

THE GENESIS OF THE CONCILIAR STATEMENTS REGARDING THE MUSLIMS

Joseph Farrugia

Nowadays it is no longer surprising to read about Christians and Muslims assembling for encounters in friendship, committing themselves to search for mutual understanding and uttering words of reciprocal appreciation if not, indeed, admiration.

People have come to expect to hear formerly unheard of protestations of esteem and respect issuing from both the Islamic and Christian sides engaged in inter-faith dialogue.

Catholics have become accustomed to learn about the Holy Father welcoming exponents of the Islamic religion and calling upon the Catholic faithful to emulate their Muslim neighbours in their sincere devotion to God and in the firmness of their commitment to live in consonance with their religious beliefs.

Nevertheless, if one were to look back over the fourteen centuries or so of Christian-Muslim history, one would realize with astonishment how far we have come. Throughout these centuries the prevailing attitude of both religions towards one another was one of mutual disregard with spasmodic episodes of violent polemics and even open hostilities. Misunderstandings, misjudgements and mistrust were the order of the day, that is, of each day.

Then, about twenty-five years ago, the wholly unexpected happened.

An ecumenical council of the Catholic Church was convened at the Vatican. Its brief was Church renewal. The world of the non-Christians and their religions as such could not be further from the mind of those who were entrusted with the preparatory work. Nevertheless, once the conciliar ball got rolling, a confluence of 'unforeseen' insights in the Church's relation to the world and startling socio-political events pushed the status of the non-Christians vis-à-vis the Church to the foreground and, quite suddenly,

JOSEPH FARRUGIA, born at Victoria Gozo, on February 19, 1954, is a Lecturer in Dogma and Fundamental, Theology and Ecumenism at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Malta. He is the author of *The Church and the Muslims*, issued 1988.

Islam and the Muslims¹ emerged as a conciliar theme.

Much went into the conciliar discussions concerning this theme, and many unexpected ups and downs at times favoured, at other times threatened its tempestuous evolution.

Nevertheless, the end-result were two official statements² in which, for the first time in its history, the Catholic Church recognized the presence of spiritual and moral truths in the Muslim faith, confessed the Church's esteem thereof, and called for Islamic-Christian dialogue and collaboration.

The story behind, and leading to, the first tentative texts which subsequently developed into the definitive texts concerning Islam and the Muslims is extraordinary, significant and most revealing.³

Four months after the unexpected announcement of his decision to hold an Ecumenical Council,⁴ Pope John XXIII constituted a Pre-preparatory Commission⁵ to give initiation to the preparations for the Council. An invitation was made to the episcopate throughout the world, to the Roman authorities, to various superiors of religious orders and to Catholic universities and faculties to send their proposals for the definition of the concrete programme of the Council.⁶ The answer to this invitation, taking the form of proposals, wishes and requests, was massive.⁷

1. In its discussion of the final draft of the Declaration on non-Christian religions the respective sub-commission opted in favour of the adjective *Muslim* when speaking of persons adhering to Islam and the adjective *Islamic* when speaking of things since these terms were considered as being of standard usage in this way among the Muslims. Hence: *muslimi* for the Muslims and *islamicus* for their religion or their faith. Cf. R. CASPAR, "La religion musulmane", in A.-M. HENRY (dir.), *Vatican II. Les Relations de l'Eglise avec les Religions non chrétiennes* (= *Unam Sanctam* 61) (Paris 1966) 207.

2. The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions *Nostra aetate*, n.3; and the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, n.16.

3. The desire of Pope John XXIII had merely been that the coming Council should give a new and positive definition to the attitude of the Church towards the Jewish people. "Giovanni XXIII, in un primo tempo, aveva inteso e desiderato semplicemente una dichiarazione sull'atteggiamento della Chiesa verso il Popolo dell'Antico Testamento, ma nel corso del Concilio, soprattutto nella discussione del relativo schema, i Padri conciliari chiesero che si preparasse una dichiarazione più ampia, che comprendesse pure le religioni non cristiane in generale." A. BEA, "La Chiesa di fronte alle religioni non cristiane", *La Civiltà Cattolica* III/117 (1966) 454-455.

4. "Primus Oecumenici Concilii nuntius", *Acta et Documenta Concilio Vaticano II apparando*, vol. I, series I (ante-paeparaatoria) (Vatican City 1960ss) 3-6. The announcement was made in the Basilica of St Paul just outside Rome on January 25th, 1959.

5. "Constitutio Commissionis Antepaeparaatoria", *ibid.* pp. 22-23. The commission was actually erected on May 17th, 1959.

6. "Litterae, quibus Exc.mi Episcopi et Prelati rogantur communicare suas animadversiones, concilia et vota circa res et argumenta quae in futuro Concilio Oecumenico tractari poterunt" in *Acta et Documenta*, vol. II, series I (ante-paeparaatoria), pars I, p.x. Cf. also: vol. III, p.xiii; vol. IV, pars I, pp.xi-xii.

7. These are published in the fifteen impressive volumes published from 1970 onwards by the Polyglotta Vaticana under the title *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando*.

1. The First References to Islam

It appears that the very first references to specifically Islamic matters in relation to the forthcoming Council were those made by some bishops and prelates charged with pastoral activity in predominantly Muslim mission countries. These references to Islam and the Muslims were very, very few indeed and constituted only a few sparsely scattered paragraphs in the thousands of pages that made up the volumes of proposals, wishes and requests sent from all over the world to the pre-preparatory commission.

From *North Africa* there arrived four contributions. The apostolic vicar of Heliopolis in Egypt expressed the desire that experts and theologians inquire into the attitude to be held regarding how the Church is viewed by Mohammedans and other 'bona fide' infidels and, also, regarding what relations is the Church to assume with men locally esteemed for their spiritual import.⁸ That of Benghasi, Libya, called the Council's attention to the need of having Catholic experts in Islamic matters able to contest the ever increasing studies in Islam.⁹ The bishop of Oran, Algeria, addressed himself to that which he termed as "the peril of Islamic expansion in Africa and elsewhere". This expansion was being partly helped by what he described as "the naivety of too many Catholics who believed that they should never speak of Islam except in terms of publicly and gratuitously granting it a spiritual value equal to that of Christianity". After referring to "the insuperable boundaries between the dogmas of the two religions" and criticising the above described attitude for its effect of strengthening the Islamic errors by praising them, he asked: "Why not condemn in Islam that which should be condemned?"¹⁰

8. A. HUBERT, Ap. Vic. of Heliopolis: "Optandum est... b) quamobrem optandum est ut peritissimi, et theologi praeclari et docti inquirant quid cogitandum sit de talibus factis actualibus: 1) Quomodo apparet Ecclesiae Dei in sua vita quotidiana, Mahumetanis vel aliis infidelibus bona fide, et quomodo iudicatur ab eis;... 2) Quid de relationibus Ecclesiae cum aliis viribus spiritualibus, quae etsi non desint erroribus, tamen multis his incolis apparent ut fax et regimen vitae et intellectus", *Acta et Documenta*, vol. II, series I (antepreparatoria), pars V, p. 398.

9. E.A. GHIGLIONE, Ap. Vic. of Bengasi, Ap. Adm. of Derna: "Mentem Patrum Concilii ad mundum Islamicum velim revocare cum praesenti tempore magis augeantur in dies studia islamica et ex nostris saepe non habeantur viri periti qui de re islamica veleant decertare". *Ibid.*, p. 276.

10. B. LACASTE, Bishop of Oran: "Oserai-je aborder le problème missionnaire en terre d'Islam? Nos missions, cruellement dévastées par le communisme, risquent de faire perdre de vue le péril que constitue l'expansion islamique en Afrique et ailleurs. Tandis que le communisme, fier de ses conquêtes gigantesques, emploie toutes les ressources d'une propagande incomparable, l'Islam, hier humilié, relève aujourd'hui la tête, encouragé d'une part par la diplomatie communiste, malgré les démentis officiels d'une press gagnée à sa cause, et d'autre part, chose curieuse, par la naïveté de trop nombreux catholiques qui croient ne devoir jamais parler de l'Islam qu'en lui octroyant publiquement, alors que rien ne l'exige, une valeur

More to the west the archbishop of Rabat, in Morocco, spoke with regard to missionary activity amongst Mohammedan workers and explained that since in his Mohammedan region the working place provided the only possibility for an intimate conversation between Mohammedan workers and the Catholic priests, the latter should be permitted to follow the life of the workers, working with them in the offices...¹¹

From *West Africa* the bishop of Bathurst in Gambia, after declaring that he had many Mohammedans in his diocese, informed that missionaries did not directly preach the Gospel but performed works of charity, less intent on acquiring conversions than on instilling in the Mohammedans a remembrance of gratitude towards the Christians whom they, mostly ignorant on both Mohammed and Jesus Christ, tended to identify with western culture. Consequently, the bishop suggested that in the Council, Church and Mohammedan doctors discuss the problems of the propagation of materialism "which both Christians and Mohammedans oppose", and the position of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin in the Qur'an.¹² The bishop of Niamey, Niger, substantially converged with the former when he suggested that the Church should seek that which unites and

spirituelle égale à leurs frères chrétiens d'avoir autant de force dans foi et de vigueur dans leurs espérances que les Musulmans eux-mêmes!

