

Article

The Holy Spirit and Scripture: André Scrima's Contribution to Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*

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Abstract: This article explores André Scrima's contribution to the final version of Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*. In so doing, the article shows the way in which Bishop Neophytos Edelby's speech in aula on 5 October 1964, which was (co)authored by Scrima, led to changes in the draft of *Dei Verbum* Chapter III, §12. That being the case, the recovery of the pneumatological dimension of Christian exegesis by *Dei Verbum* III, §12 was largely the result of Scrima's interventions in the conciliar debates during the third session of Vatican II. In addition, the article focuses on Scrima's reflections on the final version of *Dei Verbum* in the years following the closure of Vatican II.

Keywords: André Scrima; Vatican II; *Dei Verbum*; Orthodox Christianity



Citation: Coman, Viorel. 2023. The Holy Spirit and Scripture: André Scrima's Contribution to Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*. *Religions* 14: 1454. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14121454>

Academic Editor: Andrés Jaime Valencia Pérez

Received: 25 October 2023

Revised: 20 November 2023

Accepted: 21 November 2023

Published: 23 November 2023



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Sixty years after Vatican II, the history of the Council, as well as its theological legacy, continues to be a permanent point of reference for the Catholic Church. Since its closure in 1965, Vatican II has been subject of a continuous stream of research, which has analyzed the history of the event, the redaction history of its documents, the role of key players in the Council, and its larger theological, ecumenical, and interreligious impact (Alberigo and Komonchak 1995–2006; O'Malley 2008; Melloni et al. 2015; Rush 2019; Gaillardetz 2020; Clifford and Fagioli 2023). In past decades, the opening of new archives related to the pivotal figures at Vatican II (especially Yves Congar, Pierre Duprey, Christophe-Jean Dumont, Emmanuel Lanne, and others) brought a considerable increase in the amount of excellent research works on the Council (see, for example, Figoureux 2017; Skira and De Mey 2020). But even if libraries' shelves are filled to overflowing with books on Vatican II, there are still gaps in the literature on the Council that merit further research interest. It is true that the contribution of non-Catholic observers at Vatican II has attracted a lot of attention from scholars and experts in the field (Velati 2014; De Mey 2013, 2023; Bordeianu 2018; Hopf 2019; Coman 2020a, 2020b, 2021). Yet, certain gaps in the research remain nevertheless. The contribution of André Scrima (Eastern Orthodox) to Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* III, §12 is an example in this vein. The present article fills this lacuna and shows that the recovery of the pneumatological dimension of Christian exegesis by *Dei Verbum* III, §12 was largely the result of Scrima's interventions in the conciliar debates during the third session of Vatican II, in close collaboration with Bishop Neophytos Edelby of the Melkite Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch. In addition, this article explores Scrima's critical reading of the final version of *Dei Verbum*, which is part of the larger story of the Orthodox reception of Vatican II in the years following the closure of the Council. In doing so, this article enlarges the existing scholarly literature on André Scrima's dialogical theology (Tătaru-Cazaban and Dumbravă 2019; Tătaru-Cazaban 2020, 2022).

1. Personal Representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras at Vatican II

André Scrima was born on 1 December 1925, in Transylvania, a former province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that reverted to Romania after World War I. After studies in

