contains part of revelation that is not contained in any way in Scripture, making Scripture insufficient regarding the truths necessary for salvation. Therefore, two theological camps developed that became diametrically opposed to one another. Still, as with any debate, some theologians took more of a middle ground between the two sides.

Certainly, the topic of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition has great importance for Catholic theology. While the intensity and polemical nature of the debate has subsided since the 1960s, there is still the necessity of working through these different positions

on the matter. Since there has been no definitive answer given by the Church, as the Second Vatican Council chose not to decide the matter, the topic remains open for continued debate. It is the purpose of this study, therefore, to enter into the conversation, focusing on the Tridentine decree in order to determine what it taught on the matter, and using that decree to offer insights that will help guide future discussion. As a means of procedure, Chapter 2 will introduce the major players in the debate with an overview of their theological positions on the topic. Chapter 3 will then take a look further back in history to the Council of Trent, exploring the proceedings of the Fourth Session in order to shed light on the modern controversy. Chapter 4 will use this historical foundation to offer some critiques of the mid-twentieth century nature of the debate, responding to both sides by showing their strengths and weaknesses. Chapter 5 will then offer insights, suggestions, and conclusions on how to move forward in the debate over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition.

## Chapter 2

### *Status Quaestionis*

The 1950s gave rise to a heated debate over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, one that only intensified in the early 1960s.<sup>1</sup> The theological storm that ensued had been brewing for quite some time. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there began to be a shift in the wind regarding the understanding of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition among Catholic scholars. During those centuries, some scholars began to move away from the common post-Tridentine view that revelation is contained *partly* in Scripture and *partly* in Tradition.<sup>2</sup> This shift led to renewed interest in the topic. Towards the end of the nineteenth century came the First Vatican Council, which took up the concept of revelation in its Third Session. Yet, the Council's definitive decree of April 24, 1870 merely repeated the words of Trent.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Vatican I offered no further commentary on or clarification of Trent's words regarding the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, leaving the topic open for debate.<sup>4</sup>

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1. For an excellent summary of this debate, see Gabriel Moran, *Scripture and Tradition: A Survey of the Controversy* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963). For a complimentary review of the book, see John L. Murphy, *Theological Studies* 25 (1964): 87-9.

2. Despite the change in wording of the Tridentine decree from *partim-partim* to *et*, many post-Tridentine theologians interpreted Trent with the *partim-partim* meaning, as will be discussed further below.

3. The Council proclaimed, "Now this supernatural revelation, according to the belief of the universal church, as declared by the sacred council of Trent, *is contained in written books and unwritten traditions, which were received by the apostles from the lips of Christ himself, or came to the apostles by the dictation of the holy Spirit, and were passed on as it were from hand to hand until they reached us.*" "Haec porro supernaturalis revelatio, secundum universalis ecclesiae fidem a sancta Tridentina synodo declarata, *continetur in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus, quae ipsius Christi ore ab apostolis acceptae, aut ipsis apostolis Spiritu sancto dictante quasi per manus traditae, ad nos usque pervenerunt*" (emphasis mine). Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 2:806.

4. Interestingly, Vatican I went on in the same decree to clarify a misinterpretation in Catholic theology of Trent's Fourth Session's teachings regarding the interpretation of Scripture. See Tanner, *Ecumenical Councils*, 2:806.

With the publication of the *Acta* of the Council of Trent in the early twentieth century, the discussion became focused on the Tridentine decree.<sup>5</sup> This publication allowed for a look at the proceedings of the Council's Fourth Session, resulting in studies exploring the conciliar discussions that brought about the final decree.<sup>6</sup> The waters were further stirred in 1950 when Pope Pius XII defined the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary,<sup>7</sup> creating a swell into "an awareness [that] a contemporary exigence of Catholic theology is a precise understanding of the very concept of tradition," as Walter Burghardt explained in 1951.<sup>8</sup> As a result, new interest formed regarding the question of whether or not Tradition constitutes a source of revelation distinct from Scripture. The watershed moment came when the German scholar Joseph R. Geiselmann published his insights in 1956, resulting in the eruption of a theological squall. Scholars quickly took sides, many supporting Geiselmann's interpretation of Trent and his advocacy for the sufficiency of Scripture, while others remained adamantly opposed. Thus, the lines were drawn for what would be an intense debate.

### *Geiselmann's Views*

In 1956, Geiselmann presented a paper to Catholic and Protestant theologians in Germany that was sure to turn some heads based on the title alone: "Das Missverständnis über das Verhältnis von Schrift und Tradition und seine Überwindung in der katholischen Theologie" ("The Misunderstanding about the Relationship between Scripture and Tradition and its

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5. See Council of Trent, *Concilium Tridentinum diariorum, actorum, epistularum, tractatum nova collectio*, ed. Societas Goerriesiana, 13 vols. (Freiberg: Herder, 1901-2001) (henceforth *CT*).

6. See, e.g., the studies of Robert Hull, S. J.: "The Council of Trent and Tradition I," *Ecclesiastical Review* 81 (1929): 469-82; "The Council of Trent and Tradition II," *Ecclesiastical Review* 81 (1929): 602-15; and "The Tridentine Decree on Tradition," *Month* 154 (July 1929): 10-16.

7. See the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* in Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1957), 2331.

8. Walter J. Burghardt, S. J., "The Catholic Concept of Tradition in the Light of Modern Theological Thought," *Catholic Theological Society of America* 6 (1951): 43.



Overcoming in Catholic Theology”).<sup>9</sup> What was the “misunderstanding” to which he was referring? Geiselman argued that belief in the parity of Scripture and Tradition as two sources of revelation was a mistake that had entered into Catholic theology and was at his time being corrected. In the ecumenical setting of his presentation, he articulated the quandary as, “Does the doctrine that the Word of God is contained *partly* in Scripture and *partly* in tradition represent the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church? Or is it a misunderstanding of her teaching?”<sup>10</sup> To answer this question, Geiselman focused attention on the Council of Trent’s decree on Scripture and Tradition.

Geiselman believed the *partim-partim* understanding of Scripture and Tradition had entered into Catholic theology shortly before the Council of Trent. He attributed it to a translation of Pseudo-Dionysius done by Ambrose Traversari, Abbey General of the Camaldolese, in 1431, in which the *partim-partim* formulation appeared.<sup>11</sup> According to Geiselman, Catholic theologians at the time of the Reformation (including John Fisher, John Eck, John Driedo, and Melchior Cano) picked up this formulation and became proponents of the parity of Scripture and Tradition. In fact, he said, “[This belief] had become predominant before Trent.” Yet, there were other Catholic theologians that “contended that all the truths necessary for salvation are contained in Scripture.” Geiselman, then, inquired, “Did the decree of Trent settle the issue?”<sup>12</sup>

For Geiselman, the disagreement was not settled by Trent. In fact, in his mind, the Council decided nothing on the matter. This conclusion, he believed, was made evident by the

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9. The paper was published under the same title in *Una Sancta* 2 (1956): 131-150. An English version was later published in *Theology Digest* 6 (1958): 73-78, under the title “Scripture and Tradition in Catholic Theology.” This English edition will be the one referenced here.

10. Geiselman, “Scripture and Tradition,” 73-74.

11. Interestingly, this same passage from Pseudo-Dionysius, including the *partim-partim* formulation, was cited by the Council Fathers at Trent, as will be explained below.

12. The contents and quotations from this paragraph are gleaned from Geiselman, “Scripture and Tradition,” 74.

change in the Tridentine decree from *partim-partim* to *et*. For him, this change was no mere semantic adjustment but had significance for what the definitive decree actually proclaimed and, more importantly, did not proclaim. Geiselmann believed that since *partim-partim* was removed, the Council Fathers decided not to affirm Scripture and Tradition as two sources of revelation, but they left the question open for debate by using the more ambiguous *et* formulation. Here it is helpful to quote Geiselmann at length:

One thing is clear . . . *and* cannot be legitimately interpreted in the partly-partly sense. Trent did *not* mean to define that Scripture and tradition were two separate sources standing side by side. Does the *and*, then, imply that Scripture is sufficient by itself? Probably not; that would seem to be stretching the point. The *and* simply seems to be a compromise. What then did Trent decree about the relation between Scripture and tradition? The answer is, ‘Nothing at all.’ In using the *and*, Trent avoided the debated issue and indicated that the question was not yet ripe for decision.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, according to Geiselmann, Trent did not condemn the belief of the sufficiency of Scripture in favor of the parity of Scripture and Tradition. In fact, the Council did not affirm either view. Rather, it decided “nothing” on the matter, leaving the question open for further debate.

Despite the Council having decided “nothing,” Geiselmann pointed out that the majority of post-Tridentine Catholic scholars held to the *partim-partim* concept of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, often interpreting the Tridentine decree in that sense. He believed this interpretation was an error, resulting from the influence of nominalism. In his 1956 presentation, he put the blame on Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine for this mistake.<sup>14</sup> Later, in a 1959 essay, he added Melchior Cano to this list and, in fact, faulted him with originating the erroneous interpretation of Trent.<sup>15</sup> In that essay, he concluded:

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13. Ibid., 75.

14. See Ibid., 75-76.

15. See Geiselmann, “Scripture, Tradition, and the Church: An Ecumenical Problem,” in *Christianity Divided: Protestant and Roman Catholic Theological Issues*, ed. Daniel J. Callahan et al., trans. John Tashjean (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 40-43. Originally published as “Schrift-Tradition-Kirche, ein ökumenisches Problem,” in *Begegnung der Christen*, ed. Maximilian Roesle and Oscar Cullmann (Stuttgart and Frankfurt: Evangelisches Verlagswerk and Verlag Josef Knecht, 1959).

The *opinio communis* of theologians immediately after the Tridentinum was determined by the influence of the *Loci theologici* of Melchior Cano, by the catechisms and the theological writings of Canisius, and the *Controversies* of Bellarmine, which say that the Council decided the relation of Scripture and Tradition in the sense of ‘partly-partly.’<sup>16</sup>

Geiselmann believed these three theologians, in particular, influenced the theological thought for centuries to come, resulting in the parity of Scripture and Tradition being widely disseminated in Catholic theology.

According to Geiselmann, the nineteenth century was the beginning of a renewed understanding of the Council’s decree on Scripture and Tradition. Before this, in the eighteenth century, some Catholic theologians had moved from the *partly-partly* understanding to a *partly-totally* belief, holding that the Word of God is *partly* in Scripture and *totally* in Tradition.<sup>17</sup> Yet, it was only in the nineteenth century that Catholic theology truly began to shift away from the *partly-partly* understanding of Scripture and Tradition under the leadership of scholars such as Marian Dobmayer, Theodor Pantaleon Senestrey, Johann Adam Möhler, John Henry Newman, and John Baptist Kuhn.<sup>18</sup> Geiselmann saw himself and other theologians with his views as the successors of these nineteenth-century giants, merely picking up where they left off, and completing their pioneering efforts to correct the post-Tridentine error.

In a similar trajectory to these nineteenth-century theologians, Geiselmann argued for a *totally-totally* view of Scripture and Tradition. In his 1956 lecture, he explained, “The word of God may be found in its totality in Sacred Scripture and in its totality in the living tradition of the Church. All of the revealed word of God is to be found in Sacred Scripture as interpreted by

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16. Geiselmann, “Scripture, Tradition, and the Church,” 43. Particular writings of Canisius that Geiselmann mentioned as including the *partim-partim* view include his *Catechismus Major* and *Summa Doctrinae Christianae*. Also, in addition to Bellarmine’s *Controversies*, Geiselmann named his *De Verbo Dei*. See “Scripture and Tradition,” 75-76. For a recent study addressing Robert Bellarmine’s views of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, see Christian D. Washburn, “St. Robert Bellarmine on the Authoritative Interpretation of Sacred Scripture,” *Gregorianum* 94, no. 1 (2013): 55-77.

17. Geiselmann credited Engelbert Klüpfel with this teaching. See “Scripture and Tradition,” 76-77.

18. See Geiselmann, “Scripture, Tradition, and the Church,” 59.

living tradition.”<sup>19</sup> In this way, Geiselman maintained what he saw as an essential unity between Scripture and Tradition. He was opposed to dividing them into two distinct sources; rather, he wanted to keep them as an organic whole. He did this by claiming that Scripture is “doctrinally complete” and delegating Tradition to the essential role of the authoritative hermeneutical key to Scripture. He would later develop these ideas much further and come to emphasize the “sufficiency” of Scripture.

While this lecture contained all of Geiselman’s primary arguments on this subject, at least in seed form, Geiselman went on to further develop his positions in a lengthy essay published one year later in Michael Schmaus’ *Die mündliche Überlieferung* (“The Oral Tradition”), entitled “Das Konzil von Trient über das Verhältnis der Heiligen Schrift und der nicht geschriebenen Traditionen” (“The Council of Trent on the Relationship of Holy Scripture and Unwritten Traditions”).<sup>20</sup> In this essay, he reiterated and expounded further upon the views expressed in the 1956 lecture. He once again concluded that “nothing” was decided at the Council of Trent regarding the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. Explaining what the change to *et* signified, Geiselman said, “Nothing, nothing whatsoever. With the ‘et’, the Council avoided a decision, because this issue was not yet ready for a decision.”<sup>21</sup>

Geiselman also reiterated the *totally-totally* view and argued for the sufficiency of Scripture, with Tradition functioning as its authoritative interpreter. Thus, he again emphasized the unity of Scripture and Tradition. He denied the *partly-partly* interpretation of Trent and juxtaposed that view against what he saw as the correct Catholic belief of *totally-totally*. In fact,

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19. Geiselman, “Scripture and Tradition,” 78.

20. Geiselman, “Das Konzil von Trient über das Verhältnis der Heiligen Schrift und der nicht geschriebenen Traditionen,” in *Die mündliche Überlieferung*, ed. Michael Schmaus (Munich: Hueber, 1957), 123-206.

21. Geiselman, “Das Konzil von Trient,” 163. “nichts, gar nichts. Mit dem ‘et’ ist das Konzil einer Entscheidung ausgewichen, weil diese Frage noch nicht entscheidungsreif war.” See also, Geiselman, “Scripture, Tradition, and the Church,” 47-48.

he concluded the essay by saying, “So at the end of this development, the ‘*partim in libris scriptis, partim in sine scripto traditionibus*’ of the post-Tridentine controversial theology stands against the ‘*totum in sacra scriptura et iterum totum in sine scripto traditionibus*.’”<sup>22</sup> Thus, the battle lines were drawn. There was no compromise in Geiselman’s mind. For him, post-Tridentine thought was predominately wrong on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. He saw himself as an important part of the current that was returning to a correct Catholic understanding of the Word of God (i.e. revelation).

In 1959, Geiselman published another article on the subject entitled “Schrift-Tradition-Kirche, ein ökumenisches Problem” (“Scripture, Tradition, and the Church: An Ecumenical Problem”), which has already been mentioned. In that article he further reiterated his interpretation of the Council of Trent and his views on the sufficiency of Scripture. He even went as far as claiming, “[A truly Catholic] view is irreconcilable with the kind of mechanistic division of two sources of Scripture and Tradition put forth by post-Tridentine theology with its *partim-partim*. To put it more clearly, the latter view is un-Catholic.”<sup>23</sup> Ironically, that same year, Heinrich Lennerz, another Catholic German scholar, published two articles in the *Gregorianum* attacking Geiselman’s position and essentially accusing him of being un-Catholic for holding his views.<sup>24</sup> In those articles and in a third one published in 1961, Lennerz defended the *partim-partim* interpretation of Trent against Geiselman.<sup>25</sup> The German theologian Johannes Beumer, among others, also published criticisms of Geiselman around the same time.<sup>26</sup> These scholars

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22. Geiselman, “Das Konzil von Trient,” 206. “So steht am Ende dieser Entwicklung dem *partim in libris scriptis—partim in sine scripto traditionibus* der nachtridentinischen Kontroverstheologie das *totum in sacra scriptura et iterum totum in sine scripto traditionibus* gegenüber.”

23. Geiselman, “Scripture, Tradition, and the Church,” 48.

24. Heinrich Lennerz, S. J., “Scriptura sola?” *Gregorianum* 40 (1959): 38-53; and “Sine scripto traditiones,” *Gregorianum* 40 (1959): 624-635.

25. Lennerz, “Scriptura et tradition in decreto 4. Sessionis Concilii Tridentini,” *Gregorianum* 42 (1961): 517-522.

26. See, e.g., Johannes Beumer, S. J., “Katholisches und protestantisches Schriftprinzip im Urteil des Trienter Konzils,” *Scholastik* 34 (1959): 249-258; “Die Frage nach Schrift und Tradition bei Robert Bellarmin,” *Scholastik*

will be discussed further below, but for now it is worth noting that Geiselman was under attack to the extent that it merited a response.

That response came in the form of his *magnus opus* on the subject, a book entitled *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition (Holy Scripture and Tradition)*, published in 1962.<sup>27</sup> John Murphy commented in his review of the book, “The volume is in part polemical in nature, serving as a response to some of the criticisms leveled against [his] position. . . . The two chief critics were Lennerz and Beumer; this explains the special attention given to their views in this volume.”<sup>28</sup> That “special attention” given to Lennerz and Beumer was made explicit by Geiselman at the beginning of the book when he explained, “The writings of Heinrich Lennerz are up for discussion below, as well as those of Johannes Beumer.”<sup>29</sup> Throughout the book he interacted rather extensively with their views.<sup>30</sup>

In response to his critics, Geiselman used this book to clarify and even slightly modify some of what he had previously said. He assured his readers that he was not embracing any form of the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*, as Lennerz had accused him of doing. He asserted, “Certainly no Catholic could commit himself to the principle of *scriptura sola*.”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, he clarified his stance on the sufficiency of Scripture, noting that Scripture is *materially* sufficient, but not *formally* sufficient. According to Murphy, “[Formal sufficiency] would mean that the truths of revelation are expressed so clearly in Scripture that one might perceive them at

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34 (1959): 1-22; and “Das katholische Traditionsprinzip in seiner heute neu erkannten Problematik,” *Scholastik* 36 (1961): 217-240.

27. Geiselman, *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition: zu den neueren Kontroversen über das Verhältnis der Heiligen Schrift zu den nichtgeschriebenen Traditionen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1962). The first three chapters have been translated into English by W. J. O’Hara as *The Meaning of Tradition* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966).

28. Murphy, Review of *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition*, by J. R. Geiselman, *Theological Studies* 24 (1963): 484. For additional reviews in English, see R. P. C. Hanson, *Journal of Theological Studies* 14 (1963): 552-555, and Maurice Bévenot, S. J., Appendix to “‘Traditions’ in the Council of Trent,” *Heythrop Journal* 4 (1963): 344-45.