"Il y a bien, direz-vous, pour leur éviter semblables excès, la croyance au Fils de Dieu. Ils vous répliqueront que pour les Musulmans, le Christ, s'il n'est pas Dieu, est le plus grande de leurs prophètes. Il y a aussie Marie, Mère de Dieu, insisterez-vous. Ils vous répondront: 'Pour les Musulmans, Marie est comme pour nous la Vierge Immaculée!' Comme si les trois principaux mystères du catholicisme ne tracaient pas une ligne de démarcation infranchissable entre les dogmes des deux religions comparées!

"Un judaïsme rabbinique du VII^e siècle, assorti de quelques séquelles nestoriennes, ne doit tout de même pas faire oublier aux catholiques la richesse unique qu'est, dans l'économie du salut, le Christ et son Eglise. Pourquoi, sous prétexte de ne pas froisser l'amour-propre de ces hommes qui sont nos frères en humanité, fortifier l'erreur par des louanges qui sont, trop souvent, le fait de notre ignorance religieuse ou celui d'ambitions temporelles fort suspectes. Pourquoi ne pas condamner dans l'Islam ce qui est condamnable? Comme nous l'écrivions au début, proclamer la vérité, à tel moment de l'histoire, est la première des charités", *Ibid.*, p. 114.

11. L.A. LEFEVRE, Archbishop of Rabat: "Inter tales opifices arabicae gentis quales invenimus in nostra regione mahumetana, officina quidem est unicus locus possibilis colloctionis inter sacerdotem catholicum et opifices mahumetanos, cum aliqua spe mutuae confidentiae et proximitatis. Quomodo pastor oblivisci posset hos homines praesertim miserabiliores et pauperiores ius habere ad lumen evangelii?"

"Ad tale arduum et periculosum apostolatatum sane et longa probatio necessaria est..." *Ibid.*, p. 315.

12. M.J. MOLONEY, Bishop of Bathurst: "— Missionarii evangelium Mahumetanis directe non praedicant. Sunt contenti caritatis operibus e.g. orphanatrophiiis, nosocomiis, scholis. Grata beneficiorum memoria tantum, minime conversio, consequitur. — Christianis et cultus Occidentalis in animis Mahumetanorum idem significant. — Ecclesia, in Africa, plerumque commercium habet tantum cum Mahumetanis ineruditis — cum illis qui doctrinam neque Jesu Christi neque Mahumed intelligunt....

not that which separates her from the Mohammedans. For example he mentioned the common attitude against atheism and communism.¹³

Still in West Africa, the bishop of Umuahia in Nigeria, appealed on the need of finding a way "to combat the danger of the doctrine of Mohammed" especially by preparing priests specifically for this task.¹⁴ The apostolic prefect of Makeni, Sierra Leone, declared that too much intercourse between the two religions could lead to "religious syncretism" to the detriment of authentic truth and unity. He considered that it would be better "to seek the errors and fables which are found in the text of the Coran and in the Islamic traditions and clearly demonstrate and refute them" given Christian charity and due politeness.¹⁵

From *East Africa*, the apostolic vicar of Rumbek, Sudan, lamented that in his country those who favour Islam had better social conditions and higher probabilities of social advance in society.¹⁶ The bishop of Zomba, Mozambique, inquiring after the best way of conducting the Mohammedans to the doctrine of Christ, proposed the creation of a commission or institute for the studying of this problem. The aim would be at the same time "to combat the heresy (of Mohammedanism) and formulate a method of evangelization particularly adapted for the conversion of the Mohammedans".¹⁷ The bishop of Gulu in Uganda also expressed the need

"Itaque omni cum reverentia moneo ut si fieri potest doctores Ecclesiae, et maxime ii qui in doctrinis Mahumetanorum versantur, in concilio cum doctoribus Mahumetanorum disceptent, praecipue de his questionibus: a) de propagatione Materialismi – cui et Christiani et Mahumetani resistent; b) de statu Domini Nostri Jesu Christi et Beata Mariae Virginis in 'Koran',” *Ibid.*, p. 215.

13. C. QUILLARD, Ap. Pref. of Niamey: Under the heading *Commercium cum Mahumetanis* he writes: "quaerendum est potius quae sunt communia inter nos quam quae nos separant. Duo sunt quae unioni favent: certamen contra atheistas et contra communistas". *Ibid.*, p. 92.

14. N. NWENDO, Bishop of Umuahia: Under the sub-title *De actuositate negotiisque Ecclesiae* he writes: "Ut afferatur methodus pugnandi periculum Macometi doctrinae, specialiter de praeparandis sacerdotibus ad hoc munus", *Ibid.*, p. 353.

15. A. AZZOLINI, Ap. Pref. of Makeni: "Quaerendum videtur medium doctrinaliter sanum – et quidem praestantius – quam quod recenter apparuit in publicationibus crebriusque conventibus ubi Monotheismus islamicus saepius aequiparatus fuit Monotheismo Christiano et 'pons' ad istum, cum et contra Mahumetana conceptio errorem involvat quoad Naturam et Vitam Intimam Dei, et concessionem et dissimulationem quorundam Catholicorum loco favendi Veritati et Unioni aleam praebeant Macometane pravitate confirmandae vel quemdam syncretismum religiosum inducant. Via aptior forte quaerenda est ad errores et fabulas, quae in Coranico Textu et traditionibus islamicis inducta sunt, clare ostendendas et refellendas, salva semper Christiana Caritate et integra urbanitate", *Ibid.*, p. 436.

16. I. DUD, Ap. Vicar of Rumbek: "Maior problemata in Africa sunt *Communismus et Islamismus*.... Islamismus (contrary to communism which made headway amongst the higher educated) offert meliores condiciones sociales et opportunitates iis qui in iisdem scholis ad Islamismen inclinat", *Ibid.*, p. 466.

17. L.P. HARDMAN, Bishop of Zomba: "Quae est via optima Mahumetanorum, praesertim in territoriis Africae habitantes, ad Christi doctrinam adducendi? Ut haec via invenietur, valde

of giving special attention to the problem of discerning the appropriate means for converting the Mohammedans.¹⁸ The apostolic pro-prefect of Eldoret, Kenya, after noting the widespread and numerous Mohammedan conversions, converged with the above bishops on the need of giving attention and study to the problem of “conducting the Mohammedans to the true faith” and of “confronting the danger of the perversion of the faithful”.¹⁹

The apostolic vicar of Mogadishu in Somalia, on the other hand, decried the widespread negative Christian attitude towards the Muslims and insisted that the Christians should also consider the several positive elements present in the Islamic religion and should underline the analogies that exist between Islam and Christianity. He then spoke about the work of his missionaries which was not that of direct evangelization but rather of charitable activities which lead to some conversions and created much sympathy for the Christian religion.²⁰

urgetur commissio vel institutum speciale cuius sit investigare principia fundamentalia doctrinarum et methodum evangelizationis Mahumetanismi; invenire media particularia huius haeresis oppugnandae, et formare methodum evangelizationis Mahumetanorum conversioni specialiter adaptatam. Cum Mahumetani B. M. Virginem honore speciali prosequuntur, haec commissio vel institutum Matri omnium hominum sit dedicatum”, *Ibid.*, p. 371.

18. I.B. CESANA, Bishop of Gulu: Under the heading *De Propaganda Fide* he suggests: “Speciatim considerandum esse videtur problema de convertendis macometanis ac media proponenda, si quae adesse videantur”, *Ibid.*, p. 513.

19. P. CULLEN, Ap. Pro-Pref. of Eldoret: “Cumlate, numeroque conversorum crescenti, Mohamedanismus apud Africanos indigenos Africae tam Occidentalis quam Orientalis divulgatus sit, mihi videtur bonum esse ut commissio sine mora statuatur; quae commissio hoc periculum diligenter inspiciat. Insuper Ordinarios certiores faciat quae necessaria sint ad praedavendum hunc periculum perversionis fidelium, et quomodo Mohamedani ad veram fidem perducentur”, *Ibid.*, pp. 265-266.

20. F. FILIPPINI, Ap. Vicar of Mogadishu: Under the heading *Apostolato fra i Musulmani* he writes: “Da 46 anni vivo fra i Musulmani. Di solito si vede in loro soltanto il male; si è convinti che vi è nulla da fare per la loro conversione; si parla sempre male del loro fondatore, Maometto, e del Corano. Si considerano nostri nemici. Con questi sistemi penso che non si farà mai nulla e ci odieranno sempre.

“Secondo il mio modo di vedere, non bisogna guardare soltanto al male; ma bisogna considerare anche il bene che Maometto ha fatto: distrusse l'idolatria, ha diffuso il culto del vero Dio – come gli ebrei. Il Corano ha dei buoni principi e delle verità, in gran parte prese dall'Antico Testamento ed anche dal Nuovo. Si può osservare nei singoli maomettami il bene che fanno: pregano, vanno alla moschea, fanno elemosine, digiunano, e si amano.

“Per cui i nostri sentimenti verso di loro dovrebbero essere di molto comprensione, di compatimento e di grande carità. I nostri discorsi dovrebbero far risaltare il bene ed il vero che vi è nella loro Religione, sottolineando le analogie fra essa ed il Cristianesimo.

