

VATICAN II AFTER SIXTY YEARS

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Vatican II After Sixty Years

Developments and Expectations Prior to the Council

Edited by

MATHIJS LAMBERIGTS, ANTONIA PIZZEY, AND
KARIM SCHELKENS

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Cover illustration: Photo of John XXIII, taken on January 25, 1959, the day of the announcement of the Second Vatican Council (kind permission of FSCIRE, Bologna)

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In grateful memory of Joachim Schmiedl, ISch (1958-2021),
an outstanding and untiring Vatican II scholar and friend

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The Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions

A Representative Summa of Pre-conciliar European Catholic Ecumenism?

The experience of the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions (CCEQ),¹ the body that, in the decade preceding the council, constituted the sole instrument for international coordination of Catholic ecumenism in various countries, is widely known to experts.² During the pontificate of Pius XII, it represented the only instrument for dialogue, albeit on an informal level, with the World Council of Churches. Presided over by the future Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, the Catholic Conference also constituted a kind of preview and preparation for the work of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, into which many of the members of the Catholic Conference converged during the preparatory phase of the Second Vatican Council. In this contribution, therefore, leaving aside reconstructions of the body's history or its theological contribution, which have already been examined elsewhere,³ an attempt will be made to investigate one of the most problematic issues concerning the CCEQ, that is, to determine whether

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- 1 Abbreviations used in this contribution: ACCQOE = Archive de la Conférence Catholique pour les questions œcuméniques, Chevetogne; ADPJ = Archiv der deutschen Provinz der Jesuiten, Munich; CCEQ = Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions; EBAP = Erzbistumsarchiv, Paderborn; FD = Dumont's papers, Archives de la Province dominicaine de France, Paris; ILAFO = International League for Apostolic Faith and Order; KWA = Kardinaal Willebrands Archief, Leuven; SWV = Sint-Willibrordvereniging; WCC = World Council of Churches
 - 2 Mauro Velati, *Una difficile transizione. Il cattolicesimo tra unionismo ed ecumenismo (1952-1964)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1996); Peter De Mey, 'Johannes Willebrands and the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions (1952-63)', in *The Ecumenical Legacy of Johannes Cardinal Willebrands (1909-2006)*, ed. by Adelbert Denaux, Peter De Mey (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), pp. 49-77; Peter De Mey, 'L'évolution théologique et œcuménique de la Conférence Catholique pour les questions œcuméniques (1952-63)' in *Mgr J. Willebrands et la "Conférence catholique pour les Questions œcuméniques". Ses archives à Chevetogne*, ed. by L. Declerck (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), pp. 7-39; Saretta Marotta, 'Die Katholische Konferenz für ökumenische Fragen', in *Die deutsche ökumenische Bewegung der 1950er Jahre*, ed. by D. Burkard, M.E. Gründig (Rottenburger Jahrbuch für Kirchengeschichte, 41), (Rottenburg: Thorbecke, 2023), forthcoming.
 - 3 Peter De Mey and Saretta Marotta, 'The Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions', in *A History of the Desire for Christian Unity*, ed. by Alberto Melloni (Leiden: Brill, 2024), forthcoming.

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it constituted a representative and collegial 'summa' of pre-conciliar European Catholic ecumenism or if it was not rather dominated by a few preponderant figures. The dialectical dynamics present within the Catholic Conference will therefore be illustrated and the profiles of the different sensibilities that animated it will be traced. These sensitivities can essentially be reduced to those of two large groups that also corresponded to two different geographical contexts, the German-Dutch and the French-speaking. Their divergence was evident from the very beginning of the CCEQ's collegial experience.

The Dutch-German Understanding

Founded on the initiative of the Dutch ecumenical association Sint Willibrord Vereniging, from the very beginning of its activity, the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions looked to German Catholic ecumenism as the main reference for its work. Indeed, there were many points of convergence between German and Dutch Catholic ecumenism, starting with the fact that they shared a similar confessional situation in their respective countries, with Catholicism in a minority position. The Sint Willibrord Vereniging itself, an association of which Johannes Willebrands was president, appeared to be very much modelled on the Fulda bishops' conference commission in charge of ecumenism and chaired by the Archbishop of Paderborn, Lorenz Jaeger, as it was mainly a coordination between the different diocesan referents for ecumenism in the Netherlands.⁴

When Willebrands and his collaborator and friend Frans Thijssen toured Europe in August 1951 to present the project of what they called at that time 'Conseil catholique œcuménique' in the various countries, they probably mainly thought of extending this coordination model on an international scale.⁵ Archbishop of Paderborn Lorenz Jaeger was the first to meet them and was promptly ready to offer his important support for the project.⁶ Firstly, he immediately included Willebrands and Thijssen as speakers at the next meeting of German diocesan delegates for ecumenism, a conference that took place in Frankfurt in October 1951.⁷ This invitation helped the two Dutch ecumenists to develop

4 Jan Jacobs, *Nieuwe visies op een oud visioen: een portret van de Sint Willibrord Vereniging, 1948-1998* (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 1998); Karim Schelkens, *Johannes Willebrands (1909-2006). Een leven in gesprek* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2020).

5 See the different versions of the *Plan voor een Katholieke Oecumenische Raad*, and translations thereof, in ACCQOE, Dossier 5/2: Premiers projets d'un 'Conseil œcuménique catholique'.

6 Willebrands and Thijssen to Jaeger, 21.7.1951 in ACCQOE, Dossier 19/1: Correspondence. For the report of the visit, see: *Verslag van de Reis voor het Plan Katholieke Oecumenische Raad (2-18 august 1951)*, in ACCQOE, Dossier 5, pp. 2-5. Cf. also Saretta Marotta, 'Lorenz Jaegers Rolle für den ökumenischen Weg von Johannes Willebrands und Augustin Bea', in *Lorenz Jaeger als Ökumeniker*, ed. by Nicole Priesching, Albert Otto (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2020), pp. 198-215.

7 Jaeger's circular letter of 9.8.1951, in ACCQOE, Dossier 19/1: Correspondence. Cf. anche EBAP, Jaeger, Dossier 18 U.S.-Arbeit, "Diozesan-Referenten".

contacts on German soil that would be useful for the creation of their 'Catholic Ecumenical Council', e.g. with the Jesuits of the Sankt Georgen Institut and with the editors of the 'Herder-Korrespondenz', including Johannes Peter Michael, who attended the Frankfurt meeting as an envoy of the bishop of Mainz, Albert Stohr.