29. Geiselman, *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition*, 10. “Die Abhandlungen von *Heinrich Lennerz* werden unten zur Diskussion stehen, ebenso die von *Johannes Beumer*.”

30. See, in particular, pp. 93-107 and 143-153.

31. Geiselman, *Die Heilige und die Tradition*, 151. “Gewiß könne kein Katholik sich zum Prinzip der *scriptura sola* bekennen.”

once, or easily deduce them.”<sup>32</sup> This position, in essence, is the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*. In contrast, Geiselman stated, “There is no sufficiency of Holy Scripture as such.”<sup>33</sup> For Geiselman, therefore, as Murphy explained, “There is not a single point of Christian doctrine which is based solely upon the passages of Scripture. Scripture is not a self-explanatory document . . . but requires the interpretation of the living tradition of the Church.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, for Geiselman, Tradition is necessary because it authoritatively interprets Scripture.

By *material* sufficiency, Geiselman meant that all the truths necessary for salvation are *somehow* contained in Scripture. These truths are not always explicitly stated in Scripture but are there at least implicitly, in seed form, requiring Tradition to make them evident. Thus, Tradition is necessary in order to complete Scripture, making clear the truths of the faith that are contained there. In that sense, Geiselman affirmed both the incompleteness and material sufficiency of Scripture at the same time. J. P. Mackey explained, “Geiselman distinguishes sufficiency from completeness since the mode of inclusion of a truth in Scripture varies from truth to truth.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, Scripture does not stand by itself; it requires Tradition to complete it, even though it is materially sufficient.

Furthermore, Geiselman continued to advocate the *totally-totally* view in his book, with a slight qualification. In his conclusion, he pointed out a distinction between what pertains to faith and what pertains to morals (*mores*) and customs (*consuetudines*). He explained, “What concerns faith: *totum in sacra scriptura et iterum totum in traditione*, entirely in Scripture and

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32. Murphy, Review of *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition*, 488.

33. Geiselman, *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition*, 272. “Es gibt keine Suffizienz der Heiligen Schrift schlechthin.”

34. Murphy, Review of *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition*, 485. See Geiselman, *Die Heilige und die Tradition*, 151.

35. J. P. Mackey, “Scripture, Tradition and the Church,” *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1963): 49. See also his *The Modern Theology of Tradition* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 150-169 for further discussion.

entirely in Tradition.”<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, he said, “What concerns *mores* [morals] and *consuetudines* [customs]: *partim in sacra scriptura, partim in sine Scripto traditionibus*, partly in Sacred Scripture, partly in Tradition.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, for Geiselman, Scripture is materially sufficient in matters of faith and contains all truths necessary for salvation. Yet, in matters of morals and customs, Scripture is insufficient. In fact, in these matters, Geiselman affirmed that some practices have come down only through Scripture and others only through Tradition. All in all, Geiselman clarified his position on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition in this book, but he basically stuck to the same premise: revelation is totally in Scripture and totally in Tradition, with Scripture being materially sufficient regarding truths necessary for salvation (i.e. those pertaining to faith).

Geiselman was followed by many other scholars who adopted his views, to the point of basically forming a theological school on the topic. In fact, under the influence of these scholars, it was not long before Catholic thought shifted from the two-source theory of revelation, which had been predominant since the sixteenth century (if not before), to the predominance of the one-source theory. Some of the most prominent scholars who advocated this position include Henri Holstein, S. J., George H. Tavard, and Yves Congar, O. P. Some of these scholars simply repeated the arguments of Geiselman, others went beyond his conclusions, while still others embraced his fundamental argument in a slightly nuanced form. Regardless, most of these theologians writing in the late 1950s and early 1960s viewed their work, as Gabriel Moran explained, “as a simple step forward in the clarification of dogma.”<sup>38</sup> Some even went as far as

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36. Geiselman, *Die Heilige und die Tradition*, 282. “was den Glauben betrifft: *totum in sacra scriptura et iterum totum in traditione*, ganz in der Schrift und ganz in der Tradition.”

37. Ibid. “was die *mores* und *consuetudines* betrifft: *partim in sacra scriptura, partim in sine scripto traditionibus*, teils in der Heiligen Schrift, teils in der Überlieferung.”

38. Moran, *Scripture and Tradition*, 29.



claiming that the Council of Trent had excluded the two-source theory from legitimate Catholic belief and explicitly supported the one-source theory, a claim that Geiselmann never made.

The French theologian Henri Holstein was one such scholar. In a 1959 article, he claimed that the change from *partim-partim* to *et* at the Council was a rejection of the former view.<sup>39</sup> While commenting on the change, he remarked, “The idea of two partial and complementary sources of revelation was thus discarded.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Holstein upheld the one-source theory, believing that Trent had, in fact, formally excluded the two-source theory from Catholic doctrine. He especially emphasized the unity between Scripture and Tradition, contending that the Council discarded the *partim-partim* formulation in favor of teaching their inseparability. He concluded, “[The Council] had the great merit of teaching the Church that the source of all salutary truth and every Christian attitude was to be sought inseparably in Scripture and tradition.”<sup>41</sup> In essence, therefore, he affirmed the *totally-totally* view of Scripture and Tradition. Overall, Holstein basically held to the views of his German counterpart, Geiselmann, while going one step further by interpreting the change in the Tridentine decree as an exclusion of the *partim-partim* meaning, rather than merely deciding “nothing” on the matter. On that point, as one of his reviewers has commented, “Not everyone will find [Holstein] convincing about Trent.”<sup>42</sup> However, another French theologian did.

That theologian was George H. Tavard, who wrote more on the subject of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition than any other scholar mentioned here.<sup>43</sup> Tavard embraced

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39. See Holstein, “La Tradition d’après le Concile de Trente,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 47 (1959): 367-390. An English version was published in *Theology Digest* 9 (1961): 43-48, entitled “The Question of Tradition at Trent.” The English version will be used here. See also Holstein’s *La Tradition dans l’Église* (Paris: Grasset, 1960).

40. Holstein, “Tradition at Trent,” 46.

41. *Ibid.*, 48.

42. Joseph H. Crehan, S. J., Review of *La Tradition dans L’Église*, by Henri Holstein, *Theological Studies* 22, no. 3 (1961): 486.

43. His extensive corpus of literature on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition according to Trent includes: “Scripture, Tradition and History,” *Downside Review* 72 (1954): 232-244; *Holy Writ or Holy Church: The*

Geiselmann's views on the topic, while agreeing with Holstein on the interpretation of the change in the Tridentine decree. In his chapter on the Council of Trent in his 1959 book, *Holy Writ and Holy Church*, he explained, "That the Gospel is only partly in Scripture and partly in the traditions, was explicitly excluded [at the Council]."44 Thus, Tavad believed the Council's change from *partim-partim* to *et* was a rejection of the former view. Yet, for him, the Council did not, at the same time, endorse the sufficiency of Scripture. While not deciding the matter, the Council gave credence to the one-source theory. Tavad concluded, "[The Council] respects the classical view: Scripture contains all revealed doctrine, and the Church's faith, which includes apostolic traditions, interprets it."45 Therefore, Tavad believed that the Council of Trent excluded the two-source theory and provided support for the one-source theory, while not explicitly affirming it.

Furthermore, like Geiselmann, Tavad viewed the two-source theory as a mistake that had entered into Catholic theology. In 1961, he remarked, "The theology of two separate and partial sources of faith appears now to have been an unfortunate accident in the history of Catholic theology."46 One year later, he similarly commented, "The theory of 'two partial sources' of faith marked a definite regression [in Catholic theology]."47 That same year, however, Tavad expressed his disagreement with Geiselmann regarding when and how this error entered Catholic thought. In a study entitled "Tradition in Early Post-Tridentine Theology," after

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*Crisis of the Protestant Reformation* (London: Burns & Oates, 1959); "Is 'Tradition' a Problem for Catholics?" *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 16, no. 4 (1961): 375-384; "Tradition and Scripture," *Worship* 35 (1961): 375-381; "The Authority of Scripture and Tradition," in *Problems of Authority*, ed. John M. Todd (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1962), 27-42; "The Problem of Tradition Today," *Ecumenist* 1, no. 3 (1963): 33-36; "Scripture and Tradition: Sources or Source?" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1 (1964): 445-59. For a complete bibliography of Tavad's works, see Marc R. Alexander, "Georges H. Tavad Bibliography," in *The Quadrilog: Tradition and the Future of Ecumenism, Essays in Honor of George H. Tavad*, ed. Kenneth Hagen (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 388-403.

44. Tavad, *Holy Writ*, 208.

45. *Ibid.*, 209.

46. Tavad, "Tradition and Scripture," 379.

47. Tavad, "Authority," 29.

reiterating his support of Geiselmann's views on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, he showed that Melchior Cano was not the disseminator of the *partim-partim* interpretation of Trent.<sup>48</sup> In fact, he argued, many early post-Tridentine theologians, including Cano, did not embrace the two-source theory.<sup>49</sup> Rather, he showed that their views of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition were more nuanced. Tavad did not put the blame on any particular individual for the dissemination of the two-source theory. Instead, he explained that it was in existence well before Trent and became the predominant view sometime during the course of the Counter Reformation.

Like Geiselmann, Tavad embraced a *totally-totally* interpretation of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. He emphasized their unity, arguing against any separation into two distinct categories and contending that Scripture and Tradition form an organic whole. Tavad explained, "Scripture and Tradition are not two, but one."<sup>50</sup> As a result, one is not complete without the other. He remarked, "Scripture without tradition is nothing, and tradition without Scripture is nothing."<sup>51</sup> Yet, he still maintained that all truths necessary for salvation are in Scripture, with Tradition functioning as its authoritative interpreter. Therefore, Tavad also believed in the material sufficiency of Scripture.

Finally, the great French theologian Yves Congar merits mention. In 1960, the first volume of his *magnus opus*, *La Tradition et les traditions*, appeared.<sup>52</sup> Congar devoted an entire

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48. Tavad, "Tradition in Early Post-Tridentine Theology," *Theological Studies* 23, no. 3 (1962): 377-405.

49. In addition to Melchior Cano, Tavad's study included Martin Perez de Ayala, Johannes Coelaenus, and Aurelius Sanutus. For an additional study of post-Tridentine theology of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition with a focus on Peter Canisius, Edmund Campion, Antonio Possevino, and Robert Bellarmine, see John Patrick Donnelly, S. J., "Jesuit Controversialists and the Defense of Tridentine Tradition," in *The Quadriolog*, 94-109.

50. Tavad, "Authority," 36.

51. Tavad, "Problem for Catholics," 378.

52. The second volume appeared in 1963. Congar, *La Tradition et les traditions*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1960-1963). It was later translated into English by Michael Naseby and Thomas Rainborough as *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966). Congar had already published on the subject with his "Traditions apostoliques non écrites et Suffisance de

chapter to the Tridentine decree in this work. Most of this chapter was a summary of what happened at Trent and interpretations of the decree. Still, Congar did not shy away from expressing his own perspective. In agreement with Geiselmann, he believed the Council did not decide the matter. Trent's focus was on opposing the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*, not resolving disagreements within Catholic theology. Therefore, Congar concluded:

Faced with two opposing currents of opinion among the Catholic theologians . . . the council, seeing no adequate solution and ever careful to express itself only where Catholics were in agreement, contented itself with affirming, by juxtaposition and with no precision of their interrelation, the *two forms* under which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is communicated, in its plenitude and purity.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, for Congar, the change from *partim-partim* to *et* was intended to make the decree more inclusive of various Catholic positions. The Council did not present Scripture and Tradition as two sources of revelation but, rather, as “two ways or two forms by which the one source of the Gospel is communicated to us.”<sup>54</sup> It said nothing more about their relation to one another.

Since the Council of Trent did not decide the matter, Congar agreed with Geiselmann that Catholics are still free to believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. In a 1960 article, he concluded, “It remains permissible for a post-Tridentine Catholic to hold that all the truths of the Faith are to be found, if not formally expressed, then at least implied, in Scripture, and to that extent

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l'Écriture,” *Istina* 6 (1959): 279-306, along with his “Holy Writ and Holy Church,” *Blackfriars* 41 (1960): 11-19. The latter was primarily a reply to Tavad's book, *Holy Writ or Holy Church*. He later revisited the topic in *The Meaning of Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1964), and “The Debate on the Question of the Relationship between Scripture and Tradition from the Viewpoint of Their Material Content,” in *A Theology Reader*, ed. Robert W. Gleason, S. J. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), 115-129.

53. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 165.

54. *Ibid.*, 166. Congar acknowledged that the majority of the Council Fathers themselves seemed to hold to the *partim-partim* view and that this was certainly the view of the post-Tridentine controversialists and many Catholic theologians even up until the modern era. Still, he held that the Council itself did not affirm this position in its definitive decree. Interestingly, Congar suggested that the removal of the *partim-partim* from the decree could be seen as *prophetic*, “going beyond what the Fathers themselves could have had in mind” (*Ibid.*, 168). He explained that there is a divine intention behind magisterial texts that trumps the human intention. As a result, even if the Council Fathers intended the meaning of *partim-partim* in the final decree, God may have had other intentions, allowing the change in order to leave the question open for a later decision. See *Ibid.*, 168-69.

contained in it.”<sup>55</sup> Congar himself, like the others mentioned above, took advantage of this liberty allowed by the Council and concluded, “Scripture contains, at least in the form of suggestion or principle, the entire treasury of truths which it is necessary to believe in order to be saved.”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, he too affirmed the material sufficiency of Scripture.

This overview of the proponents of the one-source theory has by no means been exhaustive. The corpus of literature on the topic is quite extensive. Other theologians have aligned themselves with Geiselmann’s views, to the point that they have become the theological majority on the matter. These theologians include, among others, Jean Daniélou,<sup>57</sup> Karl Rahner,<sup>58</sup> Joseph Ratzinger,<sup>59</sup> Hubert Jedin,<sup>60</sup> and John Murphy.<sup>61</sup> Edmond Ortigues preceded Geiselmann, but he would rightfully fall into this category as well.<sup>62</sup> Yet, still other theologians adamantly opposed the above-mentioned views. These scholars include, among others, Heinrich Lennerz,

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55. Congar, “Holy Writ and Holy Church,” 11.

56. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 116.

57. See, e.g., his “Scripture, Tradition, and the Dialogue,” *Theology Digest* 9 (1961): 38-42. Originally published as “Écriture et Tradition dans le dialogue entre les chrétiens séparés,” *Documentation Catholique* 54 (1957): 283-94.

58. See, e.g., his “Scripture and Tradition,” *Theology Digest* 12, no. 1 (1964): 3-7. Originally published as “Schrift und Tradition,” *Wort und Wahrheit* 4 (1963): 269-279.

59. Ratzinger, now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, was in basic agreement with Geiselmann’s views. See, e.g., his “Offenbarung—Schrift—Überlieferung,” *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 67 (1958): 13-27. Yet, at times, he distanced himself from Geiselmann and took more of a middle ground position on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. See, e.g., his joint work with Karl Rahner, *Revelation and Tradition*, trans. W. J. O’Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966). Originally published as *Offenbarung und Überlieferung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1965). There he discussed the Tridentine decree but framed the question of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition quite differently than Geiselmann or his opponents. He began his chapter on the Tridentine decree by explaining, “The focusing of attention by Geiselmann on the reasons leading to the replacement of *partim-partim* by *et*, and the consequent concentration on a search for elements in the Tridentine discussions and their antecedents which seem to point to a material sufficiency of scripture, has resulted in undue narrowing of the inquiry. This to a large extent obscures the real background to the Tridentine decree” (*Revelation and Tradition*, 50).

60. See, e.g., his *A History of the Council of Trent*, trans. Ernest Graf, O.S.B., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1957-1961), esp. 2:52-98. In the midst of his historical reporting of the proceedings of the Fourth Session, Jedin did not hesitate to interject his opinion of the change from *partim-partim* to *et*. In fact, commenting on the change, he said, “Thus the wishes of the minority were after all met in a decisive passage of the decree” (87), and later, “The suggestion to discriminate between two separate currents of revelation (*partim-partim*) was put on one side” (92).

61. See, e.g., his “Unwritten Traditions at Trent,” *American Ecclesiastical Review* 146 (1962): 233-63, and his review of *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition* mentioned above.

62. See, e.g., his “Écriture et Traditions apostoliques au Concile de Trent,” *Recherches de Science religieuse* 36 (1949): 271-99.

Johannes Beumer, Maurice Bévenot, and Charles Boyer.<sup>63</sup> We now turn to their treatment of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition.

### *The Response to Geiselmann's Views*

One of the first and most outspoken opponents to Geiselmann's views was the German scholar Heinrich Lennerz, S. J. As mentioned above, he published three important articles in the *Gregorianum* responding to Geiselmann, advocating the two-source theory of revelation and arguing that it was the teaching of the Council of Trent. In his first article ("Scriptura sola?"), Lennerz accused Geiselmann of embracing a form of the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*. He believed the Fathers of the Council of Trent responded to the Protestants, whom he called "Innovators,"<sup>64</sup> by declaring that apostolic traditions exist in the Church and function as a source of revelation. Lennerz explained:

The Council's teaching seems clear: not all the teaching of Christ is written, i.e. contained in Holy Scripture, but much is not written, and this is contained in the apostolic traditions. The deposit of faith [*depositum fidei*], which Christ entrusted to His Church, includes Holy Scripture and the apostolic traditions. So the Council defined the true doctrine against the Innovators, who claimed: everything is in Holy Scripture—*sola scriptura*.<sup>65</sup>

Thus, Lennerz believed Catholics are not free to hold to the sufficiency of Scripture because Trent condemned the idea that "everything is in Holy Scripture."

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63. Once again, this is not an exhaustive list but includes all of the major players in the discussion. Gerard Owens and V. Moran could also be included in this category. See, e.g., Owens, "Is All Revelation Contained in Sacred Scripture?" *Studia Montis Regii* 1 (1958): 55-60, in which he criticized Daniélou's 1957 article, and Moran, "Scripture and Tradition: A Current Debate," *Australian Catholic Record* 38 (1961): 14-22.

64. Lennerz used "Neuerer" in German and "Novatores" in Latin.

65. Lennerz, "Scriptura sola?" 45. "Die Lehre des Konzils scheint klar: nicht die ganze Lehre Christi ist geschrieben, d. h. in der hl. Schrift enthalten, sondern manches ist nicht geschrieben, und dies ist enthalten in den apostolischen Traditionen. Das *depositum fidei*, das Christus seiner Kirche anvertraut hat, umfasst die hl. Schrift und die apostolischen Traditionen. So hat das Konzil die wahre Lehre gegen die Neuerer festgelegt, die behaupteten: alles steht in der hl. Schrift; *Scriptura sola*."