“Bisogna poi fare del bene a tutti, specialmente ai malati, ai poveri, ai bambini abbandonati, con ambulatori.... e quanto la carità di Cristo può suggerire.

“Con queste Opere Assistenziali e di carità i Missionari.... hanno ottenuto degli ottimi risultati: sono molto stimati e bene voluti...; non si preoccupano molto della Religione. Si hanno anche alcune conversioni e molti simpatizzanti della nostra Religione. Abbiamo così un certo numero di cristiani somali impiegati negli uffici del Governo, anche in posti di responsabilità, e godono stima. Tutte le autorità, anche le più alte ci apprezzano e ci vogliono bene.

From *South East Asia* the answers to the invitation of the preparatory commission consisted of two proposals. The internuncio in Pakistan echoed the need for institutions for deeper study of Islamic doctrine and expressed the need of inquiring after the possible ways of converting the Mohammedans.²¹ The apostolic prefect of Sukabumi in Indonesia, after indicating that he had already spent over twenty years amongst "very fanatic" and mythically inconvertible Mohammedans, expressed his deep desire that Rome "promotes some action, discreet but well ordered to stir Islamic souls" especially through the activity of missionaries truly dedicated, pastorally, to the Mohammedans.²²

This contribution from Indonesia exhausts the paragraphs that constitute the proposals, wishes and requests sent by bishops and other prelates with regard to Islam and the Muslims.²³ An analysis of all the

"Questo è il frutto che la Missione ha fatto ai Somali Musulmani.

"Penso che questo sia l'apostolato migliore da usare con i nostri fratelli musulmani", *Ibid.*, pp. 445-446.

21. E. CLARIZIO, Ap. Internuncio in Pakistan proposes that: "Viae conversionis mahometanorum studio perquirantur. Institutiones ad doctrinam islamicam penitus cognoscendam opus dantes, maximis auxiliis corroborentur", *Acta et Documenta*, vol. II, series I (antepreparatoria), pars IV, p. 433.

22. N.J. GEISE, Ap. Pref. of Sukabumi: "Vivens per plus quam 20 annos inter Mahumentanos satis 'fanaticos', quotidie oro Deum Optimum Maximum ut Roma instituat aliquam actionem discretam sed bene ordinatam ad permovendas animas islamiticas. Mythos de inconvertibilitate Mahumetanorum nimis debilitat actionem nostram. Haec actio videtur esse restringenda ad explicationes Ethicae Naturalis, ne Mahumetani ira exardescant. Humiliter rogo ut talis actio, licet indirecta, a Roma missionariis commendetur utpote vere missionalis. Non pauci missionarii parvipendunt talem actionem, non directe intentam ad baptismum, cum sequela uti in Indonesia - et vidi hanc rem etiam in aliis regionibus islamiticis - quod nihil faciunt pro Mahumetanis", *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271.

23. At this stage it should be noted that positive, even if indirect, reflections and proposals were also made by several Catholic universities and faculties.

1) The *Pontifical Gregorian University* (Rome) proposed the introduction, in the ordinary curriculum of theological studies, of an introductory course in non-Christian religions. Cf. *Acta et Documenta*, vol. IV, series I (antepreparatoria), pars I, 1, pp. 74-75.

2) The *Pontifical Lateran University* (Rome) called for the consideration of the history, religion, culture, psychology, customs and traditions of the various peoples, in the formation of priests, to the better service of the Gospel and the Church which, after all, is catholic by nature and shouldn't be foreign to any people. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 175-177.

3. The *Pontifical Athenaeum 'De Propaganda Fide'* (Rome) also called for deeper attention to the "doctrines and traditions proper to the various peoples always in relation to Christianity which is the fullest realization of all the truths of any culture". Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 495-496.

4) The *Catholic University of Paris* submitted two proposals governing the relation of the Church to non-Catholics: "Respuatur omnis doctrina quae usui coactionis temporalis ac temporalis faveret ad propagandam sustinendamque Ecclesiam catholicam". And: "Concilium veram tolerantiam propugnet quae non sit tantum concessio ad tempus respectu opportunitatis, sed iurium conscientiae et personae humanae dignitatis rationem habeat". *Acta et Documenta*, vol. IV, series I, pars II, p. 499.

contributions discloses several important indications. *Firstly*, considering the large amount of paper that arrived at the pre-preparatory commission's offices from all over the world, the few pages that constitute the proposals, wishes and requests regarding Islam – and indeed all the other non-Biblical religions – demonstrate that Islam occupied a relatively humble place in the spheres of interests pertaining to the bishops and organisms consulted. In fact only some bishops and prelates from mission countries in Africa and South East Asia, and some Catholic universities, offered any considerations and suggestions related, directly or indirectly, to Islam and the Muslims.²⁴

Secondly, both the underlying motive and the articulated perspective of the contributions are predominantly “missionary”: the origin and the end of the proposals, wishes and requests are the conversion of the Muslims to Catholicism. Hence, when these proposals, wishes and requests dealing with the Islamic religion came up for classification in the pre-preparatory stage, it was only natural for them to be grouped and inserted into the chapter on the missions.²⁵

5) The *Pontifical Athenaeum of Poona* (India): “...; pressius quoque determinetur habitudo inter unicam Religionem revelatam eiusque depositum fidei ex una parte, et alias religiones earumque valores morales et religiosos ex altera; desideratur praeterea adaequator declaratio dogmatis ‘extra Ecclesiam nulla salus’”. *Ibid.*, p. 727.

6) The *Catholic University of Nijmegen* (the Netherlands) called for the studying of comparative religion; *Ibid.*, p. 479.

7) The *Catholic University of Lovanium* (the Congo) made the most remarkable contribution of all when it proposed that “the Council.... declares that even in non-Christian religions there is the influx of supernatural grace” and indeed “a preparation for the Gospel”. “Cum viri scientifici historiae comparativae religionum periti nostris diebus omnes agnoscant magnas religiones non-christianas plura elementa valoris authentice religiosi continere et cum habitus mere negativus erga easdem homines bonae voluntatis a sola vera religione catholica potius avertat quam ad eam conducatur, inspecto insuper emolumento quod pro vero bono naturali ac supernaturali humanitatis obveniret ex consociata omnium religionum reluctatione adversus atheismum! nostra aetate grassantem, in votis est ut Concilium, reiterata monitione de indifferentismo in re religiosa vitando, nihilominus etiam declaret in religionibus, etiam non-christianis, agnosci posse influxum gratiae supernaturalis, immo et ‘praeparationem evangelicam’ (cf. iam S. Iustinus, *Apol. II*, 13; *MG* 7, 466)”. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

24. Cf. CASPAR, *Unam Sanctam* 61, 201-202.

25. *De missionibus inter Afros*: (5) Ecclesia in Africa plerumque commercium habet tantum cum Macometanis ineruditis, nempe cum illis qui doctrinam neque Iesu Christi, neque Macometi intelligunt. (6) Cum late, numeroque conversorum crescente, Macometi doctrina apud Afros divulgata sit, bonum esset si Commissio sine mora statueretur quae Ordinarios certos faciat de mediis ad fidelium perversionem praecavendam et Macometanorum conversionem attingendam.

De missionibus inter Macometanos: (1) Foveatur conversio macometanorum. (2) Vitetur syncretismus religiosus et via aptior quaerenda est ad uxores et fabulas quae in Corano et traditionibus islamicis inductae sunt, clare ostendendas et refellendas, salva semper caritate. (3) Saepe desiderantur viri catholici periti qui de re islamica valeant decertare. (4) Si fieri potest doctores Ecclesiae et maxime ii qui in doctrinis Macometanorum disceptent praesertim a) de propagatione materialissimi; b) de statu Domini Nostri Iesu Christi et B.M.V.

Thirdly, one gets the impression that the very consideration which the bishops and prelates had given to Islam and which was then transformed into the lines sent to the pre-preparatory commission, had arisen from conditions that had somehow made this consideration unavoidable. These circumstances appear to have been of an adverse nature, such as: the absolutely overwhelming predominance of the Islamic religion; the mythical and unflinching loyalty of the Muslims to their religion; a possible feeling, justified or not, of unwarranted difficulties that Catholic pastoral activity had to confront, and so on. This impression is furthermore strengthened by the fact that no bishops from Europe or America felt the need to call for the consideration of anything that had to do directly with Islam and the Muslims.

Fourthly, although the nature of the contributions is basically pastoral, they do contain some theological references that regard both the Islamic religion in itself, and also, supposed theological – even if rudimentary – convergences and analogies between Islam and Christianity.²⁶ These theological references are latent in the desire of justifying a given stand taken by the contributor in favour of or against a given attitude towards the Islamic religion and its followers.

Fifthly, the proposals, wishes and requests range from an unequivocal call for a clear demonstration and refutation of the “errors and fables” present in the Qur’an and the Islamic traditions to the less apologetic and more open desire for a recognition of those elements which are not so foreign to and incompatible with Christianity.²⁷ Indeed two basic attitudes predominate. One is fundamentally *negative* and views Islam and the Muslims in terms of “peril”, “perversion”, “errors and fables”, “heresy” and “fanaticism”; for this attitude, too much contact between Islam and

in ‘Koran’. (5) Maior caritas habeatur etiam cum Macometi asseclis et analogiae inter Christi et Macometi doctrinam exprimentur. (6) Missionarii evangelium Macometanis directe non praedicant, sunt contenti caritatis operibus, sed ex his grata beneficiorum memoria tantum, minime conversio, consequitur. (7) Ob analogias cum Macometanorum doctrina ne obliviscamur profundas discrepationes cum doctrina christiano-catholica. (8) Christianitas et cultus occidentalis in Macometanorum animis idem significant. *Acta et Documenta*, series I (antepreparatoria), Appendix Voluminis II, pars II, pp. 640, 641-642.