philosophy (1944–1948) at the University of Bucharest, his intellectual formation continued at the Orthodox Theological Institute (1949–1956), also in the capital city of Romania. Scrima's interest in theology grew out of his participation in the meetings of the Burning Bush Group, which emerged in 1945 around the Antim Monastery in Bucharest. The group brought together 14 Romanian intellectuals, some of them clerics, who were interested in conversations of a theological and mystical nature, as a form of spiritual survival during the very difficult years of the newly installed atheist communist regime in the country (Scrima 1996; Enache 2005; Ladouceur and Giocas 2007; Petcu 2013; Ladouceur 2019; Oprea 2019). In 1958, all the members of the Burning Bush Group except Scrima, who lived abroad at the time, were arrested by the communists, who unjustly accused them of conspiracy against the political regime, and they were incarcerated for a few years. What is equally relevant is that Scrima's participation in the meetings of the Burning Bush Group consolidated his decision to embrace monastic life in the 1950s at the Antim Monastery. Toward the end of 1952, after almost two years spent at the Neamț Monastery as a high school teacher for future clerics, Scrima returned to Bucharest to assume the position of chief librarian of the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate. In 1956, when he was acting also as an interpreter for Patriarch Justinian of the Romanian Orthodox Church, to whom he served as a close adviser, Scrima had the opportunity to meet two Indian professors who helped him obtain a scholarship to pursue a doctorate at the Benares Hindu University. In fact, this was his opportunity to escape the communist regime and flee abroad. After his doctoral studies in India, at the beginning of the 1960s, Scrima decided to reside at the monastery Deir-El-Harf in Lebanon, where he helped the monastic revival in the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch. At the same time, Scrima was affiliated with the Istina Center in Paris, travelling quite often between Lebanon and France (Tofan 2021).

On 25 January 1959, Pope John XXIII announced publicly his intention to convene a new Ecumenical Council for “the enlightenment, edification, and joy of the entire Christian people” and as a “renewed cordial invitation to the faithful of separated Churches to participate with us in this feast of grace and brotherhood, for which so many souls long in all parts of the world” (Alberigo 1995, p. 15). While many were enthusiastic about the new Council's call to unity, most of the Orthodox Churches initially looked upon it with disfavor and suspicious eyes, showing resistance to the idea of sending representatives to Vatican II. They saw in the Council's agenda the revival of the unionist methods used by Rome in the past, especially at the Councils of Lyon II and Ferrara-Florence. The Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras (1948–1972) was among the very few Orthodox leaders who, right from the beginning, nurtured the ecumenical vision of reconciliation (Clément 1969; Payer 1986; Martano 1996; Riccardi 2020). Scrima, whom Athenagoras met in 1961, was one of the rare men who fully served the unique vision of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Impressed by his brilliant mind, strong devotion to the ecumenical cause, and excellent command of more than five foreign languages, including Arabic and Sanskrit, Athenagoras made Scrima an Archimandrite of the Ecumenical Throne and a close collaborator, entrusting him with the task of working as a Church diplomat for the relationships between Constantinople and Rome. His ecumenical work was crucial for the success of the most important events in Orthodox–Catholic relationships during the conciliar period: (i) the historic meeting between Athenagoras and Paul VI in Jerusalem (5–6 January 1964), on the occasion of the latter's pilgrimage to the Holy Land; and (ii) the solemn lifting of the mutual anathemas of 1054 between Rome and Constantinople at the end of Vatican II (7 December 1965). In 1964, Patriarch Athenagoras appointed Scrima as his personal representative at Vatican II.

As the personal representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras at the third (14 September–21 November 1964) and fourth sessions (14 September–8 December 1965) of Vatican II, Scrima played a major role in the debates that decided the final version of some of the most important conciliar documents: *Lumen Gentium*, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, and *Dei Verbum*. Like all the other non-Catholic observers at Vatican II, Scrima was “welcome as auditor at the public sessions of the Council and general congregations but could not participate in the work of the commissions” (De Mey

2023, p. 477). Nevertheless, the weekly meetings of the members of the Secretariat for Christian Unity with the observers, as well as private encounters and discussions of the conciliar fathers and *periti* with them, turned the non-Catholics at Vatican II (including Scrima) into influential figures. Giuseppe Alberigo did not hesitate to single out Scrima among the observers, whose contributions were decisive for the trajectory of some conciliar documents: “The Council was also the occasion for bringing into limelight a younger generation of theologians, who often made a fresher contribution to the discussions [...]. Among the observers, too, some high-ranking theologians stood out, for example, K. E. Skydsgaard, O. Cullman, and A. Scrima” (Alberigo 2006, p. 604).