In fact, Lennerz viewed Geiselmann's interpretation of Trent as innovative, calling it a "new interpretation" (*nova interpretatio*).<sup>66</sup> He made a point of the fact that most Catholic theologians had taught the two-source theory of revelation since Trent, with many interpreting the Tridentine decree itself with the *partim-partim* meaning. Thus, while Geiselmann and his followers believed they were making theological progress, Lennerz thought they were teaching something new that was contrary to the teaching of an Ecumenical Council. Furthermore, Lennerz believed the change in the Tridentine decree from *partim-partim* to *et* did not alter the meaning intended by the Fathers of the Council. He explained:

For the text of the decree perfectly explains the same doctrine that was found in the form of the decree initially proposed by the Fathers; and thus the decree itself when it was definitively approved, clearly showed that the Council altogether remained firm in its first opinion, namely, that not all doctrine is contained in Sacred Scripture, and that which is not found there, is contained in unwritten traditions.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, Trent explicitly taught the insufficiency of Scripture, Lennerz concluded, saying:

Neither the Sacred Scriptures contain the whole gospel, that the Apostles were bound to preach, nor do the unwritten traditions contain it. The whole gospel is found in the Sacred Scriptures and those traditions, which are unwritten, taken together. And in this sense the Council clearly teaches the insufficiency of Sacred Scripture.<sup>68</sup>

Lennerz passed away before Geiselmann's *magnus opus*, *Die Heilige Schrift und Tradition*, was published, in which he emphasized the material sufficiency of Scripture, denying its formal sufficiency. Yet, it seems that this distinction would not have mattered to Lennerz. For him, Scripture is not formally or materially sufficient. It is, in fact, insufficient, requiring the distinct content of the apostolic traditions to complete it.

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66. See Lennerz, "Sine scripto traditiones," 625, 630, and 631; and "Scriptura et traditio," 517-518, 520, and 522.

67. Lennerz, "Sine scripto traditiones," 629-630. "Nam textus decreti perfecte eandem doctrinam exponit, quae inveniebatur in forma decreti ab initio Patribus proposita; et sic ipsum decretum definitive approbatum, clare ostendit, concilium omnino permansisse in prima sua sentential, scilicet non totam doctrinam contineri in s. Scriptura, et id quod ibi non invenitur, contineri in sine scripto traditionibus."

68. Ibid., 635. "Neque sacra Scriptura continent totum evangelium, quod Apostoli praedicare debuerunt, neque sine scripto traditiones illud continent. Totum evangelium invenitur in sacra Scriptura et illis traditionibus, quae sunt sine scripto, simul sumptis. Et hoc sensu concilium clare docet insufficientiam s. Scripturae."

Lennerz primarily focused his attack on Geiselmann through a look at what happened at the Council of Trent. He used the discussions and events that occurred at the Council to show that the final decree could not be interpreted in Geiselmann's sense and, for that matter, certainly not in the way Holstein and Tavard understood it, as explicitly excluding the two-source theory. Lennerz believed the Council decided the matter in favor of the *partim-partim* understanding of Scripture and Tradition. Therefore, contrary to Geiselmann, the question of whether or not all revelation is contained in Sacred Scripture is not "a freely disputed question among Catholics."<sup>69</sup> Lennerz thought this interpretation was obvious from the *Acta*. For this reason, at the conclusion of his final article on the subject, he remained perplexed that so many theologians had followed Geiselmann's views. He remarked:

Perhaps it is not superfluous to ask how it is possible to explain that so many theologians have not considered nor noticed the weakness of the argument of Professor Geiselmann, and that in such a serious and fundamental question they have simply accepted with closed eyes what he wrote.<sup>70</sup>

Still, Lennerz was not alone in this puzzlement, as other theologians joined him in criticizing Geiselmann's views.

One of these theologians was the German scholar Johannes Beumer, S. J. As mentioned above, he critiqued Geiselmann's views in multiple publications.<sup>71</sup> In particular, Beumer criticized Geiselmann's interpretation of Trent's change of *partim-partim* to *et*. On this matter, he basically agreed with Lennerz that the difference in wording did not change the meaning of the decree. He explained:

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69. Ibid., 634. "questionem libere disputatam inter catholicos."

70. Lennerz, "Scriptura et traditio," 522. "Fortasse non est superfluum quaerere quomodo explicari possit tot theologos non considerasse neque animadvertisse debilitatem argumentationis Professoris Geiselmann, quasi oculis clausis simpliciter acceptasse quod ille scripsit, idque in quaestione adeo gravi et fundamentali."

71. In addition to the articles mentioned above, see Beumer, *Die mündliche Überlieferung als Glaubensquelle* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 1962), esp. 74-88. For an excellent analysis of the book, see Francis Sullivan, "A New Historical Study of Tradition," *Gregorianum* 43 (1964): 536-542.



The 'et' of the definition is not substantially different from the 'partim-partim' of the draft and says the same thing in the matter, though the first certainly offers a better expression and more effectively eliminates misinterpretation, as if it should be said there is a division of revelation into two separate content areas of the Word.<sup>72</sup>

Beumer may have held that there was no difference between *partim-partim* and *et*, but, as these words indicate, he had a slightly different view than Lennerz on the meaning of *partim-partim*. In fact, he did not agree with the two-source interpretation of the Tridentine decree. As Tavard explained, "*partim, partim*, in [Beumer's] mind, means 'on the one hand, on the other hand' rather than 'partly, partly.' It has an *alternate* sense."<sup>73</sup> Thus, he may have agreed with Lennerz that *partim-partim* and *et* have basically the same meaning, but he did not agree with Lennerz's definition of *partim-partim* as meaning Scripture and Tradition constitute two distinct sources.

Beumer, in essence, took a middle ground between Geiselman and Lennerz. He emphasized the unity of Scripture and Tradition but was not willing to affirm the sufficiency of Scripture, as Geiselman had explained it. For Beumer, the Council of Trent's primary concern was to respond to the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*. The Fathers did this by defining that there are two ways in which the Gospel has been transmitted: Scripture and Tradition. Francis Sullivan has explained that, according to Beumer:

The Council simply meant to declare that the Gospel has been given to us both in writing (*in libris scriptis*) and orally (*sine scripto*); it did not divide the Gospel into two parts, one of which was given in writing, the other only orally; nor did it decide the question whether, in some cases, the content of the *sine scripto traditiones* might go beyond what is found *in libris scriptis*.<sup>74</sup>

In this way, Beumer avoided the extremes of both sides of the debate, taking, as Gabriel Moran explained, "a middle ground between the allegations of the sufficiency and the insufficiency of

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72. Beumer, "Katholisches und protestantisches Schriftprinzip," 258. "Das 'et' der Definition unterscheidet sich nicht wesentlich von dem 'partim-partim' des Entwurfes und besagt in der Sache dasselbe, obschon ersteres ohne Zweifel einen besseren Ausdruck bietet und wirksamer die Fehldeutung ausschließt, als ob einer Aufteilung der Offenbarung in Zwei selbständige Inhaltsbereiche das Wort geredet werden solle."

73. Tavard, "Problem of Tradition," 33.

74. Sullivan, "Study of Tradition," 537-538.

Scripture.”<sup>75</sup> In essence, he avoided the polemical language being used in the debate and attempted to restate the relationship between Scripture and Tradition in a more nuanced way. Therefore, while he certainly had strong criticisms of Geiselmann, Beumer should not be simply lumped in with Lennerz’s views. Rather, he stood in a category somewhat his own.

The French patristics scholar Maurice Bévenot, S. J. also criticized Geiselmann, while taking a slightly different approach than Lennerz to the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. He took up the debate in a 1960 article entitled, “Tradition, Church, and Dogma.”<sup>76</sup> There he criticized Geiselmann’s interpretation of Trent, referencing Lennerz’s 1959 article when saying, “Fr. Lennerz has perhaps shown sufficiently clearly that . . . [Geiselmann] has misinterpreted the Council of Trent.”<sup>77</sup> Bévenot provided two primary criticisms of Geiselmann’s views.<sup>78</sup> First, he showed that belief in the sufficiency of Scripture and, at the same time, the necessity of Tradition to complete it, is inconsistent and paradoxical, at best. For, Bévenot explained, “If Church, Scripture, and Tradition *together* form an indivisible whole, then Scripture by itself does not contain the whole of Revelation.”<sup>79</sup> Second, he argued against Geiselmann’s view that Scripture is the *norm* of all the Church’s teaching, including the apostolic traditions. In other words, everything in Tradition must be checked against Scripture. Bévenot contended that Scripture could not function as a *norm* if certain dogmas of the faith are only hinted at there. He concluded, “Of course a genuine tradition will not *contradict* what really is in the Scriptures, but non-contradiction is already much less than a suggestive hint, and is quite

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75. Moran, *Scripture and Tradition*, 83.

76. Maurice Bévenot, “Tradition, Church, and Dogma,” *Heythrop Journal* 1 (1960): 34-47.

77. *Ibid.*, 38. That same year, he criticized Tavard in a review of *Holy Writ or Holy Church* found in *Theological Studies* 21, no. 3 (1960): 485, saying, “The trouble is that this book is dominated by Prof. Geiselmann’s unfortunate interpretation of the Council of Trent’s decree.”

78. See Bévenot, “Tradition, Church, and Dogma,” 39-40.

79. *Ibid.*, 39.

useless as a norm.”<sup>80</sup> Therefore, Bévenot found Geiselmann’s teaching on the sufficiency of Scripture to be rather insufficient.

At the same time, Bévenot was more gracious to Geiselmann than Lennerz. He willingly accepted Geiselmann’s focus on the unity of Scripture and Tradition, expressing that this rightfully helped avoid “the crude conception of the deposit of faith as being contained in two boxes, one labeled ‘Scripture’ and the other ‘Tradition.’”<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, in his 1960 article, he reserved final judgment on Geiselmann’s views until the publication of the forthcoming *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition*, which appeared in 1962. Unfortunately for Geiselmann, however, Bévenot subsequently judged the book as “rather disappointing” in a 1963 review.<sup>82</sup> Yet, he did not side with Lennerz’s interpretation of Trent in that review either. For Bévenot, the Council Fathers were in general agreement on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition in the *partim-partim* sense, but making a definitive declaration on this matter was not their primary concern. Bévenot concluded, “The suppression of the [*partim-partim*] phrase . . . was made not because it was wrong, nor because it was generally recognized to be an open question, but because (i) it had been objected to and (ii) because its suppression did not affect what they really wanted to define.”<sup>83</sup> Therefore, Bévenot did not believe the Tridentine decree *must* be interpreted in the *partim-partim* sense as Lennerz did, but he also did not believe it *could* be interpreted as a rejection of the *partim-partim* view, as Holstein and Tavard did.

Finally, the French theologian Charles Boyer, S. J. strongly reaffirmed Lennerz’s arguments against Geiselmann in two articles found in *Unitas* in 1963 and 1964.<sup>84</sup> Following

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80. *Ibid.*, 40.

81. *Ibid.*, 38.

82. See Bévenot, “‘Traditions’ in the Council of Trent,” 344.

83. *Ibid.*

84. Boyer, “Non-Written Apostolic Traditions,” *Unitas* 15 (1963): 243-257; and “The Council of Trent and the Question of the Insufficiency of Sacred Scripture,” *Unitas* 16 (1964): 159-170. See also his “Traditions apostoliques non écrites,” *Doctor Communis* 15 (1962): 5-21.

Lennerz, Boyer argued that the Council's change from *partim-partim* to *et* did not change the meaning of the decree. Therefore, Trent affirmed the two-source theory, and those who taught otherwise, like Geiselmann, were acting against the Council. According to Boyer, "[The decree] was modified purely for reasons of style, as well as to avoid suggesting that the two fonts had the same quantitative importance."<sup>85</sup> The use of *et*, therefore, still included a distinction between Scripture and Tradition. For Boyer, in order to have the full content of revelation, one must have both Scripture and Tradition, since some truths of the faith are found in one but not the other.

Boyer viewed Geiselmann's claim of the sufficiency of Scripture to be erroneous, even with Geiselmann's qualification that the Scriptures are only *materially* sufficient. He concluded, "In no reasonable sense can one speak of a real material sufficiency of the Scriptures. This is excluded by the text of the decree in question, by the examination of the Acts of the Council, by the testimony of the conciliar theologians, and even by pure probability."<sup>86</sup> For Boyer, the point of the Council's decree on Scripture and Tradition was to affirm the insufficiency of the Scriptures against Protestants, declaring that the apostolic traditions contain portions of revelation not included in Scripture. Thus, in order to have access to the whole of the content of revelation, one must look to both Scripture and Tradition. Boyer concluded, "The Council of Trent has taught us that to know all of Revelation it is not enough to consult the Bible; we must have recourse to unwritten apostolic traditions as well."<sup>87</sup> Thus, for Boyer, as well as Lennerz, the question of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition is not one that can be freely debated among Catholics, for it was decided by Trent in favor of the two-source theory. As is evident, this view was diametrically opposed to Geiselmann's views, resulting in an impasse of sorts in the debate. Was there any hope, then, of coming to a solution?

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85. Boyer, "Apostolic Traditions," 254.

86. Boyer, "Insufficiency of Sacred Scripture," 160.

87. *Ibid.*, 170.

## *The Second Vatican Council*

With the opening of the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962, many theologians wondered whether or not a decision would be made on the subject of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. Since this issue was a central point of debate among Catholic theologians at the time, it naturally became part of the agenda. Prior to the Council's opening, seven schemas were sent to the Council Fathers for them to review in order to prepare for the discussion of these drafts at the First Session. First among these was a schema entitled "On the Sources of Revelation."<sup>88</sup> As is indicated by the title, this document embraced the two-source theory of revelation. In fact, it not only called Scripture and Tradition sources but also clearly expressed that there are revealed truths that have been passed down *only* through Tradition. Thus, had the document been promulgated as it stood, it would have censured Geiselman and those who shared his views.

With many of the theologians holding Geiselman's views being present at the Council, the schema was sure to be opposed.<sup>89</sup> In fact, even prior to the opening of the Council, this schema was sharply criticized.<sup>90</sup> Once the Council opened on October 11, 1962, addressing the schema soon became an important order of business. At the General Congregation on November

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88. The full Latin title was *Schema constitutionis dogmaticae de fontibus revelationis*. For discussion of this schema and its development throughout the Council, see Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, eds., *History of Vatican II*, 5 vols. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995-2006), esp. 2:233-66, 385-91; 4:195-231; and 5:275-362; Gregory Baum, "Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation: History and Interpretation," *Theological Studies* 28 (1967): 51-75; Karim Schelkens, *Catholic Theology of Revelation on the Eve of Vatican II: A Redaction History of the Schema De Fontibus Revelationis (1960-1962)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); and Jared Wicks, S. J., "Vatican II on Revelation—From Behind the Scenes," *Theological Studies* 71 (2010): 637-50.

89. These theologians included Yves Congar, Joseph Ratzinger, Karl Rahner, Jean Daniélou, and George Tavard, who all served as *periti* ("experts") at the Council. Geiselman himself was not present. Of those mentioned above who were critical of Geiselman, Maurice Bévenot and Charles Boyer were also involved in the conciliar discussions regarding the text of "On the Sources of Revelation."

90. While criticisms came from many Council Fathers, the young German theologian Joseph Ratzinger was one of the strongest opponents. For Ratzinger's criticisms regarding the presentation of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition in the schema, see the text of his lecture given to the German-speaking bishops on the night before the opening of the Council in Jared Wicks, "Six Texts by Prof. Joseph Ratzinger as *peritus* before and during Vatican Council II," *Gregorianum* 89 (2008): 269-77.

14 of that year, the document was formally presented to the Council.<sup>91</sup> On November 20, the Council Fathers voted regarding whether or not to keep it. Although well over half of the Fathers voted against retaining the schema as it stood, it was not the two-thirds majority needed to secure the decision. Still, the next day, Pope John XXIII brought to fruition the desire of the majority by announcing the removal of the schema from the Council's immediate agenda. It was given to a commission for major revisions, while the Council moved on to other matters.<sup>92</sup>

The draft went through substantial revisions in the years that followed, including a name change. What came out at the end of the process was the "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation" (*Dei Verbum*). This decree was promulgated at Session Eight on November 18, 1965.<sup>93</sup> When compared with the original text of "On the Sources of Revelation," it is evident that the changes were quite dramatic. As a result of the advocacy of many of the Fathers, especially those holding to Geiselman's views, the decree no longer supported the two-source theory of revelation. In fact, it did not make a decision on the matter at all. Rather than taking a side in the heated debate over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, Vatican II left the topic open for continued dialogue.<sup>94</sup>

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91. For the text of this schema, see Vatican II, *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, 32 parts in 6 vols. (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970-1996), I/3:14-26.

92. See Baum, "Constitution on Revelation," 52 for an overview of these events.

93. For the text of *Dei Verbum*, see Tanner, *Ecumenical Councils*, 2:971-81. For commentary on the text, see Tavard, *The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation of Vatican Council II* (Glen Rock, NJ: Paulist Press, 1966); and Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 5 vols. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 3:155-272.

94. That Vatican II did not take a side in the debate over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition is the consensus of modern scholarship on the matter, in addition to being the view expressed by many theologians who were present at the Council. Concerning those present at the Council, Tavard, e.g., has commented, "Whereas the first text ["On the Sources of Revelation"] adopted one particular interpretation of Tradition (as a partial source of faith, complementary to, and independent of, Scripture), the subsequent texts did not take sides among theologians in the controversial question of the quantitative extension of Scripture and of Tradition: they left it open for theology to hold that the entire revelation is in Scripture and also in Tradition, or that only a part of revelation is in Scripture while all of it is in Tradition, or even, as with Text I, that a part of revelation is in Scripture and another part in Tradition alone" (*Dogmatic Constitution*, 16. See also, 26-30). Furthermore, writing in 1966, Congar stated, "The debate upon the relationship between Scripture and Tradition quite obviously still remains open" ("Relationship between Scripture and Tradition," 115). Ratzinger expressed the same conclusion in his commentary on *Dei Verbum*, explaining, "Both points [of the debate] have been incorporated in the text" ("The Transmission of Divine

Following the wording of the Tridentine decree (as will be explained below), *Dei Verbum* used the word “source” (*fons*) only to refer to the Gospel but not to Scripture or Tradition.