26. Cf. above the contributions of the Bishop of Oran (Algeria), of the Apostolic Prefect of Makeni (Sierra Leone), of the Bishop of Zomba (Mozambique) and of the Apostolic Vicar of Mogadishu (Somalia).

27. “De l’ensemble de ces voeux, par ailleurs assez disparates, deux attitudes se dégagent. La première et la plus souvent exprimée est plutôt négative et prolonge les tendances apologetiques des siècles passés: l’Islam est une erreur absolue qu’il faut réfuter, un danger pour l’Eglise qu’il faut combattre. La seconde reconnaît dans l’Islam des lumières de vérité et des analogies avec le Christianisme qu’il faut développer. On retrouvera ce clivage dans les attitudes des Pères du Concile,” CASPAR, “La religion musulmane”, *Unam Sanctam* 61, 202.

Christianity can only lead to "religious syncretism".²⁸ This basically negative attitude prolongs the apologetic tendencies of past centuries which invariably viewed Islam as a danger to Christianity and the Church, as a 'new' religion which not only denied the chief dogmas of Christianity but even endeavoured to take the place of the religion of Christ.²⁹

The second attitude is more *positive* and disposed to recognize in Islam those rays of truth and analogies with Christianity which make possible between them a rapport of cooperation with regards to various problems such as the struggle against materialism and atheism.³⁰ This favourable spirit on the part of some bishops and prelates definitely constituted a progress in the attitude of the Church towards Islam.

However when the contributions regarding the Islamic religion and its adherents, after being classified and elaborated by the pre-preparatory commission into "proposita et monita", were submitted to the relevant preparatory commission,³¹ the latter suppressed all references to Islam and to other non-Christian religions. The proposals, wishes and requests had been included in the chapter on the missions. But the preparatory commission for the 'Schema on the Missions' decided in favour of a more generic and less particularized study of non-Christian religions.³² Consequently, Islam and the Muslims did not appear in the schema dealing with the missions and, hence, on the agenda of the Council.

When, indeed, Islam and the Muslims do make their appearance in the Council hall, it would not even be with reference to the schema on the missions!

2. The Emergence of Islam in the Council Hall

The first references to the Muslims appeared in the debates in connection with a draft on the attitude of the Church towards the Jews, during the second session of the Council.

28. Cf. *Acta et Documenta*, vol. II, series I (antepreparatoria), pars IV, pp. 270-271; pars V, pp. 114, 265-266, 353, 371, 436.

29. G.C. ANAWATI, "Excurs zum Konzilstext über die Muslim", *LThK, Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, II, p. 485. Also in H. VORGRIMLER (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, III (N.Y./London 1969) 151.

30. Cf. *Acta et Documenta*, vol. II, series I (antepreparatoria), pars V, pp. 92, 215, 445-336.

31. When the classification of the material that had reached the Pre-Preparatory Commission from all over the world was concluded, the *motu proprio* "Superno Dei nutu", 5th June 1960, gave initiation to the immediate preparations for the Council. Ten commissions and three secretariats were created for the task of the redaction of the first schemas to be submitted for Conciliar discussion. Among the commissions there was one charged with the missions. Cf. *AAS* 52 (1960) 433-437. It was on to this commission that the "proposita et monita" dealing with Islam and the Muslims were passed.

32. CASPAR, *Unam Sanctam* 61, 202.

The origin of the draft on the Jews goes back to a very personal desire of Pope John XXIII who, profoundly moved by the various sufferings to which the Jewish people had for centuries been submitted, yearned for a more just and loving attitude from the Christians towards them.³³ This desire assumed its first concrete terms when John XXIII commissioned Cardinal A. Bea, who already headed the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, with the preparation of a draft declaration defining the inner relations between the Church and the people of the Old Testament.³⁴ Thus the intention behind the initiative of the Pope was essentially pastoral.

However the papal commission had hardly begun to take on flesh that an indiscretion alerted the Arab world's attention to the intended pronouncement.³⁵ The Arab leaders and the Arab press misconstrued the intended statement as "tantamount to a political recognition of the State of Israel by the Holy See and thus as condoning the injustice which a number of Moslems driven from their homes and their land by war have undoubtedly suffered".³⁶ The stubborn hostility of the Arab world, however, did not succeed in obstructing the Sub-Commission entrusted with drawing up the preliminary document so that the first draft of a *Decretum de Iudaeis* was worked out by December 1961.³⁷ This document was then passed on to the Central Preparatory Commission³⁸ for eventual submission to the Council fathers and subsequent discussion during the first session of the Council.

In the meantime the Arab diplomatic and propagandistic activity against the Council statement "in favour of the Jews" was getting more

33. "È e rimarrà grande merito di Giovanni XXIII essersi reso conto di questo secolare problema e averne compresa tutta l'importanza. Fu lui che con personalissima decisione, tolse dalla liturgia del Venerdì Santo l'espressione *pro perfidis Iudaeis*, fonte di tanti malintesi. Procedendo anche oltre, diede personalmente l'incarico di preparare per il Concilio un apposito schema." A. BEA, "Il Concilio e la fraternità fra gli uomini", *Civiltà Cattolica*, 115/II (1964) 219-220.

34. This commission was made orally on September 18th, 1960. Cf. W. BECKER, "Die Erklärung über das Verhältnis der Kirche zu den nichtchristlichen Religionen", *Catholica* 20 (1966) 108.

35. Cf. J.M. OESTERREICHER, "Erklärung über das Verhältnis der Kirche zu den nichtchristlichen Religionen. Kommentierende Einleitung" in *LThK, Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, II, p. 415. Cf. also in H. VORGRIMLER (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, III, p. 18. Henceforth all references to Oesterreicher will be made in this latter English edition of his article.

36. G.H. TAVARD, "The Council's Declaration on Non-Christians", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 3 (1966) 163.

37. OESTERREICHER, in *Commentary*, 40. Regarding the text of the draft *De Iudaeis cf. Acta et Documenta*, III, series II (antepreparatoria), pars II, p. 458.

38. This commission had been created by the *motu proprio* "Superno Dei nutu" with the task of seeing all the documents destined for submission to the Council Fathers. Cf. *idem*.

heated.³⁹ But it does not seem that it would have prevailed had it not been for the apparently unwitting aid given it by the World Jewish Congress which uninvitedly and imprudently announced the appointment of an Israeli government official as its representative to the Council. The political situation created thereby induced the Central Preparatory Commission in June 1962 to withdraw the draft decree from the Council's agenda.⁴⁰

As a consequence the *Decretum de Iudaeis* did not appear during the first session of the Second Vatican Council. But it was not doomed to the relative oblivion of the Vatican archives. It had persistent advocates, especially in Cardinal Bea. Moreover, press disclosures of Arab intrigues against the declaration had directed world attention to its importance and turned world public opinion in its favour. In the long run the personal intervention of Pope John XXIII, after a direct appeal by Cardinal Bea, brought the draft declaration once more before the Co-ordinating Commission and thus into the Council hall.⁴¹

During the intersession following the end of the first session of the Council an important event happened which favoured the work on the draft: the election to the papacy on June 20th 1963 of Cardinal Montini. Already Mgr. Montini, in his capacity of Under Secretary of State, had shown his interest in the religious values of the Islamic religion.⁴² After his election Paul VI will continue to give multiple testimony of his interest in Islam, and his discreet and indirect influence will be felt in the subsequent conciliar elaborations of the texts concerning non-Biblical religions and especially Islam and the Muslims.⁴³

Indeed, the attitude of Pope Paul VI is already decipherable in the allocation which he held at the opening ceremony of the second session of the Council. In this allocation he made very positive, even if cautious, references to non-Christian religions "that conserve the sense and the concept of God as One, Creator, Provident, Highest and Transcendent" and "adore God with acts of true piety" and "base their principles of moral and social life on such beliefs and practices". Paul VI declared that the

39. Cf. J.M. OSTERREICHER, "Arabs and Jews", *The Tablet*, August 8 (1964) 895-896.

40. OESTERREICHER, in *Commentary*, 41-42.

41. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 43; A. BEA, "Il Concilio e la fraternità fra gli uomini", *Civiltà Cattolica* 115/II (1964) 220.

42. "Thanks in particular to his relations with Louis Massignon he had a more positive attitude to Islam", R. CASPAR, "Islam according to Vatican II", *Encounter* 21 (1976) 2. "Une vieille et profonde amitié l'avait d'ailleurs lié depuis longtemps à Louis Massignon et lui avait permis d'en comprendre la 'spiritualité de substitution' et d'en défendre les nobles initiatives en faveur des Musulmans." M. BORRMANS, "Le Pape Paul VI et les Musulmans", *Islamochristiana* 4 (1978) 1.