Particular mention must be made of Willebrands's and Thijssen's relationship with Bishop Albert Stohr, who on several occasions invited Thijssen to give lectures in his diocese and even offered Mainz as the seat of the future Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions.⁸ The main point of contact between the three was the concern for the apostolate of conversions, especially towards converted former Protestant pastors. Stohr invited the Dutch ecumenists (also covering their travel expenses) to be present on 22 December 1951, in Mainz, when Rudolf Goethe, a seventy-one-year-old married former Lutheran pastor, was ordained a Catholic priest with a special papal dispensation from celibacy.⁹ Goethe's ordination, through which he became the first married priest of the modern Latin Catholic Church, took place thanks to Archbishop Jaeger's decisive intermediation with the Holy See. To Jaeger in particular, Dutch ecumenism recognised a leading role in the question of priestly ordinations of converted pastors. Already in the summer of 1950, the Cardinal of Utrecht, Johannes de Jong, had approached Lorenz Jaeger to ask him about the 'correct procedure' for obtaining the Holy See's consent for such ordinations.¹⁰ In fact, in 1949 the German episcopate obtained a *Norma ad tempus* from the Holy See which allowed a dispensation from celibacy to be granted on a case-by-case basis.¹¹

The Dutch bishops would be the first to follow the German example: the first priestly ordination of this kind on Dutch soil took place in 1963 and the second in 1967.¹² Dutch and German Catholic ecumenism (at least as far as episcopally-led

8 See the correspondence between Thijssen and Stohr in ACCQOE, Dossier 19/1: Correspondence. About Stohr: Leonhard Hell, 'Unio Ecclesiae - Materia primaria. Bischof Albert Stohrs Einbindung in den entstehenden internationalen katholischen Ökumenismus und in die Vorbereitung des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils', in *Dominus fortitudo: Bischof Albert Stohr (1890 - 1961)*, ed. by Karl Lehmann (Mainz: Echter, 2012), pp. 99-119.

9 Rudolph Goethe, 'Die Offene Tür', in Karl Hardt, *Bekennntnis zur katholischen Kirche* (Würzburg: Echter, 1955), pp. 117-65.

10 Jaeger to De Jong, 4.10.1950, in AKW, Dossier 294.

11 During the preparatory phase of the Second Vatican Council, the question of whether to transform the norm *ad tempus* into a definitive norm was addressed by the Third Subcommission of the Secretariat for Christian Unity and defended with particular emphasis precisely by the members and consultors of German and Dutch origin. Cf. Mauro Velati, *Dialogo e rinnovamento. Verbali e testi del Segretariato per l'unità dei cristiani nella preparazione del concilio Vaticano II (1960-62)* (Il Mulino: Bologna, 2011), p. 31 and pp. 511-88.

12 Jacob Loos (Groningen, September 1963) and Hendrik van der Linde (Nijmegen, December 1967). Cf. Richard A. Hill, 'Ordination of married Protestant Ministers', in *Canon Law Society of America: Proceedings of the fifty-first Annual Convention* (Washington: Canon Law Society of America, 1990), pp. 95-100; Richard H. Puza, 'Viri uxorati - viri probati. Kanonistisch-historische Überlegungen', *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 172 (1992), 16-23.



ecumenism was concerned, since the sensibility of the *Una Sancta* movement at the local level was quite different) thus shared a common approach, focusing mainly on the apostolate of conversions and hence on efforts to accompany the reunification of individuals and small communities. Therefore, just as one of the main efforts of the Sint Willibrord Vereniging consisted in dialogue with the ‘Catholicizing’ Protestant group of the *Hilversum Convent*, so in Paderborn, in the ecumenical institute founded by Jaeger, great energies were spent in dialogue with the *Sammlung*, a Catholicizing group that arose within the German Evangelical Church.

This interest in conversions needs to be understood in the context of a common attitude in Catholic ecumenical circles in the 1950s, especially in Central Europe, where proselytism and the promotion of dialogue mingled and overlapped. Indeed, for a long time they were perceived as non-contradictory paths to the common goal of re-establishing unity. The Catholic Conference’s work on ecumenical issues has also long been conditioned by this overlapping approach. Willebrands’ dialogue efforts with the ILAFO, the International League for Apostolic Faith & Order, a Catholicizing association within Anglicanism, were perhaps more akin to the model of dialogue undertaken with the *Sammlung* or the *Hilversum Convent* rather than to the collaboration with the World Council of Churches.¹³ The overlap between ecumenism and unionism would continue even during the preparatory work for the Council, when a specific sub-commission would be formed within the Secretariat for Christian Unity to study the question of conversions.¹⁴

However, this confusion of approaches was not the only one, but certainly one of the main points of divergence within the CCEQ between the Dutch and German members and the Francophones. There is a well-known page in Maurice Villain’s memoirs in which the ecumenist from Lyon recalls the ‘surprise and shock’ which Congar, Dumont and he himself experienced on hearing the inaugural address of the coadjutor bishop of Utrecht Bernard Alfrink at the second annual assembly of the CCEQ held in Dijnselburg in 1953. Alfrink’s speech was precisely about the conversion of Protestants and the various conversion methods used for this purpose, starting with pastors: ‘I was sitting between Father Congar and Father Dumont. For each new sentence, we lowered our heads a little more. Finally, my head touched my knees.’¹⁵ However, Congar, a year earlier, when he received the first draft of the project on the ‘Catholic Ecumenical Council’ in

13 Saretta Marotta, ‘The dialogue between the International League for Apostolic Faith & Order and the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions’, *Journal of Modern and Contemporary Christianity*, 3 (2024), forthcoming.

14 Peter De Mey, ‘De oecumenismo catholico et de opere conversionum: The relationship between Ecumenism and the Apostolate of Conversions Before and During the Second Vatican Council’, in *Conversion and Church. The Challenge of Renewal*, ed. by Stephan Van Erp and Karim Schelkens (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 263-87.

15 M. Villain, *Vers l’unité. Itinéraire d’un pionnier 1935-1975* (Dinard: G.S.O.E., 1986), p. 208.

May 1952, had already perceived the problem, reacting in the following way with Willebrands:

A truly ecumenical work can only exist if it includes a kind of dialectical dimension welcoming the truth of the others, which is what I tried to define in my two books, *Chrétiens désunis* and *Vraie et fausse réforme* (...) On the official side, so far, there has *only* been mention of a pure and simple return. Now, we all agree that this is the term. But our work is at the level of the means, of the pathways towards this term (...) the discussion on the very words 'unionism' and 'ecumenism', clearly shows that there could be a possible equivocation underneath.¹⁶

Notwithstanding these aspects, German and Dutch Catholic ecumenism made a considerable contribution to the birth of the CCEQ that French ecumenism could not have done. It was in fact Jaeger who secured the 'Catholic Council' project the assent of the Holy Office in Rome. He obtained it by putting Willebrands in contact with the German consultor Augustin Bea, whom Jaeger himself had pre-alerted and gained for the cause.¹⁷ Moreover, it was thanks to the efforts of German Catholic ecumenism, and Jaeger in particular, that the Holy Office's instruction *Ecclesia Catholica* on ecumenism was promulgated in December 1949, which constituted the 'magna carta' of Catholic ecumenical activities, allowing them to continue by delegating their supervision to the bishops.¹⁸ Therefore, Bea was not making a neutral suggestion when he suggested to Willebrands to use in the 'Catholic Council' project some quotations strategically taken from *Ecclesia Catholica*, precisely in order to place the initiative within the framework of what the instruction envisaged, i.e. under the responsibility of the local bishops and not directly of the Holy See.¹⁹ Furthermore, Bea recommended an international but private meeting between the bishops (or their representatives) mainly involved in ecumenical work and the best experts in the movement. This suggestion