Quoting word-for-word the Council of Trent, Vatican II decreed, “[The Gospel is] the source [*fontem*] of all saving truth and moral conduct.”<sup>95</sup> The document furthermore proclaimed in Article 9, where it addressed the relationship between Scripture and Tradition most directly:

Hence Sacred Tradition and Scripture are bound together in a close and reciprocal relationship. They both flow from the same divine wellspring, merge together to some extent, and are on course towards the same end. . . . The Church’s certainty about all that is revealed is not drawn from Holy Scripture alone; both Scripture and Tradition are to be accepted and honored with like devotion and reverence. Tradition and Scripture together form a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, entrusted to the Church.<sup>96</sup>

In this statement, along with the remainder of the document, *Dei Verbum*, contrary to the original schema, did not side with either the one-source theory or the two-source theory but remained neutral on the issue.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, Vatican II left the question of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition open for further debate among Catholics.

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Revelation,” in *Commentary*, 3:191). Many other theologians have expressed the same view. See, e.g., Baum, “Constitution on Revelation,” 56-57, 65; Augustin Cardinal Bea, *The Word of God and Mankind* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1967), 158; Rino Fisichella, “*Dei Verbum Audiens et Proclamans*: On Scripture and Tradition as Source of the Word of God,” *Communio* 28 (2001): 87; Joseph A. Komonchak, “The Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council,” in *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations*, ed. Raymond F. Bulman and Frederick J. Parrella (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 71; John G. Lodge, “*Dei Verbum* on Scripture and Tradition Forty Years Later,” *Chicago Studies* 44, no. 3 (2005): 245-46; Hanjo Sauer, “The Doctrinal and the Pastoral: The Text on Divine Revelation,” in *History of Vatican II*, 4:199-200; Albert Cardinal Vanhoye, “The Reception in the Church of the Dogmatic Constitution ‘*Dei Verbum*,’” in *Opening up the Scriptures: Joseph Ratzinger and the Foundations of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. José Granados et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 107-108; and Ronald D. Witherup, *Scripture: Dei Verbum* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 96.

95. See Tanner, *Ecumenical Councils*, 2:973. “fontem omnis et salutaris veritatis et morum disciplinae.” The translation here is my own.

96. Tanner, *Ecumenical Councils*, 2:974-75. “Sacra traditio ergo et sacra scriptura arcte inter se connectuntur atque communicant. Nam ambae, ex eadem divina scaturigine promanantes, in unum quodammodo coalescunt et in eundem finem tendunt. . . . ecclesia certitudinem suam de omnibus revelatis non per solam sacram scripturam hauriat. Quapropter utraque pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia suscipienda et veneranda est. Sacra traditio et sacra scriptura unum verbi Dei sacrum depositum constituunt ecclesiae commissum.” The phrase *pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia* is a direct borrowing from the Tridentine decree.

97. It is important to note here that the rejection of the schema “On the Sources of Revelation” by the Council Fathers is sometimes used as evidence to say that they rejected the two-source theory that it advocated. There are two significant problems with this theory. First, if the rejection of the schema was a rejection of the two-source theory, then it was also a rejection of the rest of the contents of the document. Yet, the schema contained a discussion of a number of important truths concerning the nature of revelation, inspiration, and divine

Since Vatican II did not solve the problem, we are left wondering what is the correct understanding of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. As discussed above, the two solutions traditionally proposed have been labeled the two-source theory, which adheres to the belief that revelation is contained *partly* in Scripture and *partly* in Tradition, and the one-source theory, which holds to the material sufficiency of Scripture regarding truths necessary for salvation. Still, the options must not be limited to these two camps. Certainly, following theologians such as Johannes Beumer and Maurice Bévenot, a middle ground between the two-source and one-source theories is possible and, in fact, even desirable, as we will see. But, first, before progressing towards a way forward in the debate over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, we must take a closer look at the Council of Trent, in order to better understand what was decided in its definitive decree on Scripture and Tradition. Therefore, we now turn to the sixteenth century and the proceedings of the Fourth Session of the Council of Trent.

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condescension, many of which were subsequently affirmed in *Dei Verbum*. Certainly the Council Fathers were not rejecting those teachings. Second, the rejection of a schema is simply that. It is not the rejection of its doctrinal contents unless the rejection of the schema is itself promulgated by the Council. Since this was not the case at Vatican II, then the contents of “On the Sources of Revelation” were not formally condemned. See Washburn, “St. Robert Bellarmine on the Infallibility of General Councils of the Church,” *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum* 42, no. 1 (2010): 184.



## Chapter 3

### The Proceedings of the Fourth Session of Trent

The official Catholic response to the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century came in the form of an Ecumenical Council. After many failed attempts to call a Council, Pope Paul III convoked the Council of Trent on November 19, 1544 in the Bull *Laetare Hierusalem*.<sup>1</sup> The suggested start date of March 15, 1545 (*Laetare Sunday*) proved to be too soon to gather the many bishops and theologians who were summoned.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the opening was postponed until December 13, 1545 (*Gaudete Sunday*).<sup>3</sup> With this inaugural opening session, the Council of Trent began, being in this first period under the presidency of three papal legates: Cardinals Giovanni Maria del Monte, Marcello Cervini, and Reginald Pole.<sup>4</sup>

The Bull of Convocation had placed before the Council three tasks, explained by Jedin as “a statement of Catholic dogma, reform of the Church, [and] preparing the way for peace.”<sup>5</sup> Since the Pope was to see to the task of peace himself, the Council was left with focusing on the

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1. For the text of this bull, see *CT* 4:385-88. This was, in fact, the third convocation of the Council. On June 2, 1536, Pope Paul III had first summoned a General Council to meet at Mantua on May 23, 1537 through the bull *Ad Dominici Gregis Curam* (for this bull, see *CT* 4:2-6). After the opening of the Council at Mantua failed, as did an attempt to open it at Vicenza, it was finally adjourned *sine die* on May 21, 1539. Three years then passed before an attempt was made to reconvene. On May 22, 1542, Paul III issued the bull *Initii Nostri Huius Pontificatus*, convoking a Council to begin on the first of November of that year at Trent (for this bull, see *CT* 4:226-31). However, King Francis I of France soon declared war on Emperor Charles V, preventing the gathering of a Council. Therefore, the Council was once again postponed until Paul III's third convocation on November 19, 1544, which proved successful. For a brief overview of these events leading up to the opening of the Council, see Jedin, *Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church: An Historical Outline*, trans. Ernest Graf, O. S. B. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1960), 149-58. For a much more detailed account, see Jedin, *Council of Trent*, 1:288-581.

2. Jedin, *Ecumenical Councils*, 154.

3. Even then, only thirty-one bishops, most being Italians, were present. See *Ibid.*, 154-55.

4. *Ibid.*, 155.

5. Jedin, *Council of Trent*, 2:29. See *CT* 4:385-88.

matters of dogma and reform. The Council Fathers met for Session Two on January 7, 1546 and explained the procedure that would be followed. They decreed, “It is the chief concern, responsibility and intention of this holy council that, when the darkness of heresies . . . has been dispelled, the light of Catholic truth . . . may shine forth again in its brightness and purity, and matters which require reform may be duly amended.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the purpose of the Council was to dispel heresies (i.e. affirm dogma) and bring about reform. The Third Session took place on February 4, 1546 and reiterated this point: “The dual purpose on account of which the council was primarily brought together [is] the rooting out of heresy and the reform of conduct.”<sup>7</sup> The decree of the Third Session also included a recitation and affirmation of the Nicene Creed. Thus, the foundation was laid for the future sessions in which dogma and reform would be the structure for discussions.

Although the two-fold purpose of dogma and reform was clear enough, the order in which these would be addressed at the Council was not. Between the second and third sessions, debate had ensued over which of the two tasks should be addressed first. The Pope had already made evident his desire. In a letter from Cardinal Farnese in Rome dated December 31, 1545, the legates were directed to begin with dogma.<sup>8</sup> Yet, as soon as January 6, 1546, the legates were aware that the majority opinion at the Council was to begin with reform.<sup>9</sup> The discussions at the General Congregation on January 18 evidenced this strong favoring of the priority of reform by the majority of the Council Fathers.<sup>10</sup> In another General Congregation on January 22, however,

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6. Tanner, *Ecumenical Councils*, 2:661. “Ad haec cum huius sacrosancti concilii praecipua cura, sollicitudo et intentio sit, ut propulsatis haeresum tenebris . . . catholicae veritatis lux . . . candor puritasque refulgeat et ea, quae reformatione egent, refoventur.”

7. *Ibid.*, 2:662. “quae duobus illis capitibus de extirpandis haeresibus et moribus reformandis continentur, quorum causa praecipue est congregata.”

8. See *CT* 10:290-92 for the text of the letter.

9. In a letter to Farnese dated that day, they expressed the desire of the majority of the Fathers to begin with reform and asked for guidance from the Pope. See *CT* 10:297-300.

10. See *CT* 4:567-69.

a compromise was made with the decision to treat the two topics simultaneously.<sup>11</sup> Still, a letter received on January 26 from Farnese expressed the Pope's continued desire for the Council to begin with dogma.<sup>12</sup> Due to the overwhelming opinion of the Council Fathers to begin with reform and the necessary compromise that had already been decided, the legates believed the Pope's desires would be impossible to achieve. Thus, they sought to convince the Pope of the necessity of the simultaneous treatment of dogma and reform. Eventually, the Pope acquiesced and gave his approval to the compromise, with the caveat that dogma still be given a certain priority. Thus, the procedure moving forward was to discuss dogma and reform simultaneously.

#### *Preliminary Events and Discussions at the Fourth Session*

Shortly after the Third Session of February 4, the legates decided to proceed by setting the foundation of future dogmatic considerations through affirming the canonicity of the biblical books. On February 7, they sent a letter to Farnese to explain to the Pope their plans for the Council moving forward. Richard Baepler has summarized their correspondence:

The letters of the papal legates to Farnese reveal their plan to propose that the council accept [the] Sacred Scriptures as the source of doctrine; to establish that all of Jesus' revelation was not recorded in the Bible but that some was handed down in the tradition; that after the Ascension, the Holy Spirit continues His work of revealing in the church, the results of which are found in the tradition which is defined chiefly by the councils.<sup>13</sup>

This summary evidences that from the start the legates intended for the Council to discuss Tradition alongside Scripture.<sup>14</sup> The legates desired for the Council to respond to the Protestant

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11. See *CT* 4:569-72.

12. See *CT* 10:321 for the text of the letter.

13. Baepler, "Scripture and Tradition in the Council of Trent," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 31 (1960): 349.

14. Throughout this study the singular *Tradition* will be used interchangeably with the plural *traditions*, since the term *Tradition* is typically used today in the collective sense. Therefore, it has a correlative meaning to that of the plural form used in the sixteenth century. As will be discussed below, the Council Fathers almost always used the plural form (*traditiones* in Latin).

questioning of certain biblical books and the role of Tradition in the Church.<sup>15</sup> In the February 7 letter they explained that their primary reason for planning to speak about Tradition at the Council was that “the faith revealed by the New Testament of Jesus Christ, our Lord, was not entirely inscribed on pages.”<sup>16</sup> The legates, therefore, believed that not all of revelation is recorded in Scripture but some has been transmitted in Tradition. They further explained, “The importance of this point inheres in the fact that the heretics of today have nothing they are more eager to overturn than this.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, the legates intended to proceed in the Council with a discussion of Scripture and Tradition, looking particularly at the role of Tradition in the Church, in response to the Protestant claim of *sola scriptura*.

The Fourth Session officially opened on February 8 with a General Congregation. There the legates made known their intentions to the Council Fathers. They reported that the first priority was to receive the canonical books of Sacred Scripture, since they would be the foundation of future discussions. They explained, “Before all things the canonical books of Sacred Scripture must be received, so that they may be the foundation of things which must be investigated by the Sacred Synod, and then we may know by which authorities the dogmas of the faith are strengthened or the errors of heretics are repelled.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, the reason for proceeding

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15. There is not space here to fully develop the Protestant position, but a few points merit mentioning regarding their understanding of Tradition. The Reformers by no means discarded Tradition completely. They did, however, question its role in the Church. For them, Tradition has no binding authority. It may prove helpful for interpreting Scripture at times, but it is not a divinely guided instrument given to the Church. Furthermore, Tradition may have historical value but it does not have apostolic authority. Only Scripture is truly apostolic. Thus, they proclaimed *sola scriptura*, meaning that only the Bible functions as the binding authority in the Church. For further study, see Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 138-35; Eric W. Gritsch, “Martin Luther’s View of Tradition,” in *The Quadriolog*, 61-75; Robert E. McNally, S. J., “Tradition at the Beginning of the Reformation,” in *Perspectives on Scripture and Tradition*, ed. Joseph F. Kelly (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1976), 60-83; and Tavard, *Holy Writ*, 80-110.

16. *CT* 10:373. “la rivelazione della fede havuta nel testamento novo da Gesù Cristo, Nostro Signore, non fu scritta tutta in charte.”

17. *CT* 10:373. “Il qual punto è di tanta importantia, che hoggi li heretici non hanno cosa, quale più cerchino di sbattere, che questa.”

18. *CT* 5:3. “ante omnia recipiantur libri canonici sacrae scripturae, ut sint tamquam fundamenta eorum, quae a sacra synodo pertractanda erunt, et exinde sciamus, quibus auctoritatibus dogmata fidei corroborare vel errores haereticorum repellere.”

with a discussion of Scripture was to establish the authority upon which future discussions of dogma could be based. But was Tradition to be considered an authority as well? Interestingly, there was no mention of Tradition in the opening General Congregation. However, that silence did not last long.

On February 11, a statement distributed to the three *classes*—the groups bishops were divided into for discussions, each being presided over by a papal legate—remarked, “Besides the Scriptures of the New Testament, we have the traditions of the apostles, concerning which some mention must be made in the Council.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the legates made known their intention to address apostolic traditions alongside the Scriptures.<sup>20</sup> Another letter to Cardinal Farnese on that same day further explained their aim to oppose the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura* by accepting both the Scriptures and traditions.<sup>21</sup> John Murphy summarized, “By accepting both Scripture and these traditions, they wrote, the Council would oppose adequately the contention of those [Protestants] who held that if ‘such a thing is not found in Scripture, therefore it is not true.’”<sup>22</sup> Thus, in order to oppose Protestant teachings, the legates saw it was necessary for the Council to discuss Tradition along with Scripture.

In the General Congregation of February 12 the first recorded use of the *partim-partim* formulation appeared. Cardinal del Monte declared, “All our faith is about divine revelation and this has been handed down to us by the Church *partly* from the Scriptures, which are in the Old and the New Testament, *partly* also from a simple handing-down [*traditione*] by hand.”<sup>23</sup>

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19. *CT* 5:4. “ultra scripturas novi testamenti habemus traditiones apostolorum, de quibus est facienda aliqua mentio in concilia.”

20. Note that here at the beginning of the session the traditions were already designated as “apostolic.” This first mention indicated the type of traditions the legates had in mind from the start.

21. See *CT* 10:377-379.

22. Murphy, “Unwritten Traditions,” 236. The quotation is found in *CT* 10:378: “la tal cosa non si trova nella scrittura, adunque non è vera.”

23. *CT* 5:7. “omnis fides nostra de revelatione divina est et hanc nobis traditam ab ecclesia *partim* ex scripturis, quae sunt in veteri et novo testamento, *partim* etiam ex simplici traditione per manus” (emphasis mine).

Therefore, he concluded, the Council should begin with Scripture and then deal with Tradition. This *partim-partim* formulation initially saw no opposition from the Council Fathers. In the next General Congregation on February 15, mention was first made of the phrase *pari pietatis affectu* (“an equal affection of piety”), which became central to later discussions. Finally, the intention to discuss “the reception of the apostolic traditions” was reiterated, but nothing further was decided.<sup>24</sup>

In Cervini’s *classis* on February 18, there was much discussion about the topic of Tradition. For example, Bishop Pietro Bertano of Fano explained that Scripture and Tradition were both dictated by the same Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup> He said, “After we receive the Sacred Scriptures, the traditions are necessary to receive, which have been dictated by the same Holy Spirit who dictated the Scriptures.”<sup>26</sup> This expressed a certain equality of origin between the two modes of revelation, which was further emphasized in a statement by Cervini. He explained, “Nevertheless, nothing differs between the Sacred Scriptures and the apostolic traditions. For those [Scriptures] are possessed in writing, these [traditions] through teaching. Both, nevertheless, have emanated from the Holy Spirit in the same manner.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, Scripture and Tradition were viewed as equal because of their common origin in the Holy Spirit.

Cervini continued in that same *classis* to explain three important principles and foundations of the faith. These principles are: 1.) the Sacred Scriptures, written by the dictation of the Holy Spirit; 2.) the Gospel, taught orally by Christ and planted in the hearts of men, some of which was written down and some left in the hearts of men (i.e. transmitted orally); and 3.) the

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24. *CT* 5:10. “de receptione traditionum apostolicarum.” Note the clarifier “apostolic” here. From this point on in the discussion, “apostolic” was regularly used when the Fathers were speaking about traditions.

25. In the *Acta*, his name is “Fanensis.”

26. *CT* 5:10. “Cum iam receperimus scripturas sacras, necessario recipiendae sunt traditiones, quae ab eodem Spiritu Sancto quo scripturae dictatae sunt; demum de abusibus utriusque agendum est.”

27. *CT* 1:485. “Nihil tamen inter scripturas sacras et apostolicas traditiones differt; illae enim scriptae, haec per insinuationem habentur, utraeque tamen a spiritu sancto eodem modo emanatae.”

Holy Spirit, who was sent to reveal the things of God in the hearts of the faithful, teach the Church all truth, and clarify anything doubtful in the minds of men.<sup>28</sup> The principles laid out here by Cervini played a pivotal role in the ongoing discussions about Scripture and Tradition at the Council. The second foundation is of particular note since it indicated that the Gospel (i.e. revelation) has been passed down in both written and unwritten forms.

On February 20, the legates convened a conference of “minor theologians” to discuss the problem of the concept of Tradition.<sup>29</sup> Twenty-seven theologians were chosen with the intention that they would meet and speak before the bishops in order to help guide the discussion on Tradition. Next to nothing is known about the course of events at the first meeting on February 20. It appears from the discussions that followed on February 23 that little was clarified. In the meantime, the legates sent a letter to Farnese on February 21 in which they specified Tradition as pertaining to “the part [of revelation] that was not written,” distinguishing it from the written Scriptures.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, Tradition for them is a part of revelation that is distinct from the Scriptures due to the nature of its transmission.