43. R. CASPAR, "Le Concile et l'islam", *Études* 1 (1966) 115.

Catholic Church does perceive in these religious expressions “lacunae, inadequacies and errors” but he continues: the Catholic religion gives its appropriate appreciation “to all that which in them is true, good and human”.⁴⁴

When the Council fathers met for this second session they had before them the drafts on the Church and on Ecumenism. Neither of these drafts yet mentioned Islam. The schema dealing with ecumenism included a chapter “on the attitude of Catholics towards non-Christians and the Jews in particular, (*de catholicorum habitudine ad non christianos et maxime ad iudaeos*)”.⁴⁵

This chapter was in fact none other than the first projected declaration on the Jews (*Decretum de Iudaeis*), readjusted in some parts, added to and incorporated as Chapter IV in the Decree on Ecumenism.⁴⁶ This draft still dealt practically exclusively with the Jews. However, it was inserted in the draft on ecumenism with a new introductory paragraph referring in generic terms to “those who are not Christians, but also honour God or, at least, impelled by God’s will, try according to their conscience to keep the moral law implanted in human nature”.⁴⁷

During the second session only the first three chapters of the Decree on Ecumenism were submitted for debate. However, at the first possible moment, even before the fourth chapter on the Jew had yet been presented

44. “Catholica Ecclesia etiam longius respicit, ultra christianae familiae fines; quomodo enim certis terminis circumscribat amorem suum, cum imitari debeat amorem Dei Patris, qui omnibus bona sua dilargitur (Cfr. *Matth.* 5,45), et sic dilexit mundum, ut pro eius salute unigenitum Filium suum daret (Cfr. *Io* 3,16)? Ultra igitur christiana castra oculos suos dirigit, et ad alias religiones respicit, quae servant sensum et notionem Dei, unius, creatoris, providentis, summi et rerum naturam trascendentis; quae Dei cultum exercent sinceræ pietatis actibus; quaeque ex iis usibus et opinionibus morum et socialis vitae praecepta derivant.

“In his quidem religionibus catholica Ecclesia cernit perfecto, nec sine dolore, lacunas, defectus et errores; facere tamen non potest, quin ad eas quoque mentem suam convertat, ut easdem certiores faciat, catholicam religionem debita aestimatione iudicare quidquid veri, boni et humani apud ipsas reperitur; itemque ut moneat, ad tuendum in hominibus huius temporis religionis sensum et Dei cultum – quod civilis cultus necessitas et officium postulant – se in prima acie stare, utpote quae Dei iura in homines validissime defendat.” *ASS* 55 (1963) 857-858.

45. Cf. *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, vol. II (Periodus secunda), pars V, pp. 431-432.

46. Cf. OESTERREICHER, *Commentary*, 46-47.

47. “Postquam de Oecumenismi Catholici principiis tractavimus, silentio praeterire nolumus, quod eadem, habita ratione diversae condicionis, applicari debent, cum agitur de modo colloquendi et cooperandi cum hominibus non christianis, qui tamen Deum colunt, vel saltem bona animati voluntate, legem moralem hominis naturae insitam, pro conscientia servare student.

“Maxime autem hoc valet cum de Iudaeis agitur, quippe qui cum Ecclesia Christi speciali ratione coniunguntur.” Cf. note 45.

for discussion, those Council fathers who were contrary to the declaration on the Jews rose up in unison against Chapter IV. They emphasized that the Church's attitude towards the Jews was outside the scope of ecumenism which addressed itself to the separated Christians. But the basic and most inductive argument was that the Middle Eastern current political and social situation was such that this text was bound to be misunderstood as politically favourable to the Jews as a political entity and detrimental to the Muslims.⁴⁸

The Patriarch of Antioch Maximos IV, the foremost advocate of the inopportuneness of the declaration, said, moreover, that "if one wants to speak of the Jews, one must also speak of the other non-Christian religions, and especially of the Muslims, who number 400 million and amongst whom we live as a minority".⁴⁹ Several other Council fathers spoke also on these lines⁵⁰ adding that such religions as Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism should be mentioned in the text since "the Church recognizes those seeds of truth present in the various religions which dispose for the acceptance of the Gospel".⁵¹

It is worthy of notice that the objections against this second draft were basically two and that these were primarily of a political nature. First, it was emphasized that one cannot speak of the Jews and remain silent on the other non-Christian religions, particularly Islam. Secondly, it was pointed

48. Cf. the speech made by the Patriarch of the Syriac Rite in Antioch, Cardinal Tappouni, *Acta Synodalia*, vol. II, pars V, pp. 527-528; that made by the Patriarch of Alexandria, Stephanos I, *Ibid.*, pp. 541-542; and that made by the Melchite Patriarch of Antioch, Maximos IV, *Ibid.*, pp. 542-545.

49. "Ensuite, si l'on veut parler des juifs, il faut aussi parler des autres religions non-chrétiennes, et surtout des musulmans, qui sont au nombre de 400 millions et au milieu desquels nous vivons en minorité" (*Patr. Maximos IV*). *Ibid.*, p. 544.

50. E.g. *Cardinal E. Ruffini*: "Si Oecumenismo additur cap. IV, in quo peculiaris et benigna mentio fit Iudaeorum, cur non nominantur illi, quam plurimi, qui adhaerent, et saepissime bona fide, ceteris religionibus?...", *Ibid.*, p. 529. Also *Cardinal P.T. Doi*: "Proponimus... Ut in cap. IV, post tractationem de Iudaeis, addatur nova paragraphus de habitudine catholicorum ad ceteros homines non-christianos". *Ibid.*, p. 540. *Patriarch A. Gori*: "...in Concilio Oecumenico, vel omnes confessiones non-christianae nominandae sunt, vel nulla", *Ibid.*, p. 557.

51. *Cardinal P.T. Doi*: "Insuper, brevis mentio facienda videtur magnorum systematum religiosorum et ethicorum, quae per multa saecula influxum profundum exercuerunt in populos non-christianos, ut v.g. apud nos Buddhismus et Confucianismus. Breviter ergo ostendatur quod Ecclesia catholica debito modo aestimat germina veritatis in iisdem contenta quibus nempe secundum consilia Providentiae ad Christum praeparare videntur; et quod Ecclesia, per praedicationem doctrinae evangelicae, altissimis eorum aspirationibus satisfacere intendit". *Ibid.*, p. 540. *Cardinal L. Rugambwa*: "In campo missionali iam norma existit, traditionalis quae ab origine Ecclesiae agnita est: videte v.g. opera S. Iustini et aliorum Patrum Ecclesiae; et haec norma est: *Quidquid verum, quidquid bonum est super terram et in corde hominum, Christi est, semen Verbi est, et possumus addere: iam in patrimonium Ecclesiae a Christo ipso introducitur*". *Ibid.*, p. 556.

out that the political situation in the Middle East was so highly tensed that it was not opportune to speak of the persecutions against the Jews since this could easily be considered as unduly discriminatory to the Muslims who also considered themselves as victims of Jewish persecution.⁵²

It was in this boiling political context that Islam made its first controversial appearance in the Council *aula*. The roll of calls for the consideration not only of the Jews but also of the Muslims, of other religious adherents, and even of unbelievers,⁵³ was the resulting tremor of the encounter between theology and politics. That which had began as a pastoral desire for the modification of a popular theological attitude seen as unfair to the Jews⁵⁴ was confronted by a hostile political situation which perceived, in the pastoral initiative, not simply *religious* – as Cardinal Bea would insist in his future exposition of the draft⁵⁵ – but primarily political implications. For a time politics seemed to be holding theology in chains.⁵⁶ It was in what could be described as, the attempt to strike a compromising balance between the references to the Jews and the sensitive Muslims, and subsequently other non-Christians, that Islam made its emergence in the Second Vatican Council. Henceforth every mention of the Jews in the Council documents would be accompanied by appropriate references to Islam and the Muslims.⁵⁷

3. Expanding the Declaration to the Non-Christians

As already stated, the texts on Islam are exclusively the fruit of Conciliar activity. Several factors contributed towards their inception and evolution. These factors, including international political intrusions, the world press and other more spiritual interests, induced an astonishing transformation of the Declaration on the Jews as originally intended. This

52. Cf. speech made by Archbishop Heenan of Westminster to the 'Council of Christians and Jews' on March 5th, 1965, *Doc. Cath.*, n. 1424, col 654-656.

53. The Swiss Bishop Jelmini of Lugano thought it desirable that the Council speak not only about the Jews, but also about the adherents to Islam *and* even about unbelievers! "Non solum de Iudaeis nobis videtur esse loquendum, sed de Mahometanis et quidem in diebus nostris atheismi, de omnibus illis qui in Deum credunt et propter suam fidem in Deum persecutionem patiuntur," *Acta Synodalia*, vol. II, pars V, p. 601.

54. For example the accusation against the Jews of having committed deicide, cause of innumerable persecutions of Jews through the centuries.

55. "Ultimo: cum hic agatur de quaestione mere religiosa, patet nullum adesse periculum ne Concilium immisceatur arduis illis quaestionibus, quae respiciunt relationes inter nationes Arabicas et Statum Israel vel sic dictum Sionismum." *Acta Synodalia*, vol. II, pars V, pp. 484-485. Also p. 481.