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- 16 'Un travail vraiment œcuménique ne peut exister que s'il inclut une sorte de dimension dialectique accueillante à la vérité des autres, celle que j'ai essayé de définir dans mes deux livres, "Chrétiens désunis" et "Vraie et fausse réforme" (...) Du côté officiel, on n'a parlé jusqu'ici *que* de retour pur et simple. Or nous sommes tous d'accord que c'est là le terme. Mais notre travail se situe au niveau des moyens, des cheminements vers ce terme (...) Ceux qui, au très intéressant "Carrefour" unionique du Congrès des Laïcs à Rome (oct. 51), ont entendu la discussion sur les mots mêmes d'unionisme et œcuménisme, ont bien senti qu'il y avait là-dessous une équivoque possible', Congar to Willebrands, 25.5.1952, in ACCQOE, Dossier 5/5: Correspondence avec d'autres personnalités.
- 17 Jaeger to Willebrands and Thijssen, 28.7.1951, in ACCQOE, Dossier 19, fasc. 'Correspondence'.
- 18 Saretta Marotta, 'The Controlled Growth of Catholic Ecumenism under Pius XII', in *A History of the Desire* forthcoming.
- 19 Romereis J. Willebrands - H. Sondaal (29 April - 1 Mei 1952), in ACCQOE, Dossier 5, 1: La préparation lointaine de la CCQOE. For Bea's comments see his memorandum to Willebrands and Sondaal, 24.4.1952, in ACCQOE, Dossier 5, 5: Correspondance avec d'autres personnalités, now in Saretta Marotta, *Gli anni della pazienza. Bea, l'ecumenismo e il Sant'Uffizio di Pio XII* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2019), p. 540.



was applied literally in the summer of 1952, when the conference in Fribourg, Switzerland, marked the official start of the new organization's activities.

In Rome, Willebrands and Thijssen also found support from another consulor of the Holy Office, the Dutch Jesuit Sebastiaan Tromp. In the same vein as Bea, Tromp (who, as I have recently discovered from the archives, was the one who had insisted with the Pope in 1948 to send Catholic observers to the WCC Assembly in Amsterdam)²⁰ suggested placing the new 'Council' under the protection of a trio of ecclesiastical supervisors, namely bishops De Jong for the Netherlands, Jaeger for Germany and Feltin, archbishop of Paris, for France: this was to avoid the explicit authorization of the Roman authorities.

Without the support of Jaeger, Bea and Tromp, then, the Catholic Ecumenical Council project would have met with certain failure in the face of Roman opposition or indifference. In fact, this had been exactly the fate of the memorandum sent by Christophe-Jean Dumont to the Pope only three years earlier, in 1947, calling for the establishment of a secretariat for ecumenism within the Holy See.²¹ The Dutch and German episcopates enjoyed more trust from the Roman authorities than the effervescent French theological milieu. However, despite the fact that Dutch and German ecumenism were crucial in fostering the birth of the CCEQ, it can be said to have immediately lost its centrality in the work of the new body. Indeed, the most creative and innovative developments of the Catholic Conference, those that transformed Willebrands and the men of the future Secretariat into the pioneers of the Vatican II dialogue, were undoubtedly due to the French-speaking influence.

Francophone, or rather, Dominican influence

It is no secret that Dumont and Congar had a decisive influence on the work of the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions. The most evident and eloquent example is the Memorandum presented by the CCEQ during the preparation of the council, the main author of which was undoubtedly and almost exclusively Dumont.²² Congar, moreover, was practically a regular guest at the various meetings of the Conference. What is perhaps less well known, however, is the fact that this preponderant, almost totalizing, influence on the part of French, or rather Dominican, theology began to be exercised from the very first steps of the Conference, even before its official constitution.

²⁰ Marotta, 'The Controlled Growth'.

²¹ Étienne Fouilloux, *Les catholiques et l'unité chrétienne du XIXème au XXème siècle: itinéraires européens d'expression française* (Paris: Centurion, 1982), pp. 698-704.

²² Peter De Mey, 'La préparation intensive du concile d'un groupe européen d'œcuménistes catholiques: Note de la Conférence catholique pour les questions œcuméniques sur la restauration de l'unité chrétienne (1959)', *Irenikon*, forthcoming.

During Willebrands' and Thijssen's aforementioned trip to Europe in August 1951, the two Dutchmen also visited the Istina Centre in Paris and in particular its director Christophe-Jean Dumont.²³ They did not meet Yves Congar, but he was introduced to the project a few months later in Rome, where he met Jan Witte in October 1951 during the World Congress of the Apostolate of the Laity.²⁴ If Jaeger had assured Roman support for the initiative, it was Dumont who ensured that the new body would have a fruitful dialogue with the leaders of the World Council of the Churches from its outset.

In October 1951, Dumont indeed arranged for Thijssen to be invited to a meeting, scheduled for the following month, between a number of Catholic theologians (including Congar) and some members of the Faith and Order Commission on the subject of 'vestigia ecclesiae'. The meeting, which took place in Presinge, Switzerland, was also attended by Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the WCC, and was the first opportunity, although Willebrands was not present, for some of the protagonists of the future Conference for Ecumenical Questions to make contact with the World Council in Geneva.²⁵ In Presinge, Thijssen also had the opportunity to meet the Bishop of Fribourg, Geneva and Lausanne, François Charrière, for the first time. Probably impressed by the bishop during this meeting, it was Congar who insisted that Charrière himself host the first meeting of the new Catholic Ecumenical Council. Congar personally discussed this possibility with the Swiss bishop, putting Willebrands almost in front of a *fait accompli* and the embarrassment of having to decline a similar offer made in the meantime by Charles Boyer, director of the very Roman Unionist association Unitas,²⁶ who had even already booked a venue, Villa Maria, in the diocese of Genova, to host the meeting.²⁷ For his part, Dumont, in his letters