Cervini’s *classis* on February 23 proved to be a watershed moment in the discussion on Tradition. The question was posed whether Scripture and Tradition should be addressed in one decree or in two separate decrees. The Fathers decided they should both be included in the same decree. Moreover, an important distinction regarding Tradition was brought to the fore by the procurator of the bishop of Augsburg, Claude Lejay. He explained:

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28. See *CT* 5:11. “tria esse principia et fundamenta nostrae fidei: primum libros sacros, qui scripti sunt dictante Spiritu Sancto, secundum esse evangelium, quod Christus Dominus Noster non scripsit, sed ore docuit et in cordibus illud plantavit, cuius evangelii nonnulla postea evangelistae scripto mandarunt, multa quoque relicta sunt in cordibus hominum. Tertium, quia non semper filius Dei corporaliter nobiscum mansurus erat, misit Spiritum Sanctum, qui in cordibus fidelium seer eta Dei re velar et ecclesiam quotidie et usque ad consummationem saeculi doceret omnem veritatem, et si quid in mentibus hominum dubii occurrisset, declararet.” See also, *CT* 1:484-485.

29. They were named as such because they were lower in rank than the bishops, who were the “major theologians.”

30. *CT* 10:394. “la tradizione di quella parte che non fu scritta.”

For there are different kinds [of traditions]: for certain ones pertain to faith, and these must be received by us with the same authority as the Gospel. However, concerning others, which are ceremonials that have arisen, this is not so; for concerning bigamy and strangled meat it is differently observed by us than what has been handed down by the Apostles themselves.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, Lejay distinguished between traditions pertaining to faith, on the one hand, and ceremonial traditions, on the other hand. Those pertaining to faith are on the same level as the Gospel and, therefore, cannot be changed. Ceremonial traditions, rather, can be changed, even if they have their source in the Apostles and are recorded in Scripture (such as bigamy and strangled meat). Maurice Bévenot has commented, “From [this distinction] we can draw two conclusions, the first that *traditiones* can be found in Scripture too, the second, that those found there as laid down by the apostles need not ‘ad fidem pertinere’ [pertain to faith], and so are open to alteration.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, traditions may be apostolic (and even in Scripture) yet not pertain to faith. Cervini affirmed this distinction, saying, “For some traditions are found in Scripture, some are not found in Scripture, and some are essential, some are ceremonial, as was rightly said by Augsburg.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, the essential, unchangeable traditions are those pertaining to faith, others are merely ceremonial.

Next, Cervini presented a list of “authorities” from Scripture and the Church Fathers in order to illustrate the existence of apostolic traditions in the Church and contend for their acceptance along with the canonical books in the decree.<sup>34</sup> The Scripture passages showed the

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31. *CT* 1:491. “Sunt enim diversarum specierum: nam quaedam ad fidem pertinent, et eae pari auctoritate cum evangeliiis a nobis suscipiendae sunt. De aliis autem, quae ceremoniales existunt, non ita; nam de bigamia et de sanguine suffocato aliter a nobis observatur, quam ab ipsis apostolis sit traditum.”

32. Bévenot, “‘Traditions’ in the Council of Trent,” 337.

33. *CT* 1:492. “Nam traditionum aliquae scriptae, aliquae non scriptae reperiuntur, et aliquae essentielles, aliquae ceremoniales sunt, ut ab Augustensi recte dictum fuerat.”

34. *CT* 5:14-18. The Scripture passages included were Jer. 31:33; John 20:30, 21:25, and 16:12-13; 2 John 12; 3 John 13-14; 1 Cor. 11:2, 34; 2 Cor. 3:2-3; Phil. 3:15, 4:8-9; 2 Thess. 2:14; and 1 Thess. 4:1-2. Additionally, a passage was mistakenly attributed to 2 Cor. 11 that actually is found nowhere in Scripture but is from the apocryphal Gospel of Peter. The Church Fathers quoted as authorities were Dionysius the Areopagite (Pseudo-Dionysius);



need for Tradition because Jesus and the Apostles taught things that were not written down in the New Testament. The quotations from the Church Fathers affirmed this as well. Murphy explained, “In all of these citations, therefore, the same theme recurs over and again: the fact that the Protestant principle of ‘*Scriptura sola*’ does not suffice, but that we must have recourse to that which was not included in the canonical books of the New Testament—the ‘unwritten’ element of Christian revelation.”<sup>35</sup> Of particular note is one of the quotations from Pseudo-Dionysius, which includes the formulation *partim-partim* in reference to written and unwritten forms of revelation.<sup>36</sup> Also, one of Basil’s quotations includes the phrase *par . . . pietatis debetur affectus* (“an equal affection of piety is due”).<sup>37</sup> This phrase appeared in the first draft of the decree and in a modified form in the final decree. As we will see, these quotations from the Church Fathers influenced the language of the discussion on Scripture and Tradition at Trent.

At the General Congregation on February 26, Cardinal del Monte reported that his *classis* had also accepted the inclusion of Tradition in the same decree as Scripture. Furthermore, Cervini explained the distinction that had been expressed in his *classis* by Claude LeJay. According to him, those traditions are to be accepted “which having been received by the Church

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Irenaeus; Serapion; Origen; Epiphanius; Tertullian; Cyprian; Basil; Jerome; and Augustine. The Decree of Gratian and *Cum Marthae* of Pope Innocent III (see Denz., 414) were also cited.

35. Murphy, “Unwritten Traditions,” 240.

36. *CT* 5:15. “Siquidem primi illi nostri sacerdotales duces summa illa et supersubstantialia *partim* scriptis *partim* non scriptis institutionibus nobis tradiderunt” (emphasis mine). The text quoted here from the *Acta* is originally from Pseudo-Dionysius’ *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* 1:4. As mentioned above, the use of the *partim-partim* formulation here has been attributed to a translation of Pseudo-Dionysius by Ambrose Traversari in 1431. There is not space here to explore the question of the accuracy or inaccuracy of this translation. What is important is that the Tridentine Fathers recognized the Latin version of this text, including the *partim-partim*, as authoritative. They used it to defend the role of Tradition, and the language of *partim-partim* even made its way into the first draft of the decree. Thus, the Fathers held that the *partim-partim* understanding of Scripture and Tradition had patristic support.

37. *CT* 5:17. “Quibus *par* ritus et idem utrisque *pietatis debetur affectus*” (emphasis mine). Here the Fathers were quoting Basil’s *De Spiritu Sancto* 27, in which he argued that some beliefs and practices of the Church have come down to us in written form (i.e. Scripture) and others in unwritten form (i.e. Tradition). To both of these, according to Basil, “an equal affection of piety is due.” Here, Basil adds further patristic support to the belief of the majority of the Council Fathers in the parity of Scripture and Tradition. The writings of Basil and the other Church Fathers listed as “authorities” served as foundational for the discussions that ensued over Scripture and Tradition at the remainder of the Fourth Session, providing the important connection of the work of Trent with patristic thought.

have come down all the way to us.”<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, this is a slightly different distinction than what had been expressed in his *classis*. Cervini communicated the distinction as being between those traditions that had continued until their day and those that had ceased (such as abstaining from strangled meat). The distinction at the *classis* on February 23, rather, was between ceremonial traditions and those pertaining to faith. Cervini’s distinction does not exactly account for this since certainly ceremonial traditions, along with those pertaining to faith, could have remained in use until their day. Still, it seems that Cervini’s rendering of the distinction remained the predominant understanding throughout the remainder of the Council.

Nacchianti, the Bishop of Chioggia, was the first recorded Father to adamantly oppose the distinct role of Tradition that had been proposed at the Council.<sup>39</sup> At the same General Congregation, he exclaimed, “For no one is ignorant that all those things which pertain to salvation are contained in the sacred books.”<sup>40</sup> For this reason, he wanted the discussion of apostolic traditions abandoned at the Council. His opinion, however, was not received well by the other bishops. In fact, Cervini reported to Farnese on February 27, “I believe that many are scandalized by him.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Bishop Angelo Massarelli, who recorded many of the proceedings of the Council, described Nacchianti as “fond of new things” and “always accustomed to bring something new into [their] midst.”<sup>42</sup> That being said, Nacchianti’s views were neither commonly held nor looked on with favor by the other Council Fathers. Furthermore, after being appealed to by them, Nacchianti retracted his statement about the sufficiency of Scripture and acknowledged the existence of unwritten traditions that are not in Scripture.<sup>43</sup>

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38. *CT* 5:18. “quae ab ecclesia receptae ad nos usque pervenerunt.”

39. His name is “Clodiensis” in the *Acta*.

40. *CT* 5:18. “Nemo enim ignorat, contineri in sacris libris omnia ea, quae ad salute pertinent.”

41. *CT* 10:399. “credo che molti sono restati scandalizzati di lui.”

42. *CT* 1:494-95. “novarum rerum cupidus” and “semper aliquid novi in medium afferre solet,” respectively.

43. See *CT* 1:494-95 and also Cardinal Cervini’s comments in his letter to Farnese in *CT* 10:399.

Additionally, in the same General Congregation, the question was raised, which had already been discussed in the *classes* on February 23, whether or not the traditions ought to be enumerated in the decree. Some Fathers argued that no list should be made due to the likelihood that it would be incomplete and, therefore, could neglect certain legitimate traditions.<sup>44</sup> Yet, other Fathers believed they should be enumerated in order to avoid confusion on the matter.<sup>45</sup> The former opinion prevailed and no list was made, even though the Fathers clearly had in mind certain traditions that could have been listed if they had so desired. Finally, during this congregation, six prelates were chosen to formulate the decree, as had been proposed in the *classes* on February 23. Jedin has summarized:

Acting on the proposals made in the three classes, the General Congregation of 26 February chose the Archbishops of Sassari and Matera [namely, Salvatore Alepo and Giovenco Michele Saraceni] from del Monte's class, the Bishops of Belcastro and Feltre [namely, Giacomo Giacomelli and Tommaso Campeggio] from Cervini's, and the Archbishop of Armagh and the Bishop of Badajoz [namely, Robert Vauchop and Francisco de Navarra] from that of Pole.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, the Council progressed towards a formal decree and now had prelates to carry out the task of formulating it, while the Council itself moved on to discussions about reform.

In another Letter to Cardinal Farnese sent on March 9, the legates remained adamant about their need to defend the apostolic traditions against the Protestants. They contended that the Protestant belief "that all that was necessary to salvation was written" must be refuted.<sup>47</sup> Thus, one of the legates' primary goals for the decree on Scripture and Tradition was to extirpate the heresy of *sola scriptura*. In other words, their focus was still on responding to Protestantism.

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44. See, for instance, the words of Pacheccus (Giennensis in the *Acta*): "Probavit, quod reciperentur traditiones, earum autem enumerationem improbavit, cum periculosa sit. Nam vix homo eas omnes adinvenire et in unum congerere posset, et quae oblivione remanerent, reiectarum loco haberentur" (*CT* 5:18).

45. Their position is summarized in the *Acta*: "Nonnulli tamen censuerunt, enumerationem ipsam faciendam esse aliquarum praecipuarum traditionum, quae sc. magis haereticorum opinionibus adversarentur; reliquas vero recipiendas generaliter (ne et ipsae sub silentio praetermissae viderentur)" (*CT* 5:19).

46. Jedin, *Council of Trent*, 2:64.

47. *CT* 10:413. "che tutto quello che era necessario alla salute era scritto."

Murphy has explained, “The legates felt, therefore, that the establishment of this twofold basis of revealed truth was one of the most important things to be determined by the Council, since it touched on one of the points most controverted at that time.”<sup>48</sup> After all the preliminary discussions, therefore, the legates remained determined to uphold the reception of traditions in the Church, in addition to the Sacred Scriptures. On March 14, in another letter to Farnese, they reported that the prelates had already presented two drafts of a decree, but both had proven unsatisfactory.<sup>49</sup> The prelates, therefore, began the production of a third draft.

### *The March 22<sup>nd</sup> Draft of the Decree*

The Council reached a milestone on March 22 when the first acceptable draft of the decree was presented.<sup>50</sup> Three phrases of this decree require special attention here. First is the *partim-partim* formulation, which echoed the words of Cardinal del Monte in the General Congregation on February 12 and the quotation from Pseudo-Dionysius presented in Cervini’s *classis* on February 23. Second is the phrase *quibus par pietatis debetur affectus* (“to which an

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48. Murphy, “Unwritten Traditions,” 245. See also, *CT* 10:413.

49. See *CT* 10:417.

50. The full text of the decree reads: “Sacrosancta oecumenica et generalis Tridentina synodus in Spiritu Sancto legitime congregata, praesidentibus in ea eisdem tribus Ap Sedis legatis, hoc sibi perpetuo ante oculos proponens, ut sublati erroribus quantum per eiusdem Spiritus Sancti gratiam fieri poterit puritas ipsa evangelii Dei conservetur, quod promissum ante per prophetas eius in scripturis sanctis Dominus noster Iesus Christus eius filius proprio ore primum promulgavit, deinde per suos apostolos tamquam regulam omnis et salutaris veritatis et morum disciplinae omni creaturae praedicari iussit, perspicuensque, *hanc veritatem partim contineri in libris scriptis, partim sine scripto traditionibus*, quae vel ipsius Christi ore ab apostolis acceptae vel ab ipsis apostolis Spiritu Sancto dictante quasi per manus traditae *ad nos usque pervenerunt*: orthodoxorum patrum exempla secuta omnes libros tam veteris quam novi testamenti, cum utriusque unus Deus sit auctor, necnon traditiones ipsas tamquam vel ore tenus a Christo vel a Spiritu Sancto dictatas et continua successione in ecclesia catholica conservatas, *quibus par pietatis debetur affectus*, summa cum reverentia pro sacris et canonicis suscipit et veneratur suscipique ab omnibus Christifidelibus statuit et decernit. Omnes itaque intelligant, quo ordine et via ipsa synodus post iactum fidei confessionis fundamentum sit progressura et quibus potissimum testimoniis ac praesidiis in constituendis dogmatibus et instaurandis in ecclesia moribus sit usura. Quorum sacrorum librorum indicem huic decreto adscribendum censuit, videlicet: Testamenti veteris: quinque Moisis, idest Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numeri, Deuteronomium, - Iosue, Iudicum, Ruth, quatuor Regum, duo Paralipomenon, Esdra, Neemia, Thobia, Iudith, Hester, Iob, Psalmi David, Parabolae, Ecclesiastes, Cantica Canticorum, Sapientia, Ecclesiasticus, Isaia, Hieremia cum Baruch, Ezechiel, Daniel, duodecim prophetae minores, idest Osea, Iohel, Amos, Abdia, Iona, Michaea, Naum, Abacuch, Sophonia, Agaeus, Zacharia, Malachia, - duo Machabaeorum. Testamenti novi: quatuor evangelia, Matthaei, Marci, Lucae, Ioannis, - quatuordecim epistolae Pauli, ad Romanos, duae ad Corinthios, ad Galatas, ad Ephesios, ad Philippenses, duae ad Thessalonicenses, ad Colossenses, duae ad Timotheum, ad Titum, ad Philemonem, ad Hebraeos, - Petri duae, tres Ioannis, una Iacobi, una Iudae, Actus apostolorum et Apocalypsis Ioannis. *Si quis autem libros ipsos et traditiones praedictas violaverit: anathema sit*” (emphasis mine) (*CT* 5:31-32).

equal affection of piety is due”), which already appeared in the General Congregation on February 15 and in a quotation from Basil given on February 23. Third is the anathema at the end of the decree that stated, “But if anyone will have profaned those above-mentioned books and traditions: let him be anathema.”<sup>51</sup> Discussion soon ensued at the Council over this draft of the decree, including much debate over some of these phrases in particular.

On March 23, the day immediately after the draft was presented, the *classes* met for discussion. In Cervini’s *classis*, Bonucci, the General of the Servites, vocalized his opposition to the *partim-partim* formulation. He exclaimed, “I judge that all evangelical truth has been written down, not therefore *partly*.”<sup>52</sup> Jedin has summarized Bonucci’s view nicely:

In his opinion the stream of New Testament revelation does not divide into Scripture and Tradition, as had been taken for granted by every speaker in the previous great debate—with the exception of the Bishop of Chioggia—but Scripture is complete as to its content and contains all truths necessary for salvation. For him ‘tradition’ is essentially an authoritative interpretation of Holy Writ, not its complement.”<sup>53</sup>

Thus, Bonucci held to the sufficiency of Scripture. Yet, he failed to convince the other Fathers of his view. In fact, he ended up getting into a fight over the parity of Scripture and Tradition with the Bishop of Feltre, resulting in Cervini ordering them both to be silent.

From what can be gleaned from the *Acta*, it appears that Nacchianti (discussed above) was the only Father besides Bonucci to vocalize opposition to the parity of Scripture and Tradition at the Council, arguing rather that all truths necessary for salvation are in Scripture. However, Nacchianti’s opposition came before the March 22<sup>nd</sup> draft, and once the other Fathers confronted him, he retracted his position. According to Boyer, “He offered no further difficulties

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51. *CT* 5:32. “Si quis autem libros ipsos et traditiones praedictas violaverit: anathema sit.” For a discussion of this anathema, see Heinrich Lennerz, S. J., “Notulae Tridentinae: Primum Anathema in Concilio Tridentino,” *Gregorianum* 27 (1946): 136-142.

52. *CT* 1:525. “Iudico omnem veritatem evangelicam scriptam esse, non ergo *partim*.”

53. Jedin, *Council of Trent*, 2:75.

[on the matter].”<sup>54</sup> Bonucci, on the other hand, retained his opinion, despite the opposition of other Fathers. In the General Congregation on April 1, he said, “It is not pleasing (*Non placere*) that the truth of the Gospel is contained partly in the Scriptures and partly in the traditions.”<sup>55</sup> Still, other than this opposition from Bonucci, the *partim-partim* formulation apparently obtained little attention in the discussions surrounding this draft. In fact, it seems that the vast majority of the Fathers had no qualms with the wording.

The phrase *par pietatis . . . affectus* (“an equal affection of piety”) and the anathema, on the other hand, received significant discussion and debate. In Cervini’s *classis* on March 23, several Fathers objected to the anathema.<sup>56</sup> In their opinion, it was too much to put under anathema those who profane the traditions, especially when the Council had decided not to enumerate them. Without listing them, they thought, how could anyone avoid profaning them? At the General Congregation of March 27, the anathema was further criticized.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the phrase *par pietatis . . . affectus* was attacked.<sup>58</sup> Many Fathers believed it was too strong of language to require the same response from the faithful to both Scripture and Tradition.