56. A. WENGER, *Vatican II, Chronique de la Deuxième Session*, (Paris 1964) 175.

57. CASPAR, *Encounter*, 2.

transformation was characterized by two essentially correlative aspects. On the one hand there was a *change of orientation* so that from a declaration about Jews it became a declaration concerning non-Christians, Jews included. On the other hand, and as a necessary consequence of this, there was a *widening of perspectives* so that what was originally meant to deal solely and exclusively with Jews evolved into a statement about non-Christians in general and Hinduism and Buddhism, Muslims and Jews in particular.⁵⁸

This *change of orientation* and at the same time *widening of perspectives* was already decipherable by the end of the Second Session of the Council. From an independent *decretum de Iudaeis* treating exclusively of Jews, the declaration had become the fourth chapter of the schema dealing with ecumenism, headed by the title: *De catholicorum habitudine ad non-Christianos et maxime ad Iudaeos*⁵⁹ containing explicit, even if over-cautious and fleeting references to non-Christians other than Jews.

In his introductory elaboration of this draft on November 18th 1963, Cardinal Bea delineated the history of the declaration from its origin in John XXIII to the setbacks it had to suffer before it arrived in the Council hall. He elaborated on the Jewish question making a good case for it "with the authority he had as a great exegete"⁶⁰ and indeed limited himself to that which was exclusively of Jewish relevance. He did not make any mention of the other monotheistic non-Christians to whom the draft made fleeting reference in its first paragraph.⁶¹

This first paragraph constituted the introduction which tied the fourth chapter on non-Christians and especially Jews to the central and primary theme of the draft of the intended decree on ecumenism.⁶²

After having dealt with the principles of Catholic ecumenism we do not desire to pass over in silence the fact that these same principles, taking into account the diversity of conditions, should be applied with regard to the manner of dialogue and cooperation with non-Christians, who nevertheless honour God, or at

58. TAVARD, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 163.

59. *Acta Synodalia*, vol. II, pars V, pp. 431-432. This draft was distributed to the Council Fathers on November 8th, 1963.

60. R. ROUQUETTE, "La Deuxième Session", *Études* 320 (jan. 1964) 115.

61. *Acta Synodalia*, vol. II, pars V, pp. 481-485. "Il s'agissait essentiellement alors de se (le Concile) prononcer sur les Juifs, qu'une tenace tradition, à la fois populaire et liturgique, avait stigmatisés comme 'perfides' (c'est-à-dire parjures à la fois) et comme *déicides*...." J. MASSON, "La Déclaration sur les religions non-chrétiennes", *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 87/10(1965) 1068.

62. G. M.-M. COTTIER, "L'histoire de la Déclaration" in *Unam Sanctam* 61, 45.

least, animated by good will, seek to observe according to their conscience the moral law written in the nature of man. Now this is true, above all, when it concerns the Jews because these are tied to the Church of Christ by a special bond (*speciali ratione*).⁶³

It is to be noted here that the reference is made not to the non-Christian religions but to the non-Christians. Moreover the mention is generic and does not refer to any particular religious adherence.⁶⁴ This insertion was suggested by Cardinal Bea apparently as an explanation of the relevance of the statement on the Jews to the schema on ecumenism with which, it was then considered, lay the chance of guaranteeing the survival of the declaration on the Jews.⁶⁵ Thus it was with a rather low-key entrance that the short and generic statement on non-Christians made its way into the draft of the declaration on the Jews. Nevertheless, this does not in any way eliminate but rather enhances the remarkability of this event which saw through not only the survival of the declaration but also the stepping stone for the first formal recognition of positive spiritual and moral factors in the non-Christian sphere, that is, outside the ambit of Christianity and in the world of other religions.

When the second session of the Council came to an end on December 4th 1963, the first three chapters of the schema on ecumenism had already been accepted as a basis for further discussion, but the fourth chapter had not made it "for lack of time".⁶⁶ Only the procedural vote of acceptance of a given draft as a basis for future conciliar discussion would have withdrawn Chapter IV from the competence of the Co-ordinating Commission and turned it into an unalterable part of the Council proceedings.⁶⁷ As it happened, however, the Second Session ended without a discussion of the fourth chapter on the Jews and non-Christians but with an invitation to the Council Fathers to send their observations regarding it, in writing, to the relevant commission.⁶⁸

4. Pope Paul VI's Vision and Initiatives

During the Intersession following the Second Session, three events took place which, although not directly connected with the Council, would prove

63. Cf. note 47.

64. A.A. ROEST CROLLIUS, "Vaticano II e religioni non cristiane", *Rassegna di Teologia* VII/2 (marzo-aprile 1967) 65.

65. Cf. OESTERREICHER, in *Commentary*, 46.

66. Cardinal A. BEA in *Acta Synodalia*, vol. II, pars V.

67. Cf. OESTERREICHER, in *Commentary*, 54.

68. Cf. COTTIER, *Unam Sanctam* 61, 47.

to be determinant on the immediate redaction and final form of the text of the declaration on the Jews. All three events had their origin in the initiative of Pope Paul VI and attracted the attention of the world on the problem of non-Christian religions and, consequently, on the attitude of the Church towards the Muslims and their religion.⁶⁹

The brilliant idea of making a *pilgrimage to the Holy Land*, the “cradle of Christianity”⁷⁰, gave the Pope the opportunity of encountering the Jewish and the Islamic-Arabic world. The Pope made history with various actions, manifestations and statements of his during the pilgrimage⁷¹, and the world was moved by his courage and frankness especially in his appeals for peace. From Bethlehem he launched a message of peace to the Christians and to the world. In an explicit way he addressed himself to those who adhered to monotheism, among them the Muslims:

This respectful greeting, he said, we address in a particular way to whoever professes monotheism and with Us worships the one and true God, the living and supreme God, the God of Abraham, ... ‘the Most High God, the Creator of heaven and earth’ (Gen 14, 19). We Christians, instructed by revelation, know that God subsists in Three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but today we praise the divine nature as one, we proclaim the one, living and true God. May also to these peoples, worshippers of the one God, go Our wishes of happiness and peace.⁷²

The Pope had already anticipated the nature of this message to the Jews and the Muslims in his recent Christmas radio-message when he had said:

Our heart will stretch forth beyond the flock of Christ. It will have high and good thoughts about all the peoples of the earth, whether they be near or far away, to manifest to them Our

69. Cf. R. CASPAR, “Le Concile et l’Islam”, *Études* 324 (Jan 1966) 116.

70. M. MACCARRONE, *Il Pellegrinaggio di Paolo VI in Terra Santa*, (Roma 1964) 25.

71. “This Pope is a man of spirit. He is making history. Christendom is taking hold... of new powers of action.” Thus wrote the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of January 4th 1964. As cited in OESTERREICHER, in *Commentary*, 58.

72. “Ce salut déferent, Nous l’adressons d’une manière particulière à quiconque professe le monothéisme et avec nous rend un culte religieux à l’unique et vrai Dieu, le Dieu vivant et suprême, le Dieu d’Abraham, le Très-Haut, celui que justement sur ce sol – en un jour lointain que rappellent la Bible et le Missel – un personnage mystérieux, dont l’écriture ne nous a transmis ni la généologie ni la fin, et dont le sacerdoce royal a servi à qualifier celui du Christ lui-même, Melchisédech, célébra comme ‘le Dieu Très-Haut, créateur du ciel et de la terre’ (Cfr. *Gen* 14, 19). Nous chrétiens, instruits par la révélation, nous savons que Dieu subsiste en trois Personnes, Père, Fils et Saint-Esprit, mais toujours nous célébrons la nature divine comme étant unique, nous proclamons unique le Dieu vivant et vrai. Qu’à ces peuples adorateurs d’un Dieu unique aillent aussi Nos vœux de paix dans la justice,” *AAS* 56 (1964) 178.

sentiments of respect and love and also Our wishes of happiness and peace.⁷³

Both this previous message from the Vatican and the one from Bethlehem were in conformity with the attentive and respectful attitude of Paul VI towards "all men of good will"⁷⁴ including those "beyond the horizon of Christianity".⁷⁵ Indeed, referring to the religion of those non-Christians who retained the notion of the one God, supreme and transcendent, who worship Him and base their moral and social life on Him, Paul VI had said at the opening of the Second Session of the Council: the Church esteemed all that which in them was true, good and human.⁷⁶ On the Maundy Thursday following his pilgrimage he would again address himself to Jews and Muslims who had welcomed him in the Holy Land.⁷⁷ This address "to the believers in God" would in turn acquire a clearer context and a deeper elaboration on the following Easter Sunday when the Pope would declare that

"each religion possesses a ray of light which we must neither scorn nor extinguish even if it does not suffice to give a man that light which he is in need of nor to realize that miracle of Christian splendour wherein meet the truth and the life. Indeed every religion raises us towards the transcendent Being, the only reason of existence, of thought, of responsible action, of non-delusive hope.

73. "E il Nostro cuore si allargherà anche oltre l'ovile di Cristo, e avremo pensieri buoni e grandi per ogni popolo della terra, per i vicini e per i lontani, con senso di riverenza e di amore, e con augurio di bene e di pace," *AAS* 56 (1964) 62.