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- 23 'In Parijs is het centre d'études "Istina", onder leiding van père Dumont OP. Dit is een instituut van de Congregatie voor Oosterse Kerkel. Aangelegenheden; formeel ook alleen bestemd voor oosterse aangelegenheden. Maar omdat het leerstellige van Oost en West onderling samenhangt, en in de Wereldraad en daarbuiten met elkaar in relatie staat, daarom interesseert "Istina" zich voor kwesties die op de Westerse scheuringen betrekking hebben. Het centre en zijn directeur blijken uitstekend geïnformeerd. Ons plan beantwoordt aan zijn verlangens. De verwerkelijk zal ons helpen de Kerk ook in het Westen missionerend te maken, niet een centrum van behoud, maar een mouvement de conquête', *Verslag van de Reis*, p. 7.
- 24 *Verslag Rome-Reis van Pater J.L. Witte SJ*, in ACCQOE, Dossier 5, 1: La préparation lointaine de la CCQOE, pp. 5-6.
- 25 On the Presinge meeting see: Fouilloux, *Les catholiques et l'unité*, pp. 811-12; Karim Schelkens, 'Pioneers at the crossroads. The pre-conciliar itineraries of W.A. Visser 't Hooft and J.G.M. Willebrands (1951-61)', *Catholica*, 70 (2016), 23-39, here pp. 27-29. See also the report of Thijssen, who attended the meeting for the SWV together with the Dominican Piet Kreling, in ACCQOE, Dossier 16, 8: Presinge. On the topic of 'elements of the church' see: Sandra Arenas Perez, *Fading Frontiers? An Historical-Theological Investigation into the Notion of the Elementa Ecclesiae* (Leuven: Peeters, 2021).
- 26 On Boyer see Fermina Alvarez Alonso, 'Charles Boyer: Unitas in Italia per il mondo (1946-56)', *Colloquia Mediterranea*, 12 (2022), 203-223.
- 27 Boyer to Willebrands, 16.5.1952 and Willebrands to Boyer, 10.6.1952, in ACCQOE, Dossier 5, 5: Correspondence avec d'autres personnalités.



to Willebrands, also supported Congar's proposal, arguing that, apart from the importance of holding the first meeting outside of Italy and the influence of Boyer's Unitas association, Charriere's support could have had a positive influence on the Cardinal of Paris, Maurice Feltin, who had remained lukewarm towards the project and had not wanted to meet Willebrands and Thijssen during their trip in the summer of 1951.²⁸ Therefore, if in 1952 the first assembly of the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions was held in Fribourg and not in Italy, it was due to Dumont and Congar. Likewise, both were responsible for changing the name of the new body, abandoning the wording 'Catholic Ecumenical Council' which, as Congar pointed out, could lead to an erroneous parallelism with the World Council of Churches.²⁹

Finally, it was Congar who suggested to Willebrands to present the Catholic conference as a continuation of the attempt made by Charles Boyer in Grottaferrata, where in the Holy Year 1950, with the support of the Substitute of the Secretariat of State, Giovanni Battista Montini, and Pius XII himself, he had summoned twenty-five Catholic ecumenists from different countries and planned to bring them together in a single coordination under his leadership.³⁰ Although the attempt failed due to the mistrust of the summoned ecumenists towards the overly Roman and overly unionist approach of Boyer and the Unitas association, a coordination committee was set up in Grottaferrata that included, besides Boyer, also Dumont and Dom Olivier Rousseau from the Belgian monastery of Chevetogne. It is therefore no coincidence that the same names were chosen in Fribourg (with the addition of Josef Höfer for German ecumenism, which had been poorly represented in Grottaferrata)³¹ to form the executive board that was to assist Willebrands in leading the new CCEQ.

As for Rousseau, he too had been visited during the August 1951 trip by Willebrands and Thijssen, who had also met Dom Lambert Beauduin and Dom Théodore Strotmann in Chevetogne. Not much information remains on the

28 Feltin then met them in December 1951. *Bezoek aan Z. Hoogw. Excellentie Mgr. M. Feltin, aartsbisschop van Parijs, door dr. J. Willebrands en dr. F. Thijssen*, 12.12.1951, in ACCQOE, Dossier 5, 1: La préparation lointaine de la CCQOE.

29 Congar pointed out to Willebrands that the name 'conseil', although expressing 'assez bien ce dont il s'agit, il a l'inconvénient de paraître calquer le nom de l'organisme genevois, et donc de se situer sur un plan analogue au sien et d'être son vis à vis. À vrai dire, c'est l'organisme genevois qui porte un nom discutable (...) mais il existe déjà avec ce nom, et il faut en tenir compte', Congar to Willebrands, 25.5.1952, in ACCQOE, Dossier 5, 5: Correspondance avec d'autres personnalités.

30 Congar to Willebrands, 16.6.1952, in ACCQOE, Dossier 5, 5: Correspondance avec d'autres personnalités. On the Grottaferrata meeting see Étienne Fouilloux, *Les catholiques et l'unité*, pp. 705-09 and 835-45.

31 For Germany, Matthias Laros, coordinator of the Una Sancta movement, was supposed to be present, but had to drop out at the last moment due to an indisposition. Dutch Catholic ecumenism was also poorly represented: the priest Garcia van den Berk took part, but there was no member of the Sint-Willibrordvereniging, the country's main Catholic association working on the issue of Christian unity. The list of the participants was published in the *Osservatore Romano*, 24 September 1950, p. 1.

reception of the project in Chevetogne, which was however positive.³² Certainly Willebrands and Thijssen had from the beginning a more intense correspondence with the French Dominicans than with the Belgian Benedictines. In any case, Thijssen was immediately invited to the meeting of the Journées œcuméniques in September 1951 on 'tradition et œcuménisme', and Willebrands would be present the following year.³³ Conversely, Strotmann was invited as a speaker to the Fribourg conference, together with Congar and Hubert Jedin, perhaps on the basis of geography as well as content. With the sole exception of Jedin's historical contribution on Trent, all speakers referred to topics on the current agenda of the ecumenical movement: Congar's talk was based on his book *Chrétiens désunis* and recalled the theme of the Presinge meeting on the 'elements of the Church', while Strotmann's contribution was an overview of the work of the Faith and Order Commission, to highlight opportunities for collaboration.³⁴

The Fribourg session took place in August 1952 and was attended by twenty-four theologians. The largest 'delegation' came from Germany, with 7 'delegates', but certain French-speaking 'centres' were over-represented, such as Chevetogne, with Rousseau and Strotmann out of a total of four Belgians attending the conference, and Dumont, Congar and Le Gouillou from Paris among the five French. A small Swiss delegation of three, led by Charrière himself, also participated.³⁵ Charrière's presence at the meeting was not the only sign of episcopal approval for