Intense debate took place over these issues, along with other parts of the decree, eventually resulting in the proposal of a series of fourteen questions to the Council on March 29, regarding possible changes to the draft.<sup>59</sup> Interestingly, there was no question regarding the *partim-partim* phrase. This silence indicates that this phrase was not considered disputed. Of particular note for this discussion are questions six, seven, eight, nine, eleven, and fourteen. Question six asked whether or not it was enough for the decree to merely acknowledge the

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54. Boyer, “Insufficiency of Scripture,” 163. See also, *CT* 1:494-495.

55. *CT* 5:47. “*Non placere veritatem evangelii partim in scriptis partim in traditionibus contineri.*”

56. See *CT* 5:32-38.

57. See *CT* 5:39-41.

58. The Bishop of Fano (Fanensis in the *Acta*) led this assault.

59. See *CT* 5:41-42 for the questions. The legates accidentally listed the number of questions as thirteen in a letter to Farnese on April 4 (*CT* 10:441).

existence of apostolic traditions in the Church or if the decree should also require that they be received.<sup>60</sup> Next, question seven asked whether or not it was acceptable to speak of Scripture and Tradition with the phrase *par pietatis . . . affectus* or if another phrase indicating due reverence (*debitam reverentiam*) should be used.<sup>61</sup> Question eight also dealt with the phrase *par pietatis . . . affectus*, asking whether or not the distinction should be made between traditions pertaining to dogma (*dogmata*) and those pertaining to morals (*mores*).<sup>62</sup> In other words, should the decree specify which types of traditions are accepted with an “equal affection of piety” as the Scriptures?

Questions nine and eleven dealt with the anathema. Question nine asked whether or not the anathema should apply to those who do not receive both the Scriptures and traditions or if it should only apply to those who do not receive the Scriptures.<sup>63</sup> Question eleven asked whether or not it seemed good to the Fathers to use the word *violaverit* (“will have profaned”) in the anathema.<sup>64</sup> If taken out, the question also asked what word should replace *violaverit*. Finally, question fourteen dealt with whether or not ecclesiastical traditions should be dealt with in the decree.<sup>65</sup> It explained that the Council had already decided not to deal with them, but it still invited any Fathers who objected to this decision to speak freely.

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60. *CT* 5:41. “An satis sit, cum de traditionibus apostolorum fit mentio in decreto, agnoscere, tales esse in ecclesia, an vero per hoc decretum sit statuendum, eas esse et recipiendas esse.”

61. *CT* 5:41. “An placeat dici, quod in decreto est scriptum, cum de libris sacris et traditionibus apostolorum fit mentio: *quibus par debetur pietatis affectus*; an vero haec verba sint expungenda et alia illorum loco addenda, quae debitam utrisque reverentiam adhibendam expriment.”

62. *CT* 5:42. “An vero illis verbis suo loco manentibus ille modus loquendi temperari debeat, addendo aliqua verba, quae hunc sensum expriment, ut illis traditionibus, quae ad dogmata pertinent, *par pietatis affectus* debeatur, qui illis dogmatibus, quae in scriptis exprimentur. Et eodem modo proportione in iis, quae ad mores pertinent, singula singulis referendo.”

63. *CT* 5:42. “An apponendum sit anathema iis, qui libros et traditiones non recipiunt, an qui libros tantum non recipiunt.”

64. *CT* 5:42. “An verbum illud *violaverit* placeat, et si non placet, quid eius loco sit reponendum.”

65. *CT* 5:42. “Similiter ea, quae dicta sunt de traditionibus ecclesiasticis pertinentibus ad ritum ecclesiae; item de sacramentis; item de quatuor illis conciliis prioribus et huiusmodi: placuit iam, ut haec omnia reservarentur suo loco, ne vel sic diminute tractentur, quod esset maximum inconueniens, vel ordo perturbaretur. Et tamen si nunc aliter senserit, libera est.”

In the General Congregation on April 1, the Fathers discussed these questions and then voted on them.<sup>66</sup> In response to question six, seven Fathers voted in favor of only declaring that traditions exist in the Church, whereas forty-four voted for acknowledging that the traditions must also be received. Regarding question seven, thirty-three Fathers voted in favor of keeping the phrase *par pietatis . . . affectus* (“an equal affection of piety”), eleven voted for changing it to *similis pietatis affectus* (“a similar affection of piety”), three wanted *reverentia debeatur* (“reverence is due”), three voted *dubii* (“doubtful”), and two said *nihil placet* (“nothing pleases”), while several others abstained. Thus, despite the intense debate over that phrase, the majority of the Fathers wanted it retained. For some unknown reason, most Fathers seemed uninterested in question eight, with only twenty-four of them voting on it. Of these twenty-four, eleven voted in favor of specifying traditions as those pertaining to dogma and morals. Thirteen voted against this distinction. Thus, the vote left the matter practically undecided.

Regarding the questions on the anathema, the decision of the Fathers was more clearly defined. Regarding question nine, thirty-eight Fathers voted in favor of applying the anathema to both the Scriptures and traditions, while only three voted for applying it only to the Scriptures. At the same time, in answer to question eleven, the Fathers overwhelmingly favored changing the wording of the anathema. Here, thirty-three favored removing *violaverit*, while eleven favored its retention. In response to question fourteen, furthermore, the Fathers unanimously agreed that ecclesiastical traditions should not be treated in the decree but postponed until a more opportune time. All of these votes marked important progress in the Council. The decree was revised in accordance with the majority votes.<sup>67</sup> Yet, there was still more discussion to follow.

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66. The *summa votorum* may be found in *CT* 5:51-54.

67. Unfortunately, we do not have the text of this revised form of the decree. The diary of Severolus reported that the anathema had been changed to the following: “Si quis autem hos libros non susceperit, vel traditiones ipsas



In the General Congregation on April 5, despite the results of the vote on question seven, the Fathers revisited the adequacy of the phrase *par pietatis . . . affectus*. Jedin has explained, “Four prelates, the Bishops of Castellamare, Fano, Bergamo, and Chioggia, advocated once more the substitution of ‘similar’ for ‘equal.’”<sup>68</sup> In fact, Bishop Nacchianti of Chioggia exclaimed that to put Scripture and Tradition on the same level would be “ungodly” (*impium*).<sup>69</sup> This statement was met with staunch opposition, since Nacchianti’s use of the term “ungodly” was taken as offensive. Cardinal del Monte responded and called for an apology from Nacchianti, who tried to clarify his view. After del Monte persisted, Nacchianti finally apologized for offending the other Fathers, but he said that he could not change his opinion unless he was convinced otherwise. Yet, he agreed to submit if the decree was published as it stood.<sup>70</sup> Following this exchange, which Cardinal Seripando described as “a great uproar” (*magnus tumultus*), the debate continued.<sup>71</sup>

On April 6, the *classes* met to further discuss the decree.<sup>72</sup> In Cervini’s *classis*, in particular, the phrase *par pietatis . . . affectus* was debated. Cervini presented a slightly revised form of the decree that, for unexplained reasons, contained the word *simili* in place of *par*.<sup>73</sup> Cervini described this revised form by saying, “[The decree] has been changed by us in certain parts, nevertheless not in substance.”<sup>74</sup> This change of wording was almost unanimously rejected due to the fact that earlier congregations, including the vote on April 1, had favored *par*. As a result, *simili* was changed back to *par*. On April 7, a General Congregation was held in which the

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pertinaciter contempserit, anathema sit.” Otherwise, Severolus explained, the decree had been changed very little: “Reliquum vero decreti parum omnino imutatum fuerat.” *CT* 1:45.

68. Jedin, *Council of Trent*, 2:86.

69. See *CT* 5:71. “Non placet *de pari pietatis* etc., quod ponere est impium.” See also *CT* 1:45. “Non possum, inquit, pati, ut sepe dixi, ut pari pietatis affectu sancta hec synodus et traditiones et sacram scripturam suscipiat. Hoc enim, ut vere dicam quid sentio, impium est.”

70. See *CT* 1:45-46. “Doleo, inquit, si quemquam offendi; at opinionem meam, nisi rationes mihi allate fuerint, mutare non possum, hocque mihi facere licet, antequam in sessione decretum promulgetur; ceterum postquam promulgatum fuerit acquiescam.” For a summary of the exchange on April 5, see Jedin, *Council of Trent*, 2:86-87.

71. *CT* 2:433.

72. See *CT* 5:76-82 for the record of the proceedings of Cervini’s *classis*.

73. Again, unfortunately, we do not have the full text of this form of the decree.

74. *CT* 5:76. “quod in aliquibus partibus a nobis est imutatum, non tamen in substantia.”

decree, including the use of *par*, was submitted for approval.<sup>75</sup> The decree was accepted almost unanimously, and the Fathers decided to promulgate it the next day.

### *The Fourth Session's Definitive Decree*

On April 8, 1546, the Fathers met in order to promulgate the decrees of the Fourth Session, exactly two months after the opening of discussions.<sup>76</sup> The decree of interest here was entitled, “The Reception of the Sacred Books and the Apostolic Traditions.”<sup>77</sup> While the final form of this decree carried with it much of the content and wording of the March 22<sup>nd</sup> draft, it also contained some significant changes that must be noted. Many alterations were evident from

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75. See *CT* 5:83-89 for the proceedings of this General Congregation.

76. There were, in fact, three decrees published at this session. The first has been the focus here. The second decree dealt with the Vulgate edition of the Bible and the correct interpretation of the Scriptures, being entitled “Recipitur vulgate editio Bibliae praescribiturque modus interpretandi sacram scripturam etc.” The third decree proclaimed that the Fifth Session of the Council would take place on June 17, 1546. See *CT* 5:91-92 for the text of all three decrees.

77. *CT* 5:91. “Recipiuntur libri sacri et traditiones apostolorum.” The full text of this first decree read: “Sacrosancta oecumenica et generalis Tridentina synodus, in Spiritu Sancto legitime congregata, praesidentibus in ea eisdem tribus Apostolicae Sedis legatis, hoc sibi perpetuo ante oculos proponens, ut sublatis erroribus puritas ipsa evangelii in ecclesia conservetur, quod promissum ante per prophetas in scripturis sanctis Dominus noster Iesus Christus Dei Filius proprio ore primum promulgavit, deinde per suos apostolos tamquam *fontem* omnis et salutaris veritatis et morum disciplinae omni creaturae praedicari iussit; perspiciensque, *hanc veritatem et disciplinam contineri in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus*, quae ab ipsius Christi ore ab apostolis acceptae, aut ab ipsis apostolis Spiritu Sancto dictante quasi per manus traditae *ad nos usque pervenerunt*, orthodoxorum patrum exempla secuta, omnes libros tam veteris quam novi testamenti, cum utriusque unus Deus sit auctor, nec non traditiones ipsas, *tum ad fidem, tum ad mores pertinentes*, tamquam vel oretenus a Christo, vel a Spiritu Sancto dictatas et continua successione in ecclesia catholica conservatas, *patri pietatis affectu ac reverentia suscipit et veneratur*. Sacrorum vero librorum indicem huic decreto adscribendum censuit, ne cui dubitatio suboriri possit, quinam sint, qui ab ipsa synodo suscipiuntur. Sunt vero infrascripti. Testamenti veteris: Quinque Moisis, id est Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numeri, Deuteronomium; Iosue, Iudicum, Ruth, quatuor Regum, duo Paralipomenon, Esdrae primus et secundus, qui dicitur Nehemias, Tobias, Iudith, Esther, Iob, Psalterium Davidicum centum quinquaginta psalmodum, Parabola, Ecclesiastes, Canticum Canticorum, Sapientia, Ecclesiasticus, Isaias, Ieremias cum Baruch, Ezechiel, Daniel, duodecim Prophetarum minores, id est Osea, Ioel, Amos, Abdias, Ionas, Michaeas, Nahum, Habacuc, Sophonias, Aggaeus, Zacharias, Malachias; duo Machabaeorum primus et secundus. Testamenti novi: Quatuor Evangelia, secundum Matthaeum, Marcum, Lucam, Ioannem; Actus Apostolorum a Luca Evangelista conscripti, quatuordecim epistolae Pauli Apostoli, ad Romanos, duae ad Corinthios, ad Galatas, ad Ephesios, ad Philippenses, ad Colossenses, duae ad Thessalonicenses, duae ad Timotheum, ad Titum, ad Philemonem, ad Hebraeos; Petri Apostoli duae, Ioannis Apostoli tres, Iacobi Apostoli una, Iudae Apostoli una, et Apocalypsis Ioannis Apostoli. Si quis autem libros ipsos integros cum omnibus suis partibus, prout in ecclesia catholica legi consueverunt et in veteri vulgata latina editione habentur, pro sacris et canonicis non susceperit, et *traditiones praedictas sciens et prudens contempserit: anathema sit*. Omnes itaque intelligant, quo ordine et via ipsa synodus post iactum fidei confessionis fundamentum sit progressura, et quibus potissimum testimoniis ac praesidiis in confirmandis dogmatibus et instaurandis in ecclesia moribus sit usura” (emphasis mine).

the deliberations that took place following March 22, as discussed above. However, some changes came without explanation and have no record of discussion in the *Acta*. Thus, the text of the final form of the decree is worthy of some commentary.

First, the final decree included the word *fontem* (“source”) where *regulam* (“rule”) had appeared in the March 22<sup>nd</sup> draft. The decree described the Gospel as “the source [*fontem*] of all saving truth and moral conduct.”<sup>78</sup> In fact, here was the only place in the decree where the word “source” appeared. Thus, Scripture and Tradition were not called “sources” by Trent. Rather, they were considered means through which one may access the one source, which is the Gospel. This fact is important to keep in mind when considering the mid-twentieth-century debate over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, as will be discussed further below.

In the final decree, furthermore, Scripture and Tradition were no longer referred to with the *partim-partim* formulation. Without explanation or recorded discussion, *partim-partim* was removed with the replacement of an *et*. Thus, the final decree read, “This truth and rule are contained in written books *and [et]* in unwritten traditions.”<sup>79</sup> Since the *Acta* are silent regarding the reasons for this change, we cannot know with certainty exactly when this change entered into the decree or why the alteration was made. Murphy has explained:

It has been almost impossible to determine from the *Acta* precisely why this change was made; the records are far from what we might wish on this particular point. As is well known, there were only two objections raised to the *partim . . . partim* terminology—or at least only two [namely, those of Nacchianti and Bonucci] that have been recorded for us in the *Acta*. . . . Apart from this, there is no other record of an objection and no further information concerning the reason for the change.<sup>80</sup>

Whatever the reasons for the modification, the *Acta* give no indication that the new formulation received objections from any of the Council Fathers. In fact, the final decree received almost

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78. *CT* 5:91. “fontem omnis et salutaris veritatis et morum disciplinae.”

79. *CT* 5:91. “hanc veritatem et disciplinam contineri in libris scriptis *et* sine scripto traditionibus” (emphasis mine).

80. Murphy, “Unwritten Traditions,” 258.

unanimous consent, with only six prelates giving a conditional *placet* (“yes”). Four of these conditional votes were completely unrelated to the issue of the parity of Scripture and Tradition. According to Jedin, the other two were “the coadjutor of Bergamo, who demanded the replacement of the expression ‘equal’ by ‘similar’ or ‘agreeing with,’ and the Bishop of Chioggia, who instead of *placet* said *obediam*—‘I shall obey.’”<sup>81</sup> Thus, as far as we are aware, no one directly opposed the change from *partim-partim* to *et*. The question still remains, though, how are we to interpret this change? More discussion on this matter will occur below.

Moreover, the decree made explicit the Council’s definition of the “written books” (*libris scriptis*) by listing them. However, the Council Fathers decided against enumerating the “unwritten traditions” (*sine scripto traditionibus*). What then was meant by that phrase? First, the Fathers almost always used the plural form *traditiones* when speaking of Tradition at the Council.<sup>82</sup> Murphy has further explained, “In the minds of those who issued the decree, the apostolic traditions were specific things which could be enumerated, should one choose to do so.”<sup>83</sup> Thus, even though the Fathers chose not to enumerate the traditions in the decree, they had certain examples of apostolic traditions in mind.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, the decree described “the unwritten traditions” as those “which having been received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or having been dictated by the Holy Spirit to the Apostles themselves, as it were, having

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81. Jedin, *Council of Trent*, 2:92-93.

82. There are a few instances of the singular form (*traditio*), but Bévenot has pointed out that the singular in those places “is used in a collective sense, and is equivalent to *traditiones*” (“‘Traditiones’ in the Council of Trent,” 335, n. 1). See also, Jedin, *Council of Trent*, 2:59, n. 1. For more on the meaning of *traditiones* at the Council, see Murphy, “‘Traditions’ and the Council of Trent,” Appendix 2 in *The Notion of Tradition in John Driedo* (PhD diss., Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1959), 288-91.

83. Murphy, “Unwritten Traditions,” 235-36.

84. For example, Cervini mentioned the sacraments and the observance of Lent (*CT* 1:492). Elsewhere, Bishop Bertano of Fano (Fanensis in the *Acta*) listed standing while praying from Easter to the Ascension, praying towards the East, communion under both kinds denied to the laity, and the celibacy of priests (*CT* 1:523 and 5:40). Furthermore, Casellus (Britonoriensis in the *Acta*) included the mixing of water with wine in the Eucharist, auricular confession, and the perpetual virginity of Mary (*CT* 1:524).

been handed down by hand, have come down all the way to us.”<sup>85</sup> From this statement, we may conclude two things. First, the traditions in mind have their origin in Christ and the Apostles, meaning that apostolic traditions were specified, to the exclusion of ecclesiastical traditions.<sup>86</sup> Second, the decree identified the traditions in mind as those that “have come down all the way to us” (*ad nos usque pervenerunt*).<sup>87</sup> Thus, the Council retained Cervini’s distinction presented by him on February 26 between those traditions that were meant to be temporary (such as abstaining from strangled meat) and those that had continued until their day. Only those that had remained were to be received.

Furthermore, the decree added a qualifying phrase regarding traditions, specifying them as those “pertaining both to faith and to morals” (*tum ad fidem, tum ad mores pertinentes*).<sup>88</sup> This addition apparently came about as a result of the discussions surrounding question eight, voted upon on April 1. Bévenot has pointed out the similarity between this phrase and two other phrases in the decree: “Three times in this passage [of the decree] there occurs a contrast, which is surely the same in each case: ‘salutaris veritatis et morum disciplinae,’ ‘veritatem et disciplinam,’ and ‘tum ad fidem, tum ad mores pertinentes.’”<sup>89</sup> Thus, it seems that the Fathers wanted to emphasize the point that the traditions specified in the decree can fall into two categories: faith and morals. Yet, they did not specify what traditions apply to faith and what traditions apply to morals. Certainly there was a distinction in their minds between the two

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85. *CT* 5:91. “quae ab ipsius Christi ore ab apostolic acceptae, aut ab ipsis apostolis Spiritu sancto dictante quasi per manus traditae ad nos usque pervenerunt.”

