1. A Roman Controversy

Before endeavouring to reconstruct the concrete redactional activities of the subcommission De fontibus revelationis, some additional background information and a sketch of the circumstances surrounding the revelation debate seems appropriate at this juncture, especially if we bear in mind that the subcommission’s activities did not take place in a vacuum. Towards the end of 1960, mounting tension was evident between two Roman institutions, a tension that was to complicate its work, if only on account of the uneasy atmosphere created by the entire affair. The public polemic between the Lateran University on the one hand and the Pontifical Biblical Institute was further embittered by the fact that it inspired the regurgitation of accusations from the time of modernism and the nouvelle théologie. Indeed, the situation worsened to such an extent that interdicts were imposed once again on the teaching activities of certain protagonists.

The said controversy, which had dragged on for months, ultimately constituted a cantus firmus for the work of the SCDF. Moreover, it would appear that a number of TC members were involved in the affair, including Cerfau.x We begin our sketch, therefore, with a brief glance

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1 The Lateran Faculty had just recently—through John XXIII’s motu proprio Cum Inde (AAS 51 (1959), 401-2) of May 17, 1959—been promoted to the rank of Pontifical University. See S. Paciolla, ‘Nec de nomine tantum hic agitur,’ in Nuntium 8 (1999), 176–9; Michele Manzo, ‘Papa Roncalli e il Laterano,’ in L’università del Laterano e la preparazione del Concilio Vaticano II: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Città del Vaticano, 27 gennaio 2000), ed. Philippe Chenaux [Studi e documenti sul Concilio Vaticano II 1] (Rome, 2001), pp. 29–39, there 34–5.

at the preconciliar *vota* of the parties involved, in search of insight into what typified the two schools and what drove them apart.

**Preconciliar Votum of the Biblicum**

The preconciliar *vota* as a whole focus considerable attention on the study and use of the Scriptures. Our analysis of a number of Belgian *vota* in the first chapter of the present volume bears witness to this fact, but it also goes without saying that the Roman universities\(^3\) had their own opinion on the matter. The *votum* of the *Biblicum* is exceptional in that it is entirely devoted to exegetical issues.\(^4\) It is made up of two primary parts, the first of which is doctrinal and calls for clarification with respect to a number of still pending questions including the relationship between Scripture and Tradition,\(^5\) the historicity of the gospels, and the rejection of anti-semitism. The historical significance and value of the biblical texts are given extensive coverage, while the document challenges the forthcoming council to combine three summarised points of doctrine with a historical-critical approach to exegesis: a) the doctrine of incarnation, which shows that the Christian faith is rooted in a divine intervention in history; b) the idea that revelation only came to an end with the death of the last apostle; c) the classical doctrine whereby the biblical texts are understood to enjoy infallible status on account of their inspired character.\(^6\) In short, the

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\(^3\) Andrea Riccardi, ‘I ’vota’ romani,’ in *À la veille du Concile*, pp. 146–68.

\(^4\) Votum PIB, in AD 1/4, 121–36.

\(^5\) Votum PIB, pp. 125–6: Scriptura sola conscripta est inspirante Spiritu Sancto; Ecclesia autem gaudet non inspiratione proprie dicta, sed assistentia Spiritus Sancti ad revelationem evolvandam. […] necessarium est ut traditio in evoluzione sua se referat ad Scripturam.

\(^6\) Votum PIB, p. 130: in evangeliis explicandis duo principia applicanda et inter se concilianda sunt, historicitas et inerrantia. Quisquis in nomine fidelitatis historicae prorsus restringit libertatem evangelistarum, nullam viam apertam relinquit ad diversitates narrationum (interdum vix non contradictorias) re et non verbo solum explicandas. Ideo rigidam statuens historicitatem non salveret inerrantiam vel saltem eam in periculum adduceret.