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- 32 'In Chevetogne is ieder enthousiast. Het zou de bekroning zijn van de opzet van Kard. Mercier en père Beauduin met de stichting van Chevetogne: ook hier zoals ook elders was men er erg mee ingenomen, dat wij de "instructio" als uitgangspunt genomen hadden, en vervolgens, dat wij het geheel zowel van de bisschoppen hebben laten uitgaan, alsook op de bisschoppen hun wensen gebaseerd werden. Men was hier van mening, dat de Raad daarom in zich opnam gedelegeerd van bisschoppen, waarnaast natuurlijk ook nog anderen kunnen worden opgenomen. Dit zou voldoende zijn voor het semi-officiële karakter. Dan zou het H. Officie niet genoodzaakt zijn een directe approbatie te geven, ofschoon natuurlijk wel volkomen met alles op de hoogte', in *Verslag van de Reis*, p. 7.
- 33 Peter De Mey, Saretta Marotta, 'The Ecumenical Study Days in Chevetogne', in *A History of the Desire*.
- 34 Here the titles of the scheduled interventions: Kirchenspaltung und Ökumene historisch gesehen (Jedin); Les éléments d'Église parmi les chrétiens réformés et la réflexion ecclésiologique (Congar); Le Mouvement Foi et Constitution: Points de contact et possibilités pour un catholique d'aujourd'hui (Strotmann). For a deeper look at the themes of the interventions, see Peter De Mey, *L'évolution théologique*, pp. 7-39, here pp. 7-10. The texts of the contributions are in FWC, Dossier 5, 6: Textes des conférences.
- 35 From Germany: besides Jedin, also Josef Höfer and Karl Schmitt, sent by the bishops of Paderborn and Mainz respectively, Karl Rahner, then resident in Innsbrück, the Benedictine monk of Maria Laach Viktor Warnach, Robert Grosche, editor of "Catholica" and Karlheinz Schmidthüs, editor of the 'Herder-Korrespondenz'. From Belgium, Olivier Rousseau and Théodore Strotmann from Chevetogne, along with the historian Roger Aubert and the Dominican Jérôme Hamer. From the Netherlands, Willebrands, Thijssen, Jan Witte and the convert Karel Pauwels were present. From France, in addition to Congar and Dumont, there were Marie-Joseph Le Guillou from *Istina* (invited by Dumont himself), Henri Desmettre from Lille and Eugène Fischer from Strasbourg. For Switzerland: Charrière, Edmond Chavaz and the Dominican Adolf Hoffmann. Unlike the conference in Grottaferrata, the geographical distribution of participants was therefore more effective and representative, with only Charles Boyer coming from Roman circles.



the project: Willebrands had received enthusiastic letters, from De Jong, Alfrink, Jaeger, Stohr, Feltin and even the Apostolic Vicar of Sweden Johann Evangelist Müller, who was at that time dealing with the authorizations for the participation of Catholic observers at the Faith and Order conference in Lund at the end of August. Willebrands read out these letters in front of the whole assembly.³⁶ These episcopal endorsements made it possible to comply with the Roman authorities' request to keep the initiative under the responsibility of the bishops.

In Fribourg, the participants approved the final form of the 'Catholic Ecumenical Council', renamed 'Conférence catholique pour les questions œcuméniques'.³⁷ Interestingly, the conference report, in summarising the objectives of the new body, does not mention at all the possibility of establishing direct contact or collaboration between the Catholic Conference and the World Council of Churches.³⁸ However, already the following year the decision to dedicate the second meeting of the CCEQ in Dijnselburg, near Utrecht, to the same topic as the future World Council of Churches Assembly practically marked the beginning of the collaboration between the WCC and the CCEQ. Who had the initiative to address this topic? Dumont, of course. However, in a letter to Willebrands in 1953, Congar expressed himself very clearly on the topics the Catholic Conference should choose for its meetings: 'We need to know what exactly the Conference intends to be and do. Do we want to study a theme each year? But this is done in the annual meeting in Chevetogne, and we would not do much better, except to have the advantage of being more international'.³⁹ And with the disadvantage, it may be added, that there was no way for non-Catholic theologians to attend CCEQ meetings, due to its status as 'under special surveillance' by the Roman curia, whereas this possibility was not precluded at Chevetogne.

That is why Dumont and Congar, who assiduously participated in the Journées œcuméniques de Chevetogne (the same cannot be said for most German-speaking members of the CCEQ), probably perceived the need for a different approach to the work of the Catholic Conference. If dialogue with non-Catholics was not possible during the assemblies, then this dialogue had to be prepared in the background, through the effort to elaborate texts and documents that could be offered to non-Catholic interlocutors, and primarily to the WCC, so as to establish a dialogue at a distance, and not with individual theologians invited to speak on certain topics during a conference, but with the leadership of the ecumenical movement. This type of work characterised the activity of the CCEQ

36 Letters in ACCQOE, Dossier 5, 4: Correspondance avec cardinaux et évêques. On the Catholic participation at Lund: Fouilloux, *Les catholiques et l'unité*, pp. 813-16.

37 The final decision on the matter was taken at a restricted meeting in Paris: *Compte rendu de la réunion de la commission d'études*, 7.11.1953, p. 3, in ACCQOE, Dossier 3.

38 ACCQOE, Dossier 5, 8: rapport et conclusions.

39 'Il faudrait savoir ce que la Conférence se propose au juste d'être et de faire. Voulons-nous étudier chaque année un thème? Mais cela se fait dans la rencontre annuelle de Chévetogne, et nous ne ferions guère mieux, sauf à avoir l'avantage d'être plus internationaux'; Congar to Willebrands, 10.10.1953, in ACCQOE, Dossier 8, 1.

from 1953 until the council, and it is therefore evident how much the influence of Dumont and Congar, who were already used to working with members of the WCC, transformed the CCEQ from its original project. Finally, it must be emphasised that this very effort to offer texts and documents to the WCC was not at all appreciated either by Jaeger, Höfer, Bea or Tromp, i.e. in general by many German members of the CCEQ, who considered it more dangerous than fruitful.

Collaboration with the World Council of Churches

The opposition between the two different souls of the CCEQ therefore began to emerge very early on, and precisely during the Dijnselburg Assembly of 1953, which, as already mentioned, at Dumont's suggestion, had the same theme as the Evanston Assembly of the WCC, namely: 'Christ, the hope of the world'.⁴⁰ The idea was to prepare a memorandum to be sent as a Catholic contribution to the assembly.⁴¹ Catholic ecumenists still hoped that the Holy See would agree to send some Catholics as observers to the conference, but in the end this did not happen. However, the drafting of the memorandum was far from easy.

Two different and incompatible approaches to the subject of Christian hope emerged in Dijnselburg. On the one hand, there was the ecclesiological interpretation given by the members of the CCEQ from countries where Catholicism was in the minority, for whom the question of the need for mediation by the church and thus the question of the relationship between the church and secular power was a priority. On the other hand, there was the missionary interpretation given by the French and Belgian members of the Conference, who, seeing the social implications and the possibility of collaboration between Christians for the renewal of humanity, wanted to 'emphasise above all the temporal aspects of salvation and the importance of Christianity for the world'.⁴² The latter was an interpretation of the theme of Christian hope close to that provided by the WCC. Because of the many differences between the members of the CCEQ on how to deal with the topic, it was decided in Dijnselburg that the memorandum would

40 See Willebrands' letter of 25.1.1953 to the executive board in ACCQOE, Dossier 7, 3: correspondance et réactions concernant le 1er projet.