86. Ecclesiastical traditions here indicated those practices introduced by the Church at a later time than the Apostles. In other words, their origin was in the Church, not in Christ or the Apostles.

87. *CT* 5:91. This phrase had already been present in the March 22<sup>nd</sup> draft.

88. *CT* 5:91. *Mores* here and elsewhere in the Council did not simply mean morality in the modern sense of the word. Murphy has explained, “‘Mores’ at Trent would seem to indicate the practices and customs of the apostolic Church, some of which touch upon doctrinal matter, others having to do with disciplinary or ceremonial practices” (“Faith and Morals’ at Trent,” 300). For more information on the meaning of *fidem* and *mores* at Trent, see Bévenot, “‘Faith and Morals’ in the Councils of Trent and Vatican I,” *Heythrop Journal* 3 (1962): 15-30.

89. Bévenot, “‘Faith and Morals,’” 16.

categories, but they were concerned in the decree only with acknowledging the two categories and requiring the reception of traditions belonging to both of them. Murphy has summarized:

It would seem that the Fathers were thus intent upon simply noting that there *are* these traditions of different kinds, without making any attempt to single them out in any fashion. They recognized that those traditions which pertained to faith were of a more immutable nature than those which pertained to liturgical or disciplinary customs, but they were interested only in stating that *all* of them came from the Apostles and must therefore be accepted along with the books of sacred Scripture.<sup>90</sup>

Thus, according to the decree, the traditions being received were not limited to dogmatic traditions. Rather, they included those involving customs and practices as well. To summarize the above, then, the “unwritten traditions” in the decree referred exclusively to 1.) apostolic traditions, 2.) traditions carried on until their day, and 3.) traditions pertaining to faith and morals. If a tradition did not meet one of those qualifications, it was not included in the decree.

The final decree was also published with the inclusion of the highly contentious phrase *pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia* (“an equal affection of piety and reverence”), a slight modification and expansion of the wording in the March 22<sup>nd</sup> draft. Thus, the view of the majority of the Fathers, as had been expressed in the vote on question seven on April 1, was retained. The “written books” and “unwritten traditions” were not considered to be merely on “similar” levels to one another, but on “equal” levels.<sup>91</sup> In fact, the original phrase was even strengthened by the addition of *ac reverentia* (“and reverence”). Therefore, the final decree called for Tradition to be received with “an equal affection of piety and reverence” as Scripture. This phrase is very important for grasping Trent’s understanding of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition.

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90. Murphy, “‘Faith and Morals’ at Trent,” 294.

91. Interestingly, Tanner translated the *pari* of the definitive decree as “like,” rather than “equal” (*Ecumenical Councils*, 2:663). While this may be a possible rendering of the Latin, it does not adequately express the intention of the Council Fathers’ use of *pari*, based on the debate overviewed above. Clearly, the Fathers saw a stark difference between *simili* and *pari* that is much better expressed in English by the difference between “similar” and “equal” than “similar” and “like.” In English, the latter provides scarcely enough contrast to merit the debate over the terms. Thus, *pari* will be translated as “equal” here.

Further stressing this equality, the decree put under the same anathema anyone who would reject the “written books” or “unwritten traditions.” The final form of the anathema excluded the debated word *violaverit*, retaining the change to *contempserit* that had been made after the April 1 vote. The final form of the anathema stated, “If anyone, however, does not accept the books . . . and knowingly and deliberately rejects the aforesaid traditions, let him be anathema.”<sup>92</sup> The qualifiers “knowingly” (*sciens*) and “deliberately” (*prudens*) were likely added in order to respond to the earlier criticism that one should not be put under anathema for rejecting traditions that were not enumerated. The new wording indicated that those put under anathema must have knowledge of the traditions and willingly reject them anyways. Furthermore, in correlation with what was said above, the traditions being rejected could pertain to either faith or morals. The Council, therefore, did not specify that the anathema only applied to the rejection of revealed (i.e. dogmatic) traditions. It also included the rejection of traditions pertaining to morals (i.e. customary practices). Therefore, if someone knowingly and deliberately rejected any apostolic tradition that had continued to be observed in the Church, whether pertaining to faith or morals, that person would be *ipso facto* put under anathema. This anathema further emphasized the equality of Scripture and Tradition and, for that matter, sheds light on Trent’s understanding of their relationship to one another.

As has been shown above, the Fourth Session of Trent involved a complex course of discussions surrounding Scripture and Tradition. The Council Fathers rarely had unanimous consent regarding the items being discussed, especially when it came to the nature of Tradition. The topic of Tradition and its relationship to Scripture was fiercely debated. Yet, specific decisions were made along the way regarding what would be defined in the decree. The March

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92. *CT* 5:91. “Si quis autem libros . . . non susceperit, et traditiones praedictas sciens et prudens contempserit: anathema sit.”

22<sup>nd</sup> draft reflected many of the desires of the Fathers, but it still came under harsh criticisms at certain points. Notably, based on the records we have in the *Acta*, the *partim-partim* formulation was not among the highly contested parts of the decree. In fact, it seems that only Bonucci remained opposed to it. Still, it was removed from the final decree with the replacement of *et*. This change came without explanation. Therefore, we are left in the dark regarding the exact reasons for the alteration. Yet, the evidence given above will prove helpful in understanding the mind of the Fathers on this matter. Thus, with the Council of Trent as the guide, we will now proceed to respond to each side of the mid-twentieth-century debate, seeking to clarify the issues and move towards some conclusions.



## Chapter 4

### Interpreting the Tridentine Decree

As was shown in Chapter 2, the late 1950s and early 1960s gave rise to an intensified debate over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. Most of this debate centered on the Tridentine decree, which was discussed in some detail in Chapter 3. The theologians involved in the debate all looked at the same texts of the *Acta* and considered the same definitive decree, yet they interpreted the content of those documents differently, resulting in rather drastically distinctive conclusions from one another. On Geiselman's side, the change from *partim-partim* to *et* was viewed as a decision by the Council Fathers to leave the nature of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition open for Catholics to continue to debate. In essence, then, the Tridentine decree decided "nothing" on the matter.<sup>1</sup> Some siding with Geiselman even took the interpretation of Trent a step further, concluding that the change "discarded" and "explicitly excluded" the *partim-partim* view of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition.<sup>2</sup> Based on these interpretations of Trent, the theologians on this side of the debate argued for the material sufficiency of Scripture and a *totally-totally* view of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition.<sup>3</sup>

Still, many other theologians objected to these views, arguing that Scripture and Tradition form two distinct sources of revelation and that this idea was supported by the Tridentine

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1. See Geiselman, "Das Konzil von Trient," 163.

2. See Holstein, "Tradition at Trent," 46; and Tavard, *Holy Writ*, 208.

3. For means of review, these theologians include Joseph Geiselman, Henri Holstein, George Tavard, Yves Congar, Jean Daniélou, Karl Rahner, Joseph Ratzinger, Hubert Jedin, John Murphy, and Edmond Ortigues.

decree.<sup>4</sup> In fact, they claimed there was no essential difference between the *partim-partim* formulation and the final *et* phrasing. Therefore, they contended that it is incorrect to say that Scripture is sufficient. For them, the official Catholic teaching is that revelation is contained *partly* in Scripture and *partly* in Tradition. Thus, there are truths of the faith that are found *only* in Tradition. What, then, is the correct interpretation of the Tridentine decree? In other words, which side of the debate, if either, is correct?

Today, like in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the majority of Catholic scholars have sided with Geiselmann's views. In fact, many in that camp believe the issue has already been decided in their favor. Yet, as has been shown above, there has been no official ecclesial answer to this question, with both Vatican councils leaving it open for further debate. Thus, just because most scholars hold one view does not mean that view is totally correct. In fact, here it would be wise to heed the words of Geiselmann himself, commenting on the majority opinion of the post-Tridentine theologians in favor of the *partim-partim* view: "The post-Tridentine interpretation of the Council's decision is a *theological discussion* of the dogma, not the dogma itself. Precisely for that reason it would be very foolish to confuse it with the teaching of the Church itself."<sup>5</sup> In a similar way, it would be wrong to mistake the majority interpretation of Trent today, which favors Geiselmann's views, for "the teaching of the Church itself." It is rather a "theological discussion of the dogma," and it is the opinion of this author that the discussion has not yet been entirely resolved. Therefore, we will proceed to enter into this discussion, responding to those on both sides by utilizing the proceedings of the Fourth Session of Trent and its definitive decree, seeking then to offer some suggestions and come to some conclusions of our own.

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4. These theologians include Heinrich Lennerz, Johannes Beumer, Maurice Bévenot, Charles Boyer, V. Moran, and Gerard Owens.

5. Geiselmann, "Scripture, Tradition, and the Church," 44.

## *A Response to Geiselmann's Views*

Geiselmann's position stands or falls on his interpretation of the Tridentine decree that it decided "nothing" on the matter of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, leaving him free to hold his views. Lennerz and Boyer, in particular, have claimed on the contrary that the Council's decree kept the meaning of *partim-partim* even though they changed the language. As Geiselmann himself has pointed out, this was the typical interpretation of the decree amongst post-Tridentine theologians. If the Council truly decreed, in essence, that revelation is contained *partly* in Scripture and *partly* in Tradition, then Geiselmann's views would be *contra concilium*. In that case, Lennerz's claim that this is not an issue that Catholics are free to debate would be correct. But were Lennerz and Boyer correct in considering Geiselmann's views as un-Catholic from the start? It seems that conclusion would be pushing the issue too far.

Geiselmann's interpretation of Trent was legitimate. Simply for the fact that we do not know the specific reasons why the Tridentine Fathers changed the wording from *partim-partim* to *et* leaves open the option that they were seeking to be more inclusive with their language. The *Acta* do evidence, as Congar has rightly pointed out, that the Council was "ever careful to express itself only where Catholics were in agreement."<sup>6</sup> The Fathers' goal was to respond to Protestant doctrines, not to resolve Catholic disputes.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, since Catholics held various opinions on the matter at the time, it is possible that the Fathers decided to change the wording in order to avoid the condemnation of some Catholic views, including the belief of Bonucci and Nacchianti expressed at the Council that all truths necessary for salvation are contained in Scripture.

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6. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 165.

7. Bévenot has explained, "The concern of the Council was not primarily to determine the relations between Scripture and Tradition, nor between Scripture and 'the traditions': it was to defend the Catholic positions attacked by the Reformers" ("Traditions' in the Council of Trent," 333).

Furthermore, what happened at Vatican II supports the idea that Geiselmann's views are legitimate for a Catholic. Gabriel Moran explained at the time of the Council, "Although some writers have insisted in opposition to Geiselmann that Trent settled the matter, the discussions of Vatican II would seem to support the claim that at the very least the question is still open to debate."<sup>8</sup> As was shown above, the schema "On the Sources of Revelation" would have censured Geiselmann's views. However, this schema was rejected and the final form of *Dei Verbum* that replaced it remained inclusive of both sides of the debate. This inclusivity indicates that the debate is still open for discussion and Geiselmann's views are on the table as a legitimate Catholic option. It is true that those holding Geiselmann's views had a significant influence on the Council, in effect, gaining the removal of the censure from the decree. Yet, what the Council decreed still stands as the official teaching of the Church. Vatican II may not have given a definitive answer to the question of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, but by not answering the question it indicated that Geiselmann's views are legitimate, implying that they do not contradict the Tridentine decree. Still, a future Ecumenical Council or Pope could decide the matter either in favor of Geiselmann's views or against them. Time will tell, but, for now, we cannot dismiss his views outright as un-Catholic.

At the same time, the vast majority of the Tridentine Fathers clearly supported the *partim-partim* formulation, so much so that none of the questions over disputed parts of the March 22<sup>nd</sup> draft dealt with that phrase. It seemed to be unproblematic for all of the Fathers except Bonucci and Nacchianti, and even Nacchianti retracted his view, leaving Bonucci as the only recorded Father to have responded negatively to the *partim-partim* formulation in the March 22<sup>nd</sup> draft. Hence, the conclusion of Holstein and Tavard that the change in the wording was a rejection of the *partim-partim* view is simply unmerited. For the Fathers to condemn a

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8. Gabriel Moran, "Scripture-Tradition: Witness to Revelation," *Continuum* 1, no. 3 (1963): 348.

view apparently held by the majority of them and only objected to by two Fathers is quite the interpretive leap. If, in fact, the Fathers changed the decree in order to exclude the *partim-partim* view, there would have been enough uproar at the Council in response to merit record in the *Acta*. On the contrary, there is no recorded discussion or debate over the change. Thus, it seems that the Fathers viewed this change as minor.<sup>9</sup> To summarize, then, there may be legitimacy to interpreting the change as broadening the meaning of the decree to be more inclusive of Catholic beliefs but, in that sense, the *et* certainly still included the *partim-partim* belief.

Although Geiselmann said the Tridentine decree decided “nothing” on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, he took the liberty to make some decisions of his own on the matter. In these conclusions, Geiselmann pushed the envelope too far. Even though he did not believe Trent excluded the *partim-partim* view, he still condemned it. In fact, he considered the *partim-partim* interpretation of Trent that appeared in the writings of post-Tridentine theologians to have been a mistake.<sup>10</sup> But if Trent left the question open, how could the *partim-partim* view be a mistake? Certainly it was the majority view at the Council, so it would make sense for those who were at the Council and other theologians writing at the time to understand the Tridentine decree that way, even if they knew the decree included a broader sense.

Furthermore, Geiselmann even called the two-source, *partim-partim* understanding of Scripture and Tradition “un-Catholic.”<sup>11</sup> But how could a view that was held by the majority of

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9. G. Moran has explained, “The modification which replaced the words *partim-partim* with *et* was but one of many slight variations in wording which were to be found in the margin of the returned decree. All these variations had the purpose of expressing with maximum clarity what had been decided on by the majority. It is simply unthinkable that a major change could have been effected at this point—against what the overwhelming majority had voted for—without even so much as a mention of the fact” (*Scripture and Tradition*, 51-52).

10. As mentioned above, Tavad argued that Geiselmann was wrong in his interpretation of the writings of post-Tridentine theologians, showing that these theologians did not interpret Trent in the two-source theory sense (see his “Early Post-Tridentine Theology”). It is not the purpose of this study to resolve the issue regarding the meaning of post-Tridentine writings on the topic. Regardless, scholars agree that the two-source theory became predominant among Catholics sometime soon after Trent and remained so until well into the twentieth-century.

11. Geiselmann, “Scripture, Tradition, and the Church,” 48.

the Fathers of the Council and not explicitly excluded by the decree be considered “un-Catholic”? The opponents of Geiselmann have rightly criticized him on this point. It is quite bold to consider about four hundred years of Catholic theological teaching to have been a mistake and “un-Catholic,” especially considering the many saints and doctors of the Church included among those who made the *partim-partim* claims.<sup>12</sup> Are doctors of the Church such as Robert Bellarmine and Peter Canisius to be considered “un-Catholic”? It seems that Geiselmann wanted, on the one hand, to interpret the Tridentine decree as having left the question open, so that he remained free to hold his views, but on the other hand, he was not willing, in practice, to grant that same freedom to those who opposed his views. Thus, Geiselmann’s interpretation of the Tridentine decree proved self-contradictory.

Regarding Geiselmann and others’ belief in the material sufficiency of Scripture, we must acknowledge the possibility of this view. Without using the word “sufficiency,” Bonucci basically expressed this belief when he said, “I judge that all evangelical truth has been written down, not therefore *partly*.”<sup>13</sup> Nacchianti had earlier exclaimed, “For no one is ignorant that all those things which pertain to salvation are contained in the sacred books.”<sup>14</sup> As discussed above, it is possible that the change from *partim-partim* to *et* was made to avoid condemning these Fathers’ positions. We simply cannot know the motives of the Tridentine Fathers specifically. Thus, based on what we know, belief in the material sufficiency of Scripture was not excluded

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12. Of course, as the quote above from Geiselmann explained, “The post-Tridentine interpretation of the Council’s decision is a *theological discussion* of the dogma, not the dogma itself” (“Scripture, Tradition, and the Church,” 44). Certainly, it is theologically possible that the majority of Catholic theologians were in error regarding the relationship between Scripture and Tradition and, therefore, correction of that error became necessary, as Geiselmann claimed. Yet, the weight of the historical argument favors Geiselmann’s opponents on this matter. It would have served Geiselmann better had he acknowledged that the post-Tridentine *partim-partim* interpretation of the decree was a legitimate understanding of the Council, since he claimed the final decree left the matter open for debate. He still could have disagreed with the *partim-partim* interpretation, while recognizing it as a valid Catholic option of belief.

13. *CT* 1:525. “Iudico omnem veritatem evangelicam scriptam esse, non ergo *partim*.”

14. *CT* 5:18. “Nemo enim ignorat, contineri in sacris libris omnia ea, quae ad salute pertinent.”

by the Tridentine decree. As Geiselmann has rightly pointed out, however, the formal sufficiency of Scripture cannot be held, for this would basically be an acceptance of *sola scriptura*, which the Council of Trent clearly sought to condemn. Still, the Tridentine decree did not affirm the material sufficiency of Scripture either. Nowhere in the decree was the term “sufficiency” nor its equivalent used of Scripture. At the very most, then, we can only say that this belief was not condemned by the decree.

Geiselmann’s *totally-totally* view of Scripture and Tradition is more difficult to align with the Tridentine decree. Geiselmann claimed, “The word of God may be found in its totality in Sacred Scripture and in its totality in the living tradition of the Church. All of the revealed word of God is to be found in Sacred Scripture as interpreted by living tradition.”<sup>15</sup> This claim appears to be rooted in a desire by Geiselmann and others to move away from a static, propositional view of Scripture and Tradition as two containers holding the contents of revelation as pieces of a puzzle, with some pieces being in the Scripture container and others being in the Tradition container. Yet, this *totally-totally* view of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition went too far. In fact, it emphasized the unity of Scripture and Tradition to the neglect of recognizing any distinction between the two. According to Trent, on the other hand, Tradition has content that goes beyond that of Scripture, being more than merely its authoritative interpreter. The content of both Scripture and Tradition are necessary in order to have the fullness of revelation. Thus, how can one say that revelation is totally in Tradition or totally in Scripture? This language is misleading, since neither one is complete without the other.

