CHAPTER TWO

THE PREPARATORY THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

1. Composition

Formation and chairmanship

All roads lead to Rome... On June 5, 1960, the motu proprio Superno Dei nutu appeared in the Acta Apostolicae Sedis. In the meantime, all the vota have been processed by the Antepreparatory Commission and a thematic list has been drawn up. The publication date of the motu proprio likewise constitutes the official opening of the “Preparatory Phase” of Vatican II, during which substantial theological preparations for the Council were to take place.

The text in question contains a number of important resolutions, the first being the decision to establish ten preparatory commissions and three secretariats. The jurisdiction of each preparatory commission corresponded with that of the Roman curial congregations, the prefects of the latter being appointed chair of the respective commissions (with the exception of the Commission for the Apostolate of the Laity). We will continue to focus our attention of just one of these commissions, since it alone was responsible for the conciliar debate on revelation: the Preparatory Theological Commission (tc), opposite number to the Congregation for the Holy Office.

The position of the said commission is immediately striking, since it was the only organ to which the motu proprio ascribed a ‘job description’, namely the study and evaluation of questions related to Scripture, Tradition, and matters of faith and morals.\(^1\) All things considered, however, the description remains succinct and to a certain extent vague, although Scripture and Tradition were clearly prominent aspects thereof. In spite of the fact that John XXIII only approved

\(^{1}\text{AAS 52 (1960), 433–7, there 435: Commissio theologica, cuius erit quaestiones ad scripturam sanctam, sacram traditionem, fidem moresque spectantes perpendere et pervestigare.}
the despatch of the *quaestiones* to be treated to the respective commissions on July 2, 1960, the commission’s course had already been charted. The commencement of its work, however, was subject to other factors.

On the same July 2, letters of appointment were sent out to the future commission members. It is worthy of note that the official list—included in the weekend edition of *L’Osservatore Romano*—contains a surprising number of Belgian names: Gerard Philips, Lucien Cerfaux, Arthur Janssen, Philippe Delhayé and Édouard Dhanis. On September 26 of the same year, moreover, Franciscan Damien Van den Eynde was added as a commission member. The disproportional representation of such a small country as Belgium raises questions concerning the acquisition of commission membership and the procedures surrounding appointment. The existing literature offers little help in this regard, insisting that the criteria for appointment were

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2 The actual sending *Quaestiones commissionibus praeparatoriiis positaes* would be carried out on July 9, 1960, by Msgr. Felici, secretary general. See Alberigo, *Passaggi cruciali*, pp. 34–5.

3 *Oss. Rom.* 100/166, July 18–19, 1960. Delhayé’s name was wrongly spelled ‘Dela haye’. The others are:

a. Members: Carpino, Dubois, Scherer, Stohr, Audet, Franic, Griffiths, SCHRÖFER, Wright, HermanIUK, Kornyliak, Cerfaux, Fenton, Garofalo, Philips, PIOLANTI, Schmaus, Journet, Michel, BALTIC, CiappI, Dhanis, Gagnebet, Gillon, HÜRTH, RAMIREZ, Trapé.

b. Consultors: Bride, BRINKTRINE, JANNSEN, Jouassard, Schauff, Anastasie del SS.mO Rosario, BÉLANGER, CONGAR, DANDER, de LUBAC, di FONZO, DORONZO, HÄRING, Kerrigan, KLOPPENBURG, LABOURLDette, LÉCUYER, LIO, ONDRak, Rossi, Salaverri, Unger, WITTE, XIBERTA, Backes, Bertetto, Castellino, Laurentin.