41 Letter of invitation, 23.3.1953, in ACCQOE, Dossier 7, 1: 1er et 2e Projet. The meeting was attended by thirty theologians, mostly from Holland (eleven participants) and Germany (Grosche, Schmidthüs and Schmitt, already present at the meeting in Fribourg, as well as the historian Joseph Lortz, the journalist Johannes Peter Michael, the Benedictine from Niederaltaich Thomas Sartory and the bishop of Mainz Albert Stohr). The French and Belgians were more or less the same as at the Fribourg meeting, with the addition of Maurice Villain and Jan Walgrave and the absence of Aubert and Desmettre. Charles Boyer was also present. No-one from Switzerland was present this time, but England, the USA and Sweden were represented by, respectively, the Jesuit Maurice Bévenot, William Granger Ryan and the Dominican Michel Bonnet de Paillerets. For the complete list of participants: ACCQOE, Dossier 7, 8: compte rendu.

42 Report of the second Meeting of the 'Catholic Ecumenical Conference' at the Seminary of Dijnselburg (6-9 August 1953), p. 3, in ACCQOE, Dossier 7, 8: compte rendu.



be published as a private publication by some Catholic theologians, not in the name of the CCEQ.⁴³ A select committee, made up of Yves Congar, Louis Bouyer and Hermann Volk, was tasked with drafting the text, but Congar opposed this decision, stating that 'it would be too difficult to meet with people who do not know each other and with the difficulty of language. [...] I think we should work, at least in the first phase, among people who already know each other'.⁴⁴ He then obtained permission to hold a meeting among the French-speaking members of the CCEQ at the Istina centre and it was there that a sort of 'coup d'état' took place, which entrusted the drafting of the text exclusively to Congar.⁴⁵ This was a procedure that would recur often in the history of the CCEQ, due to the great credit given by Willebrands to Congar. However, it was a way of proceeding that could only create increasing ruptures with the other members of the CCEQ (as well as with Charles Boyer).⁴⁶ Added to this is the fact that it was precisely at this time that Congar was hit by the infamous measures of the Holy Office, which in 1954 removed him from Le Saulchoir and from teaching and which, among other things, did not allow him to attend the third CCEQ assembly held in Mainz in April of that year.⁴⁷ Congar had become *persona non grata* due to his problems with the Roman authorities, and on the eve of the Mainz meeting, his text was entrusted to Christophe-Jean Dumont and completely rewritten by him, in the hope of avoiding the criticism that would inevitably cause the project to be inter-

43 On the difficulties that arose within the CCEQ before and after Dijnselburg see Velati, *Una difficile transizione*, pp. 55-61 and P. De Mey, 'Précurseur du Secrétariat pour l'Unité: le travail œcuménique de la 'Conférence catholique pour les questions œcuméniques' (1952-63)', in *La théologie catholique entre intransigeance et renouveau*, ed. by Gilles Routhier, Philippe Roy, Karim Schelkens (BRHE, 95) (Leuven-Louvain-la-Neuve: Maurits Sabbibliotheek-Collège Érasme, 2011), pp. 271-308, here pp. 277-80.

44 'Il serait trop difficile de se réunir avec des hommes qu'on ne connaît pas et, éventuellement, la difficulté de la langue. (...) Je pense qu'il faudra travailler, au moins au premier stade, entre gens qui se connaissent déjà', Congar to Willebrands, 10.10.1953, in ACCQOE, Dossier 8, 1: Correspondance en préparation de la réunion.

45 The decision was taken during a meeting at the Istina centre in Paris in November 1953, attended almost exclusively by theologians from the French (and Dominican) area, such as Dumont, Congar, Le Guillou, Hamer, Bouyer and Bazille. In addition to them, Willebrands, Witte and the prior of Chevetogne Clément Lialine also participated. For the report of the meeting see: *Compte rendu de la réunion de la commission d'études*, 7.11.1953, p. 1, in ACCQOE, Dossier 3, 1953.

46 See Boyer to Willebrands, 22.3.1954, in ACCQOE, Dossier 8, 1: Correspondance en préparation de la reunion.

47 Étienne Fouilloux, *Yves Congar (1904-1995): une vie* (Paris: Salvator 2020), pp. 167-203. See also Alberto Melloni, 'The System and the Truth in the Diaries of Yves Congar', in: *Yves Congar Theologian of the Church*, ed. by Gabriel Flynn (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), pp. 277-302.

rupted.⁴⁸ However, the same criticism was repeated in Mainz as in Dijnselburg,⁴⁹ which is why Willebrands finally decided to have the memorandum published in the journal 'Istina' not under the name of the CCEQ, but anonymously.⁵⁰ Even in this form the contribution could still be shared with the WCC. An English translation of the text was distributed to the delegates, and in this way for the first time a Catholic contribution came to a WCC assembly.⁵¹ Furthermore, thanks to special permission negotiated by Willebrands directly with WCC General Secretary Visser 't Hooft, Dumont himself was able to attend the assembly as a journalist.⁵²

In Willebrands' intentions, however, the collaboration with the WCC was to be continued. A year later, Willebrands proposed to Visser 't Hooft to repeat the experience of the Evanston Memorandum, asking the WCC General Secretary to indicate a theme on which the two bodies could share their reflections. Visser 't Hooft proposed the theme of the 'Lordship of Christ over the Church and the World', which was the main focus of the WCC Study Division at the time.⁵³

The work on the Lordship of Christ occupied the CCEQ for about three years. The topic was not an easy one to deal with, because it again involved the question – already a 'stone of scandal' in Dijnselburg – of the church's role as mediator of the kingdom of Christ and thus the question of Church-State relations. After having entrusted the drafting of the text to an international and extended commission of scholars, divided into three sub-commissions that were supposed to deal with the subject respectively from a biblical, historical and theological point of view, after more than a year of work the CCEQ had still not produced any text.⁵⁴ It was again Congar who urged Willebrands for a 'coup d'état',