Moreover, Geiselmann’s distinction in his book *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition* that the *totally-totally* view is applied only to matters pertaining to faith, while a *partly-partly* view may be applied to matters pertaining to morals (*mores*) and customs (*consuetudines*) does not

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15. Geiselmann, “Scripture and Tradition,” 78.

help his cause. The Council of Trent simply did not make this distinction. In the final decree, the Council specified that the traditions being received were those “pertaining both to faith and to morals” (*tum ad fidem, tum ad mores pertinentes*), without distinguishing between them. Thus, the Council Fathers saw no differences between Scripture’s relationship to traditions pertaining to faith and those pertaining to morals. It seems that here Geiselman was attempting to acknowledge that there are some traditions not found in Scripture, while still trying to maintain his belief that all truths necessary for salvation are in Scripture. Yet, this distinction only served to weaken his overall argument by not remaining true to the language of Trent.

Finally, the desire of Geiselman and other theologians to maintain the unity of Scripture and Tradition may be commended. They rightfully denied a wooden separation of the two into distinct containers with little or no overlap between them, instead advocating for holding them as an organic whole. However, in this regard, they were responding to a straw man, for their opponents did not deny the unity of Scripture and Tradition. The advocates of the two-source theory were simply trying to emphasize a distinction between Scripture and Tradition. To claim they were trying to completely separate Scripture and Tradition, however, was a gross mischaracterization. V. Moran has adequately explained this mistake:

All through his article Dr. Geiselman supposes that *partim/partim* means that what is in Scripture is not in Tradition and vice versa . . . But this is surely to take a grotesquely exaggerated view. All that *partim/partim* means is that what is contained in one source is not identical with all that is contained in the other. It does not mean that there is no body of doctrine common to both sources, or that one may not be the interpreter or complement of the other.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Geiselman may have rightly emphasized the unity between Scripture and Tradition, but he overemphasized that unity to the neglect of distinction. In that way, he overcorrected what he mischaracterized as too rigid of a divide between Scripture and Tradition. In order to better

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16. V. Moran, “Scripture and Tradition,” 21. Moran was referring to Geiselman’s 1957 article, “Das Konzil von Trient.”



understand Geiselmann's misrepresentation, we must now turn to a further look at the views of those who opposed him.

### *A Response to Geiselmann's Critics*

Lennerz and Boyer, in particular, contended against Geiselmann that the *partim-partim* meaning remained the true sense of the Tridentine decree even after it was removed.<sup>17</sup> In that way, they argued that the two-source theory was affirmed by Trent. But we have already alluded to the fact that these scholars went a step too far in this regard. To restrict the meaning of the *et* formulation in the final decree to having the same meaning as *partim-partim* is a linguistic stretch. Certainly, linguistically speaking, there is a difference between the two. Whereas *partim-partim* specifies a distinction between two things and an insufficiency of each object of the construction, *et* is less explicit and more ambiguous regarding the relationship between the two objects connected by it. Thus, the *et* formulation is a more general way of speaking than *partim-partim*. Still, the *et* construction by no means excludes the meaning of *partim-partim*. Rather, *et* encompasses the *partim-partim* meaning within it. Therefore, the *partim-partim* and *et* formulations should not be viewed as identical to one another.

Bévenot's interpretation of the change is more convincing. He said, "The suppression of the [*partim-partim*] phrase . . . was made not because it was wrong, nor because it was generally recognized to be an open question, but because (i) it had been objected to and (ii) because its suppression did not affect what they really wanted to define."<sup>18</sup> This middle ground position

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17. Beumer also held that the change of wording did not include a difference in meaning, yet he argued for a different interpretation of *partim-partim* than Lennerz and Boyer, contending that it meant "on the one hand, on the other hand." Bonucci's objection to *partim-partim*, along with other discussions recorded in the *Acta*, however, provide evidence against this interpretation of the phrase. Rather, as most scholars believe, *partim-partim* indicated a distinction of content between Scripture and Tradition. Thus, this common interpretation of *partim-partim* will be assumed here.

18. Bévenot, "Traditions' in the Council of Trent," 344.

recognizes the slight difference of meaning between the Council's use of *partim-partim* and *et*, while still taking into serious consideration the fact that the vast majority of the Fathers at Trent agreed with the *partim-partim* meaning. For Bévenot, the change was certainly not a rejection of *partim-partim*, for the *et* included that meaning in it, yet it was still a broadening of the sense of the decree. Basically, according to Bévenot, the change was made in order for the decree to more clearly express what the Fathers intended to say and avoid saying more than was necessary.

Regarding calling Scripture and Tradition two distinct sources of revelation, as did Lennerz and Boyer, it must be noted that this language is inconsistent with the wording of the Tridentine decree.<sup>19</sup> The word “source” (*fons*) only appeared once in the decree and then in reference to the Gospel. The decree proclaimed, “[The Gospel is] the source [*fontem*] of all saving truth and moral conduct.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, to remain true to the wording of Trent, it is incorrect to speak of Scripture and Tradition as sources. Granted, the proponents of the two-source theory recognized this problem and clarified their use of the term “sources”. For them, the Gospel is the primary source and Scripture and Tradition are secondary sources, providing access to the Gospel. Moran explained, “There are then two distinct meanings of the word ‘source’: it can mean either the revelation itself which was delivered to the apostles or it can signify the theological places where revelation is to be found.”<sup>21</sup> If this distinction is made, it is not wrong to speak of Scripture and Tradition as sources. Yet, it would be better to remain more faithful to the words of Trent. Words other than “sources” could be used to describe Scripture and Tradition, such as “channels,” “places,” or even “containers.” Scripture and Tradition are, in fact, *means* by which the Gospel has been communicated to us. They are channels flowing from the font that is

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19. Bévenot and Beumer rightly tended to avoid the language of “sources,” taking more of a middle ground. Beumer, in particular, explicitly denied the two-source understanding of Scripture and Tradition, rather emphasizing the unity between the two.

20. *CT* 5:91. “fontem omnis et salutaris veritatis et morum disciplinae.”

21. Moran, “Scripture-Tradition,” 344.

the Gospel, providing access to that font, while not being the font itself. Thus, the Gospel is the only source of revelation, but that source is contained in both Scripture and Tradition.

Still, the proceedings of the Fourth Session of Trent provide rather substantial support for many of the positions held by the critics of Geiselmann's views. First, the letters of the papal legates to Farnese make evident that they desired to assert a certain insufficiency of Scripture against the Protestant Reformers by affirming truths of the faith contained in Tradition. After summarizing some of these exchanges, Lennerz explained:

From these letters, it is clear: The existence of traditions, which are not contained in the written books, is for the legates a matter of the highest importance; it belongs to the essential principles, which ought to be established, before the Council may pass over to separate dogmas that are going to be treated. Those traditions are denied by heretics and are especially attacked by them; therefore their existence pertains to those things that must be decided first by the Council.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, the legates intended to make Tradition a primary focus at the Fourth Session, and the *Acta* provide evidence of their success in that regard. Their intention was to respond to the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*, and their primary means of doing so was to put forward a decree that acknowledged the existence of apostolic traditions that are distinct from Scripture, requiring their acceptance by the faithful. That goal guided their procedure throughout the Session, and there is no indication that they veered off that course in the final decree.

Furthermore, the discussions at the Council support the view that Tradition is more than just the hermeneutical key for Scripture. Tradition, according to the Council Fathers, has content. The Fathers almost always spoke of "traditions" in the plural. For them, these traditions could be listed, even though they decided against enumerating them in the decree. As indicated above, the Council Fathers themselves mentioned the sacraments, the observance of Lent, standing while

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22. Lennerz, "Sine scripto traditiones," 628. "Ex his litteris patet: Existentia traditionum, quae non continentur in libris scriptis, Legatis est res summi momenti; pertinet ad principia essentialia, quae stabilire debent, antequam concilium transeat ad singula dogmata tractanda. Negantur illae traditiones ab haereticis et maxime ab iis impugnantur; propterea earum existentia ad ea pertinet, quae imprimis a concilio decidenda sunt."

praying from Easter to the Ascension, praying towards the East, the celibacy of priests, auricular confession, and the perpetual virginity of Mary as examples of apostolic traditions. To these, Lennerz added the veneration of images, the imprinting of sacramental character, and the *filioque*.<sup>23</sup> Boyer further listed the form of the sacraments, infant baptism, the validity of the baptism of heretics, and, most of all, the canon of Scripture.<sup>24</sup> Gerard Owens, therefore, concluded, “The more one thinks of the complete corpus of Catholic doctrine, the more does the restriction of tradition as a source to co-extension with that of Scripture appear to be a mirage.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, based on the proceedings of Trent, we may affirm that Tradition has content, making it more than just a hermeneutical key to Scripture, as Geiselman claimed.

This point is further evidenced by the use of *pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia* (“an equal affection of piety and reverence”) and the anathema in the Tridentine decree. Here there is no differentiation between Scripture and Tradition. They both require the same response, and the rejection of either one results in the same condemnation. But how could Tradition require “an equal affection of piety and reverence” as Scripture if it were only a hermeneutical key? In order for Tradition to be revered, it must have material content. Otherwise, there would be nothing to revere. In the same way, how could one be put under anathema for rejecting Tradition, if it did not have content that is distinct from Scripture? The Tridentine decree did not differentiate between the rejection of the Scriptures and the rejection of Tradition. To put Tradition on the same level as Scripture in these ways would at least imply that there are truths necessary for salvation contained in Tradition that are not in Scripture. For if all the truths necessary for salvation are contained in Scripture, then why not simply demand respect for Scripture and put under anathema only those who reject Scripture? The fact that Trent placed Tradition on the

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23. See Lennerz, “Scriptura sola?” 52.

24. See Boyer, “Insufficiency of Scripture,” 167.

25. Owens, “Sacred Scripture,” 60.

same level as Scripture in these matters, therefore, lends credence to the criticisms placed against Geiselman's views.

But can we use the Tridentine decree to further affirm what this content of Tradition includes? The final decree described the traditions as those “pertaining both to faith and to morals” (*tum ad fidem, tum ad mores pertinentes*). Therefore, the content of Tradition includes truths of the faith. Some of the examples of traditions listed above, such as the sacraments and the perpetual virginity of Mary, would certainly apply to this category. Furthermore, since anything pertaining to faith is necessary for salvation, it would follow that the content of Tradition includes truths that are necessary for salvation. Yet, this still leaves open the question of whether or not this content exists completely outside of Scripture. In other words, are there truths of the faith that come to us *only* through Tradition, without even implicit mention in Scripture?

Lennerz believed the answer could be found in the very adjective used to describe the traditions in the Tridentine decree. He explained:

For that which is in Sacred Scripture is ‘written;’ that which is in these traditions is ‘unwritten.’ The same thing is not able to be ‘written,’ that is, contained in Sacred Scripture, and at the same time be ‘unwritten,’ that is, not contained in Sacred Scripture. These things are exclusive: they are either written, or not written.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, since Trent described the traditions as “unwritten,” Lennerz contended that the Council clearly distinguished them from the content of the “written” Scriptures. In this way, he argued that Trent affirmed the existence of traditions that pertain to faith that are in no way in Scripture. But was he correct in this assertion? Moran has contended that he was not, since “written” and “unwritten” are not completely exclusive terms. He explained, “There can be an overlapping of

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26. Lennerz, “Sine scripto traditiones,” 633. “Nam quod est in s. Scriptura, est ‘scriptum,’ quod est in his traditionibus est ‘sine scripto.’ Non potest idem esse ‘scriptum,’ i.e. inveniri in s. scriptura, et simul esse ‘non scriptum,’ i.e. non inveniri in s. scriptura. Haec sunt exclusiva: aut scriptum, aut non scriptum.”

the truths contained in these two terms. A word cannot be a written word and an unwritten word at the same time, but there is no reason at all why a truth cannot be expressed in both a written and an unwritten form.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Lennerz went too far in assuming that Tradition has content completely distinct from Scripture based on its designation as “unwritten.” Rather, the Tridentine decree simply stated that revelation comes down to us in two forms: “written books and unwritten traditions.” Each category has content that pertains to faith but the decree does not specify whether or not certain parts of that content exist only in Tradition.

Where, then, does this leave us? Our discussion has shown that neither side of the debate was completely true to the Tridentine decree. Rather, they each took some liberties with the decree in order to come to their conclusions on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. In fact, we must admit that the Tridentine decree has not given us a firm answer to the question of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. The Council did not have in mind the same questions raised by theologians writing on this topic in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Trent was focused on responding to the Protestant Reformers, not on defining the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. Yet, certainly the Council’s response to the Reformers touches upon this matter, for the Tridentine Fathers had much to say about the role of Tradition in the Church. Thus, the Tridentine decree, with the proceedings of the Fourth Session as a proper context for it, may function as a starting point and guide for the debate over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, but it cannot be looked to in order to solve the problem in and of itself. In order to come to firm solutions, we must speculate beyond the decree, while still remaining within its parameters. That said, in the final chapter we will offer some suggestions for where to proceed from here in the debate over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition.

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27. Moran, *Scripture and Tradition*, 65.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

As is the nature with any debate, the language used can easily become polemical. As a result, arguments are formed as reactions (and, often times, overreactions) to the claims of the other side. This back and forth results in a polarization of positions. Mutually exclusive language is used in order to distance oneself from the other side. Ultimately, two camps form with views that are diametrically opposed to one another. In the midst of these polemical and semantic games, the real issues often get lost. As a result, these debates, by their very nature, can sometimes do more harm than good in finding a solution. The nature of the controversy over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition during the late 1950s and early 1960s appears to have fallen victim to these shortfalls. Looking at the debate fifty years later, somewhat removed from the polemical atmosphere, we are able to see it with a fresh set of eyes, recognizing the problems with each side's position. Thus, having summarized the debate, explored the Fourth Session of Trent and its decree, and offered some responses to both sides of the interpretation of that decree, we may now offer some final insights, suggestions, and conclusions.

Much of the problem of the debate stemmed from the use of language. Being that the discussion focused on the Tridentine decree, the language used should have remained more faithful to that decree. Therefore, in order to move forward in understanding the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, we ought to move away from the polemical language of "sufficiency" or "insufficiency," "one-source theory" or "two-source theory," and even "partly-

partly” or “totally-totally.” These terms have become too attached to one side of the debate or the other and, as a result, bring with them loaded polemical meaning. Therefore, we must find better terminology to define the dynamic relationship between Scripture and Tradition.

Regarding the sufficiency or insufficiency of Scripture, it would be better to focus on the incompleteness of Scripture. Both sides agree that Scripture is incomplete without Tradition. This idea was explicitly taught by Trent. To say, therefore, that Scripture is materially sufficient only confuses the matter and goes beyond Trent. It may be possible that all truths of the faith are at least implicitly present in Scripture, but Tradition adds content to Scripture that is necessary in order to have the fullness of those truths. In other words, the content of Tradition is not the same as Scripture, nor is it merely the hermeneutical key to Scripture. Tradition adds something to Scripture. Therefore, it is unhelpful to speak of any sufficiency of Scripture. Still, Tradition always has a connection with Scripture. They are not totally mutually exclusive categories. Certainly there is much overlap. In fact, it would be correct to say that Scripture and Tradition form an organic whole. They have a dynamic relationship with one another. But everything pertaining to revelation is not in Scripture and everything is not in Tradition. We need both in order to have the full content of revelation. Trent affirmed this fact in its decree when it said, “[The Gospel] is contained in written books and in unwritten traditions.” If you take away one, you are not left with the entire Gospel anymore. That said, it is rather misleading to speak of any sufficiency of Scripture, since Tradition is necessary in order to have the fullness of the truths necessary for salvation. It would be better simply to affirm that both Scripture and Tradition together are sufficient, each being incomplete without the other.

As mentioned above, it would also be best to avoid the term “sources” when referring to Scripture and Tradition. In order to remain true to the language of Trent, only the Gospel should



be considered the source of revelation. Scripture and Tradition, under the guiding authority of the Church, are the means by which the Gospel has been passed down to us. The fullness of revelation was given in Jesus Christ to the Apostles. The Church has preserved this revelation in “written books and unwritten traditions.” Therefore, it would be better to speak of Scripture and Tradition as “channels” or “places” or even “containers.” The Gospel is preserved in Scripture and Tradition and, according to Trent, it is not fully preserved in either one by itself. Both serve as the means of accessing the divine revelation given in Jesus Christ through the Apostles.

Furthermore, even Trent’s original language of *partim-partim* has become problematic, since the debate brought about a loaded meaning to this phrase that likely was not intended by the Council Fathers or post-Tridentine theologians. The debate of the 1950s and 1960s was asking different questions than the Tridentine Fathers and post-Tridentine theologians were. As a result, the *partim-partim* formulation came to emphasize too much of a distinction between Scripture and Tradition. The phrase basically came to be equated with the two-source theory, which has already been pointed out to be inconsistent with the language of Trent. As a result, further research must be done in order to more accurately understand the meaning of the phrase by the Councils Fathers and also by post-Tridentine theologians. Thus, an effort to avoid the loaded meaning given to the phrase in the debate and return to a more accurate understanding of the phrase ought to be pursued. Furthermore, Geiselman’s replacement of *partim-partim* with *totally-totally* only served to further confuse the matter. His intention to advocate for the unity between Scripture and Tradition may be commended, but the *totally-totally* view is going too far. For, unity should not be emphasized to the neglect of distinction, and Tradition functions as more than merely the hermeneutical key to Scripture. Therefore, new language should be sought that more adequately explains the relationship between Scripture and Tradition.

To conclude, then, more discussion must be had among Catholic theologians over the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. The intense debate of the late 1950s and early 1960s did not provide a satisfactory answer to the problem. As pointed out above, each side was right in some ways and wrong in others. The way forward appears to be a *via media* between the two extremes of Geiselman's positions and those who overcorrected him. New language must be used in order to better frame the issues. The polemic of "one-source theory" versus "two-source theory" is simply misleading and unhelpful and, therefore, ought to be discarded. A more nuanced approach should be pursued seeking to remain faithful to the Tridentine decree, while also recognizing its limitations in giving an adequate solution to the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. Trent must provide the parameters to the discussion but it cannot be the end all, for the Council Fathers did not have in mind the same questions that have been raised in our modern age. Thus, the discussion must go beyond Trent, seeking an answer in the broader context of Catholic thought. All in all, it is time to reopen the discussion on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition and look at it with a fresh set of eyes, with the hope that a better explanation may result than what was given in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

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