74. Cf. the radio-message that Pope Paul VI addressed on the very next day of his election: "Splendescat in hominum familia fidei et caritatis fulgidissima flamma, quae homines bona voluntate praeditos incendat, eorumque itinera collustret ad mutuam populorum coniunctionem provehendam, quaeque universis gentibus supernae benignitatis copiam, ipsumque Dei robur conciliet, sine quo nihil validum nihil sanctum", *ASS* 55 (1963) 577.

75. Cf. the *allocutio* which Paul VI made at the opening of the Second Session of the Council: "Catholica Ecclesia etiam longius respicit, ultra christianae familiae fines;..." *Acta Synodalia*, vol. II, pars I, 198.

76. "Ultra igitur christiana castra oculos suos dirigit, et ad alias religiones respicit, quae servant sensum et notionem Dei, unius, creatoris, providentis, summi et rerum naturam transcendentis; quae Dei cultum exercent sinceræ pietatis actibus; quae ex iis usibus et opinionibus morum et socialis vitae praecepta derivant.

"In his quidem religionibus catholica Ecclesia cernit perfectio, nec sine dolore, lacunas, defectus et errores; facere tamen non potest, quin ad eas quoque mentem suam convertat, ut easdem certiores faciat, catholicam religionem debita aestimationem iudicare quidquid veri, quidquid boni et humani apud ipsas reperitur;..." *Ibid.*, 198.

77. "Ed un saluto cordiale mandiamo anche, con memore riconoscenza, ai credenti in Dio, dell'una e dell'altra confessione religiosa non cristiana, i quali accolsero con festante riverenza il Nostro pellegrinaggio ai Luoghi Santi," *AAS* 56 (1964) 362.

Each religion is a dawn of faith, and we await its brightening into morn and into the radiant splendour of Christian wisdom”.⁷⁸

In all of these speeches, which he delivered at some critical stage in the evolution of the Council Fathers’ attitude regarding the intended pronouncement on the Jews and other non-Christians, the Pope; consciously or unconsciously, in just simply disclosing his mind and heart regarding non-Christians in general and monotheists in particular, succeeded to indicate – unobtrusively – the direction and content of the intended declaration on non-Christians and Jews, and thus helped in no small way towards the further definition of the conciliar document.

Translating his extraordinary statements into concrete action the Pope proceeded in the realization of his intention to create a *Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions*.⁷⁹ In his homily during the 1964 Liturgy of Pentecost, Paul VI announced the creation of the new secretariat, which he entrusted to Cardinal Marella, and indicating its purpose, declared: “No pilgrim, however distant, religiously or geographically, his country of origin, shall be completely stranger in this Rome, still faithful today to the historical design which the Catholic faith preserved for it as ‘*patria communis*’.”⁸⁰

Speaking to the Cardinals, some time later, the Pope elaborated on the actual task of the new Secretariat: “that it may lead to some sort of loyal and respectful dialogue with those who ‘still believe in God and worship him’....”⁸¹ The Pope continued by expressing his recognition of the fact

78. “Ogni religione ha in se bagliori di luce, che non bisogna ne disprezzare ne spegnere, anche se essi non sono sufficienti a dare all’uomo la chiarezza di cui ha bisogno, e non valgono a raggiungere il miracolo della luce cristiana, che fa coincidere la verità con la vita; ma ogni religione ci solleva alla trascendenza dell’Essere, senza di cui non è ragione per l’esistere, per il ragionare, per l’operare responsabile, per lo sperare senza illusione. Ogni religione è alba di fede; e noi l’attendiamo a migliore aurora, all’ottimo splendore della sapienza cristiana,” *AAS* 56 (1964) 394.

79. Cf. *Acta Synodalia*, vol. II, pars I, 9-13; *AAS* 55 (1963) 740-744.

80. “Vi daremo un annuncio a questo proposito (i.e. the universality of the Church and more precisely “lo sforzo che la Chiesa fa per accostare, anche con semplici contatti umani, gli appartenenti ad altre religioni”), affinché esso abbia voce e valore di Pentecoste; ed è questo: come tempo fa annunciammo, Noi istituiremo, e proprio in questi giorni, qui a Roma il “Segretariato per i non-Cristiani”, organo che avrà funzioni ben diverse, ma analoga struttura a quello per i Cristiani separati. Lo affideremo al Signor Cardinale Arciprete di questa Basilica, che alla saggezza e alla virtù, che lo fanno caro e venerato alla Chiesa romana, aggiunge una rara competenza dell’etnografia religiosa.

“Nessun pellegrino, per lontano che sia, religiosamente e geograficamente, il Paese donde viene, sarà più del tutto forestiero in questa Roma, fedele ancor oggi al programma storico che la fede cattolica le conserva di *patria communis*,” *AAS* 56 (1964) 432-433.

81. “Intanto, quale segno di quella universale sollecitudine che Ci fa interessare anche dei problemi e dei bisogni spirituali di tutti gli uomini, a somiglianza di quanto era stato già fatto per i Fratelli separati, con i quali continueremo con serenità gli amichevoli colloqui

that this Secretariat was born of the atmosphere of the Second Vatican Council, an atmosphere "of union and concord", but specified that its terms of reference were outside the Council itself.

The Secretariat for Non-Christians was precisely instituted by the Pope on May 19th 1964 and right from its beginning included a special section dedicated to Islam, a section which would in due time develop into a fully-fledged Commission for Islam dependent on the same Secretariat.⁸²

The aim of the Secretariat for Non-Christians got a solemn formulation and explication in the *Encyclical 'Ecclesiam suam'* which Pope Paul VI signed on August 6th 1964 and wherein he elaborated on and underlined the need of dialogue with all men. After referring to humanity in general the Pope turned his attention to those, also vast in number, who

"adore the one, supreme God whom we too adore. We refer briefly first to the children of the Hebrew people, worthy of our affection and respect, faithful to the religion which we call that of the Old Covenant. Then to the adorers of God according to the conception of monotheism, the Moslem religion especially, deserving of our admiration for all that is true and good in their worship of God. And also to the followers of the great Afro-Asiatic religions".

The Pope continued by saying that obviously the members of the Church cannot share in these various forms of religion. Nor could they give equal value to all forms of religion so that their followers are absolved from the duty to seek God in the perfect and definitive form in which he has revealed himself and in which he demands to be known, loved and served.

"But we do, nevertheless, recognize and respect the moral and spiritual values of the various non-Christian religions, and we desire to join with them in promoting and defending common ideals of religious liberty, human brotherhood, culture, social

avviati, Noi abbiamo determinato di istituire anche un distinto Segretariato per i non cristiani, che sia mezzo per venire a qualche leale e rispettoso dialogo con quanti 'credono ancora in Dio e lo adorano', per usare le parole del Nostro Predecessore Pio XI di felice memoria, nella Enciclica *Divini Redemptoris*.

"È chiaro che, data la sua precisa destinazione, questo Segretariato si colloca al di fuori del Concilio Vaticano II, ma esso è sorto dall' atmosfera di unione e di intesa, che ha nettamente caratterizzato il Concilio stesso.

"Con queste e con altre simili iniziative Noi pensiamo di dare una chiara dimostrazione della dimensione cattolica della Chiesa, che in questo tempo e clima conciliare non soltanto si stringe in vincoli interiori di intesa, di amicizie e di fraterna collaborazione, ma cerca anche al di fuori un piano di colloquio e di incontro con tutte le anime di buona volontà," *AAS* 56 (1964) 584.

82. Cf. M.L. FITZGERALD, "The Secretariat for Non-Christians is Ten Years Old", *Islamochristiana* 1 (1975) 87-88.

welfare and civil order. For our part, we are ready to enter into dialogue on these common ideals, and will not fail to take the initiative where our offer of discussion in genuine, mutual respect, would be well received.”⁸³

In his encyclical Paul VI provided what may be called a *theological* and at the same time *pastoral charter* expressing and explaining the new will for encountering, for listening, for understanding.⁸⁴ Without wanting to anticipate the pronouncement of the Council, the Pope sought to say something of those to whom this invitation for dialogue was addressed.⁸⁵ Evidently this initiative of Paul VI was bound to have a powerful influence on the task of the Council Fathers regarding the problem of non-Christian religions. And it did have! In fact all those who read and reflect upon the texts of the Council regarding non-Christian religions cannot fail to be struck by the convergence of attitudes and expressions that is found in the conciliar documents and the Pope’s statements.⁸⁶

5. The First Tentative Texts on Islam

The Second Session of the Second Vatican Council had been dominated by the schemes *de Ecclesia* and *de Oecumenismo*. Neither of them yet spoke of Islam.

83. “Circa nos deinde circulum itidem amplissimum prospectamus, qui a nobis est minus longiquus. Eo imprimis homines comprehenduntur, qui Deum unum et summum adorant, quem nos quoque colimus. Mentionem scilicet inicimus de filiis gentis Iudaeae, reverentia et amore nostro sane dignis, qui eam retinent religionem, quam Veteris testamenti propriam esse dicimus; deinde de iis, qui Deum adorant religionis forma, quae monotheismus dicitur, maxime ea qua Mahometani sunt astricti; quos propter ea quae in eorum cultu vera sunt et probanda, merito admiramur; ac demum de sectatoribus ampliarum religionum Africanarum et Asiaticarum. Liquet nos variis hisce religiosi cultus rationibus non posse assentiri, neque esse neglegentes et incuriosos quasi cunctae, suo quaequae modo, sint eodem loco habendae et quasi ii qui illas profitentur, sinantur non inquirere, num Deus modum ab omni errore immunem ac certum ipse revelaverit, quo cognosci velit, amari, ministrari. Quin immo, sinceritatis officio ducti, ea quae nos credimus, oportet manifestemus, videlicet veram religionem esse unam eamque esse christianam, atque spem habeamus fore ut ab omnibus, qui Deum quaerant et adorent, ut talis agnoscatur.