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- 48 'Je crois qu'il faut tout préparer pour Mayence comme si un accord pouvait y être obtenu. Dans ce but, et bien que la préparation du prochain numéro de notre revue Istina doive en souffrir, je me propose de remanier le premier texte du Fr. Congar, en tenant compte des critiques déjà faites et de ses propres réactions que j'espère recevoir sous peu (...) Je crois que si l'on veut avoir quelque chance d'aboutir dans ce projet de publication collective il faut partir non du premier texte du P. Congar mais d'un nouveau texte tenant compte des premières critiques', Dumont to Willebrands, 5.4.1954, in ACCQOE, Dossier 8, 1: Correspondance en préparation de la réunion.
- 49 *Report of the third Meeting of the CCEQ (21-24 April 1954)*, p. 2, in ACCQOE, Dossier 8, 2: documents de la réunion de Mayence. It is not possible to find the list of participants at the conference, but only the list of invitations, which numbered around 60 people, from Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the USA and Sweden.
- 50 'Le Christ, L'Église et la grâce dans l'économie de l'espérance chrétienne (Vues catholiques sur le thème d'Evanston)', *Istina*, 1 (1954), 132-38.
- 51 Velati, *Una difficile transizione*, pp. 61-72.
- 52 Documentation on the negotiations with Rome to send Catholic observers to Evanston can be found in ACCQOE, Dossier 17.
- 53 Visser 't Hooft to Willebrands, 14.11.1955, Dossier 10, 1.2: Correspondance. See: Division of studies - WCC, *The Lordship of Christ over the World and the Church: a report from the consultation held at Arnoldshain, Germany, July 5-8, 1956* (Geneva: WCC, 1956).
- 54 Heinrich Schlier, Lucien Cerfaux, Jules-Marie Cambier and Rudolf Schnackenburg for the biblical part, Friedrich Kempf and Jean Leclercq for the historical part, Jan Groot, Hermann Volk and Jérôme Hamer for the theological part. The list of these names alone, which demonstrates how scholars of



forcefully demanding a single text, possibly written by one person and above all by a theologian. In short, by him:

I felt a deep uneasiness at Chevetogne, because of the separation of the various chapters of theological work into specialties, of which at least one, the most fundamental, namely the biblical, has been enclosed in the narrowest circle of specialization. Or in the project that you propose to me, the separation between biblical scholars, historians and 'theologians', is maintained. A theological synthesis that does not flow immediately and vitally from Scripture is a mind game that satisfies no one.⁵⁵

Thus the drafting of the memorandum was once again entrusted to Congar alone, a decision that attracted criticism, this time from the editors of the 'Herder-Korrespondenz', who had long been regular participants in the meetings of the CCEQ and who insisted on the inclusion in the dossier of a section on the necessity of the Church's intervention in secular power.⁵⁶ Despite this, the memorandum on the 'Lordship of Christ', drafted by the Dominican theologian, was published in the pages of 'Istina' at the end of 1959, this time not under anonymity, but as a contribution prepared by 'a group of theologians from the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions.'⁵⁷ Four years after Visser 't Hooft's request, the work was finally done, but too late, as the work of the WCC study division had already been completed two years earlier.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, this document paved the way for a meeting of twelve CCEQ members and twelve WCC theologians to be held on the same topic in October 1959 in Assisi. In December 1958, the Holy Office had already given permission for the meeting to proceed.⁵⁹ However, right in the midst of these efforts, on 25 January 1959, the announcement of the Ecumenical Council arrived unexpectedly, accompanied

different nationalities and sensibilities were required to collaborate on a complex issue in a short time, shows how cumbersome the chosen working method was. *Réunion du Comité directeur de la Conférence Catholique pour les Questions Œcuméniques (Rome, 29-30 Mai 1956)*, in ACCQOE, Dossier 10, 1.1: comité directeur, voyages, rencontres.

55 'J'ai éprouvé un profond malaise à Chevetogne, en raison de la séparation des divers chapitres du travail théologique en spécialités dont une au moins, la plus fondamentale, à savoir la biblique, s'est enfermée dans le cercle le plus étroit de la spécialisation. Or, dans le projet que vous me proposez, la séparation entre Biblistes, historiens et 'théologiens', est maintenue. Une synthèse théologique qui ne découle pas immédiatement et vitalement de l'Écriture, est un jeu de l'esprit qui ne satisfait plus personne', Congar to Willebrands, 5.2.1958, in ACCQOE, Dossier 10, 3.3: correspondance.

56 *Stellungnahme der Herder-Korrespondenz zu der Dokumentation für die Konferenz von Chevetogne*, in ACCQOE, Dossier 10, 2.3.2: Les rapports de Chevetogne.

57 'La seigneurie du Christ sur l'Église et sur le monde, par un groupe des théologiens de la Conférence catholique pour les questions œcuméniques', *Istina*, 6 (1959), 121-66.

58 -WCC: Division of studies, *The Lordship of Christ over the World and the Church: study documents* (Geneva: WCC 1957).

59 See the letters from Willebrands to Boyer, Dumont, Höfer, Cambier, Groot, Hamer, Volk, Schnackenburg, Kempf, Congar, Leclercq, Rousseau, Schmidthüs, 27.12.1958, (ACCQOE, Dossier 10, 3.2: Préparation et projets pour la réunion d'Assise) and to Ottaviani of 20.11.1958 (in ACCQOE, Dossier 10, 3.3: correspondance) and 1.12.1958 (in ACCQOE, Dossier 4).

by hopes and fears that strained the dialogue between the confessions. The notorious ‘Rhodes incident’,⁶⁰ which broke out precisely at this delicate stage, finally sanctioned the definitive cancellation of the meeting.⁶¹

On the Eve of the Council

Among the various study documents prepared by the CCEQ, undoubtedly the most important contribution, in terms of impact and reception, was the ‘Memorandum on the Restoration of Christian Unity’, sent in June 1959 to a number of Roman congregations, as well as to many bishops, during the ante-preparatory phase of the council.⁶² The idea to prepare the *Memorandum* came, once again, from Dumont, who was also its principal author, as a recent study by Peter De Mey has shown.⁶³ The Dominican, after the announcement of the Ecumenical Council, asked himself: ‘What can the Conference do? It seems to me that it has a responsibility and must take an initiative.’⁶⁴ Dumont felt the urgency of an ‘educational’ task that the CCEQ could undertake towards the future Conciliar Fathers, in order to share the experience gained over many years of ecumenical dialogue. For example, one of the first points addressed by the *Memorandum* concerned language, calling for words like ‘heretic’ and ‘schismatic’ to be eliminated from the vocabulary, preferring to call the other confessions, if not ‘Churches’, at least ‘Communions’. The *Memorandum* also warned against the use of the word ‘Return’ to describe the goal of Christian unity efforts, as this word could give the impression that ‘we are determined to maintain our positions, leaving them to cross the divide between us without taking the smallest step in their direction.’⁶⁵ However, the memorandum did not limit itself to mere stylistic suggestions. In fact, it affirmed the ‘legitimacy of a triple pluralism: liturgical, canonical and theo-

60 Karim Schelkens, ‘L’affaire de Rhodes au jour le jour. La correspondance inédite entre J.G.M. Willebrands et C.-J. Dumont’, *Istina*, 54 (2009), 253-77. See also the documentation in ACCQOE, Dossier 4.

61 ‘You will remember that after the unfortunate incident in Rhodes you asked me whether under those circumstances we could go on with our Assisi preparations. At that time I was of the opinion that it would still be desirable to have this meeting, envisaged for such a long time (...) Unfortunately, in the meantime the situation has changed. And this malaise has become all the greater because in these four weeks since the broadcast [of Radio Vaticana], no effort has been made on the Roman Catholic side to clarify *publicly* the present confused situation’, Harms to Willebrands, 1.10.1959, in ACCQOE, Dossier 4.

62 *Note du comité directeur de la conférence catholique pour les questions œcuméniques sur la restauration de l’unité chrétienne à l’occasion du prochain concile*, 15.6.1959, and its translations into Italian, German and English in KWA, Dossier 34.

63 De Mey, ‘La préparation intensive’.

64 *You Will Be Called Repairer of the Breach: The Diary of J.G.M. Willebrands 1958-1961*, ed. by Theo Salemink (Leuven: Peeters 2009), p. 76.

65 *Note du comité directeur*, § 4-5.



logical',⁶⁶ as well as the need for the Catholic Church to revise the relationship between the local church and the universal church and the doctrine on the episcopate. The *Memorandum* was sent to Rome and, once translated into several languages, was also sent to many bishops, inviting them to use these suggestions in their speeches and pastoral letters in preparation for the council.⁶⁷ It remains difficult to measure the concrete impact of this initiative, but certainly, as the French historian Étienne Fouilloux has defined it, the *Memorandum* constituted a sort of 'votum antepreparatorium' of Catholic ecumenism in view of the council, a remote source not only for the decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, which it anticipated in many points,⁶⁸ but also for some of the major decisions of Vatican II.⁶⁹

With the creation of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, it seemed that the purpose of the CCEQ was now obsolete. Many members of the CCEQ were in fact involved in the council's preparatory commissions, and most of them in the new Secretariat chaired by Cardinal Bea. The effort to renew Catholic doctrine, which the members of the CCEQ had pursued since the beginning of their experience, thus continued in Rome. This was true for almost everyone except Yves Congar, who found himself as a consultor in the crucial preparatory theological commission, but relegated to a totally marginal and silent role.⁷⁰ Dumont, on the other hand, in the ranks of the Secretariat, was able to make a greater contribution to the preparation of the Council, and with him many of the protagonists of the CCEQ: Jaeger, Charrière, Höfer, Boyer, Volk, Stakemeier, Davis, Vodopivec, Bellini, Thijssen, Dumont, Hamer, Bévenot. Willebrands himself was appointed Secretary of the new body.⁷¹ This made it very difficult for them to organise the annual meetings of the CCEQ, which was dissolved in 1964. However, the CCEQ's most important contribution to the preparation of the council was no longer its annual study sessions, but rather its diplomatic efforts, i.e. the intensification of relations with international ecumenical associations, in order to achieve a real handover with the Secretariat for Christian Unity. An example of this, in addition to the above-mentioned contacts with the ILAFO, is the meeting with the WCC theologians on the theme of the Lordship of Christ, originally planned for October 1959 in Assisi. As mentioned, the meeting was cancelled following the Rhodes incident, but in May 1961 it was finally possible to hold

66 Note du comité directeur, § 14.

67 In Rome the *Memorandum* was sent to the Holy Office, to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and to the Secretary of State Tardini, who was also president of the council's antepreparatory commission.

68 Peter De Mey, *Johannes Willebrands*, especially pp. 56-68.

69 Étienne Fouilloux, 'Mouvements théologico-spirituels et concile (1959-62)', in *A la veille du Concile Vatican II. Vota et réactions en Europe et dans le catholicisme oriental*, ed. Mathijs Lamberigts, Claude Soetens (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 185-99 (pp. 197-98).

70 Fouilloux, *Yves Congar*, p. 225-40.

71 For a complete list of the members and consultants of the Secretariat, see Velati, *Dialogo e rinnovamento*, pp. 103-10, whereas pp. 18-25 provide a detailed reconstruction of the selection process of each member.

it: the originally planned topic was, however, shelved, replaced by another urgent topic, namely 'religious freedom', a crucial issue at the council.⁷² This meeting was extraordinarily valuable for Bea's Secretariat, since, although there was a sub-commission within the Secretariat in charge of dealing with religious freedom, the Conciliar Regulations did not provide for the possibility of direct input from non-Catholics during the preparatory work. In this sense, the semi-official character that has always characterised the CCEQ proved indispensable for the Secretariat, which took advantage of it to maintain the possibility of informal meetings shared with Geneva. This was the reason why the CCEQ survived even in the difficult years of preparation for the Second Vatican Council, namely to facilitate the transition and handover in ecumenical contacts between the CCEQ and the Secretariat and with the sole purpose of building an important legacy for its future work.

Conclusion

One of the biggest problems faced by the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions in its journey was having to reconcile different sensitivities and working methods. These differences were directly related to the different degrees of maturity of ecumenical awareness in the various countries. This was particularly evident in the difficulty of presenting a common response to the issues discussed by the WCC from Evanston onwards. To force the situation, Willebrands often appealed to Congar who, however, interpreted the results of the CCEQ's work according to his own very personal syntheses and reflections. Willebrands' dependence on Congar and Dumont is undeniable. Even the reconstruction of the genesis of the *Memorandum on the Restoration of Christian Unity* for the Council makes it clear that it was less a collegial work of the CCEQ than the reflection of its main author, Christophe-Jean Dumont. Certainly, those ideas reflected Willebrands' thinking, or rather, Willebrands was willing to be imprinted with the theology of the two Dominicans and learned ecumenism from them. Like Willebrands, many other CCEQ members went through the same transformation process. It is precisely for this reason, therefore, that some revisionism is needed on the particular perspective used in this contribution (and simplified for reasons of space) to illustrate the activities of the CCEQ during the 1950s. The ideas expressed in the *Memorandum on the Restoration of Christian Unity* were Dumont's ideas, it is true, but at that point they did not represent his positions alone. Although there were still strong disagreements with some minority members,

72 S. Scatena, *La fatica della libertà. L'elaborazione della dichiarazione 'Dignitatis Humanae' sulla libertà religiosa del Vaticano II* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003).



such as Charles Boyer or the journalists of the Herder Korrespondenz,⁷³ the ecumenical sensibility expressed in the *Memorandum* fully reflected the results of years of theological discussion and exchange within the CCEQ. It is true that this common reflection was probably dominated by the ideas of Dumont and Congar, but it is nevertheless the fruit of a collegial path. Thus, in the decade preceding the Council, the CCEQ represented a masterpiece of ecumenical training for its own members who would later become *periti* and conciliar fathers. The result of this preparatory work, for which these theologians had been trained for years, was to be seen at Vatican II, not only in the decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, but more generally in most of the documents and constitutions of the Council.

73 Among them the convert Johannes Peter Michael, who in 1957 was severely dismissed by Willebrands because he had tried to denounce to the Roman authorities the predominance of Congar within the CCEQ. See Marotta, *Gli anni della pazienza*, pp. 299-317.