“Nolumus tamen reverenter non respicere bona spiritualia et moralia, quae in variis religionibus, christiano nomine non insignibus, insunt; una enim cum iis provere iuvat ac tueri alta et praeclara, quae in campo libertatis religiosae, fraternitatis humanae, eruditionis ac doctrinae, beneficentiae socialis et ordinis civilis sunt communia. Quod ad haec magna attinet, quae nobis sunt cum illis consociata, colloquium a nobis poterit fieri, neque omittimus, quominus eius copiam demus quotiescumque, mutua sinceraque reverentia servata, benevole accipietur.” *AAS* 56 (1964) 654-655.

84. Cf. M. BORRMANS, “Paul VI et les Musulmans”, *Islamochristiana* 4 (1978) 4.

85. Cf. COTTIER, *Unam Sanctam* 61, 54.

86. Cf. BORRMANS, “les Musulmans”, 5.

The first suggestion to build the text on the Jews into the schema on the Church apparently came out during one of the early sessions of the commission entrusted with the drawing up of the *decretum pro Iudaeis*.⁸⁷ Although there was no opposition to the idea in itself, it was held that this would not absolve the Secretariat for Unity from its duty to propose to the Council a text on the Jews of its own.⁸⁸

The idea appeared again during the discussion of the first three chapters of the schema on Ecumenism – which included as its fourth chapter the declaration on the non-Christians and the Jews. In his vigorous objection to the inclusion of the statement on the Jews in the proposed decree, the Melchite Patriarch Maximos IV argued that “if one really wished to speak of the Jews at the Council, that could be done either in the schema on the Church or in that of the Church in the Modern World”.⁸⁹

Moreover several Council Fathers had insisted that if the Council was to take an interest in any particular non-Christian religion it should either take an interest in all or in none at all. Several maintained the importance of an explicit reference to the Islamic religion.⁹⁰

In the meantime the Arab world had been stepping up its campaign against the intended declaration on the Jews. The overtures of Pope Paul VI to the Arab-Islamic world, the manifestations of “his personal concern for non-Christian religions”⁹¹, his appeals for peace and understanding throughout the world apparently failed to induce a relaxation in the Arab opposition to the intended conciliar pronouncement. Indeed, the particularly positive attitude of the Pope with regards to Islam especially became more and more evident when one considers the fact that it was he who “took the initiative of personally asking the conciliar commissions to prepare a text on Islam each time there was to be a mention of the Jews”.⁹²

During the Intersession following the Second Session, the commission entrusted with the preparation of the schema *de Ecclesia* introduced a small statement on Islam in the chapter dealing with the People of God. This

87. Cf. OESTERREICHER, in *Commentary*, 36-37.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

89. *Patriarch Maximos IV*: “Ce chap. IV doit donc d’urgence être élevé du schéma de *Oecumenismo*.”

“Si l’on tient cependant à le conserver pour une cause que nous ignorons, il faut a) d’abord l’insérer dans un autre schéma où il serait mieux à sa place, par exemple dans le schéma de *Ecclesia* en parlant de l’histoire du salut ou dans le schéma en préparation sur la *présence de l’Eglise dans le monde*, comme témoignage de l’Eglise contre les racismes”, *Acta Synodalia*, vol. II, pars V, 544.

90. Cf above notes 49, 50, 51, and 53.

91. “The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years”, *Pro Mundi Vita Bulletin* 74 (Sept.-Oct. 1978) 11.

92. CASPAR, *Encounter* 21 (1976) 2.

second chapter considered how the Mystery of the Church (first chapter) is accomplished in the course of history and in the realization of its own catholicity.⁹³ The text was inserted, more exactly, in the paragraph dedicated to the consideration of the relationships to the People of God of “those who have not yet received the Gospel”.⁹⁴ The text reads thus:

“The sons of Ishmael, who recognize Abraham as their father and believe in the God of Abraham, are not strangers to the Revelation made to the Patriarchs”.⁹⁵

A note was intended to indicate that these “sons of Ishmael” were actually the Muslims.⁹⁶ It was thus formulated so that the text on the Muslims in connection with the draft of the constitution on the Church could be presented to the Council Fathers for the Third Session of the Council.⁹⁷

The wounds inflicted by the opponents of the declaration on the Jews, in the meantime, were making themselves even more felt. When the Secretariat responsible for the schema on Ecumenism met to consider the controversial draft on the Jewish question it decided to maintain the text because of its importance and of the expectations it had raised in the world.⁹⁸ However, in order to “appease its enemies the text was not only watered down but also “banished” to the appendix of the schema on Ecumenism.⁹⁹ The latter would henceforth deal solely with *unity amongst Christians*. The appendix, called “Second Declaration” – the “First Declaration” being the one on Religious Liberty – would consider *not only the Jews but also the other non-Christian religions and “especially” Islam*.¹⁰⁰

When the “Second Declaration: On Jews and non-Christians” came before the Co-ordinating Commission it underwent another “whittling

93. G. PHILIPS, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero*, vol. I (Milano 1969) 51.

94. Cf. *Schema Constitutionis De Ecclesia*, Caput II, *De Populo Dei*, n. 16 (De non-christianis): “Ii tandem qui Evangelium nondum acceperunt, ad Populum Dei diversis rationibus ordinantur (Cf. S. THOMAS, *Summa Theol.* III, q. 8, a. 3, ad 1)...” *Acta Synodalia*, vol. III, pars I, 158-192, here 189.

95. “Nec revelationi Patribus factae omnino extranei sunt filii Ismael, qui, Abraham patrem agnoscentes, in Deum quoque Abrahe credunt.” *Ibid.*, p. 190.

96. “Haec phrasis respicit ad *Islamistas*,” *Ibid.*, p. 206.

97. The schema on the Church had dominated the Council discussions of the Second Session and at that time it contained just four chapters and made no mention of the Muslims. Subsequently it had six chapters and finally it had eight chapters and it was at this stage that the first insertion on the Muslims was made, in time for the initiation of the Third Session on the 14th September 1964.

98. Cf. COTTIER, *Unam Sanctam* 61, 47.

99. OESTERREICHER, in *Commentary*, 59.

100. Cf. COTTIER, *Unam Sanctam* 61, 48.

down”¹⁰¹ so that the draft which was presented by Cardinal Bea during the Third Session of the Council was actually the fruit of not only the Secretariat for Unity but also, and more immediately, the Co-ordinating Commission under whose hands it suffered the latest definition.¹⁰² It appeared in the Council *aula* in three parts: the *first* section dealing with the question of the Jews, the *second*, the relations with non-Christians and more particularly with Muslims, and the *third* condemning discriminations for racial and religious motives.¹⁰³

As has already been indicated, the evolution of the drafts that brought forth the texts which included statements on Islam and the Muslims was sharply dominated by the Jewish problem. The development of the declaration from a document intended solely as a statement regarding the Jews to a document dealing with “Jews and non-Christians” suffered many setbacks. But these setbacks spurred the Council Fathers on to newer efforts and deeper reflection and these gave forth fruits which, although not instantly ripe, did constitute a step forward in the tortuous path which the declaration was destined to follow.

Just as it was in the context of tense opposition to the declaration that the first *oral* conciliar references to Islam and the Muslims were made, so it happened that it was also in the implacable continuation of this opposition that the first tentative statements on the Muslims were written.

Thus it can be said that it was during the Intersession between the Second and the Third Sessions of the Council that the definitive conciliar initiatives regarding Islam and the Muslims were taken.¹⁰⁴

From what we have just seen above, and from what followed in the next Sessions of Vatican II¹⁰⁵, one cannot but conclude that the textual statements dealing with Islam and the Muslims contained in the conciliar documents promulgated in the Second Vatican Council are, in a most particular way, an achievement of the Council. It is a fact that, at its inception, the Council had no intention of considering Islam or any other

101. Cf. OESTERREICHER, *Commentary*, 60.

102. Cf. *Acta Synodalia*, vol. III, pars II, 559.

103. *Declaratio altera: De Iudaeis et de non-christianis*: n. 32 De communi patrimonio Christianorum cum Iudaeis; n. 33 Omnes homines Deum ut Patrem Habent; n. 34 Omnis species discriminationis damnatur, *Acta Synodalia*, vol. III, | pars II, 327-329.

104. Cf. CASPAR, *Unam Sanctam* 61, 203.

105. This second part of the evolution of the Council statements on Islam and the Muslims will be the object of a second article to be published in the subsequent issue of *Melita Theologica*.

non-Biblical religion. Indeed, the first distinctive feature which sets these texts apart from the other conciliar statements is that they did not constitute an object of intent in the preparatory and early stages of the Council and are wholly the result of an evolution of successive drafts determined by a course of events which could not have been anticipated.

Joseph Farrugia,
Department of Dogma
Faculty of Theology,
University of Malta,
Msida.