2. Scrima’s Contribution to *Dei Verbum*

At the beginning of October 1964, the discussions of the conciliar fathers *in aula* turned to *De Revelatione*, the Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (known as *Dei Verbum*) (see Burigana 1998; Witherup 2014; Theobald 2009; Theobald 2015, pp. 183–203). From the first session of Vatican II in October 1962, the debates around the successive drafts of *De Revelatione*, particularly on its second and third chapters, were very much framed by the post-Tridentine polemics between Catholics and Protestants on Scripture vs. Tradition. This was also the case on 2 October 1964, when one of the last drafts of *Dei Verbum* was discussed during the 93rd General Congregation of Vatican II, which was presided by Cardinal Döpfner. Scrima, who was present *in aula*, approached Bishop Edelby and pressured him to intervene in the debates to show the limitations of the debates on Scripture vs. Tradition from an Eastern Christian perspective. As Edelby wrote in his journal on 2 October, “Archimandrite Scrima and Fr [Jean] Corbon draw our attention to certain aspects of the teaching of the Eastern Church that allow us to get out of the Scripture-Tradition dilemma in which post-Tridentine theology has been stuck” (Edelby 2003, p. 274). As a result, Bishop Edelby took the floor during the next general congregation (5 October 1964) and delivered “a speech on the traditional principles of the interpretation of the Holy Scripture according to the Eastern Church” (Edelby 2003, p. 276). His intervention had an important effect on the final form of the Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation, especially on Chapter III.

Opinions are divided when it comes to the author of the text of Edelby’s discourse *in aula*. In his *Carnets du Concile*, the French Jesuit theologian Henri de Lubac had no doubts that Scrima was the man behind the text read by Edelby *in aula*. As de Lubac pointed out, “9 October 1964: The text of the Edelby intervention (written by Msgr. Scrima) has been duplicated; a very general but remarkable synthesis on tradition and Scripture” (De Lubac 2007, p. 194). De Lubac’s opinion may be strengthened by the fact that Archimandrite André Scrima is mentioned as the author of the text in the copy of the Edelby intervention that is preserved in the Vatican Apostolic Archive (The Vatican Apostolic Archive 1964). However, in his *Souvenirs du Concile*, Edelby presents the text as the result of a collaborative work between him, Scrima, and Fr Corbon: “The discourse was prepared in collaboration with Archimandrite Scrima and Fr Corbon” (Edelby 2003, pp. 276–77). Fr Jan Corbon (d. 2004), who contributed to Edelby’s discourse *in aula*, was a Maronite Catholic priest, pertaining to the Dominican order. Whatever the truth, it is certain that Scrima played a major role in drafting the speech that Edelby read in front of the conciliar fathers on 5 October 1964. This means that he is either the author or co-author of the text that influenced the final version of *Dei Verbum*. Unfortunately, in his excellent article on the contribution of Edelby to *Dei Verbum*, Thomas J. McGovern made no allusion to the role played by Scrima in the redaction of the speech of the Melkite bishop (McGovern 1999). To this day, the article written by Thomas J. McGovern remains one of the best presentations and theological analyses of the Edelby intervention in the discussions on *De Revelatione*, showing how his discourse *in aula* influenced the final version of *Dei Verbum*, Chapter III, §12. McGovern’s silence can be explained by the lack of access to sources that confirm the (co-)authorship of Scrima. This article now turns to the content of text of Edelby’s speech *in aula*. In doing so, the article shows in fact the influence of Scrima—via Edelby—on *Dei Verbum* III, §12.

2.1. 5 October 1964: Discourse in Aula

The three-page Edelby discourse (see [AS III/3 1974](#), pp. 306–9) was divided into five very short sections, which explain the theological principles of the interpretation of the Holy Scripture in Eastern Christianity. A concise introduction showed Edelby's appreciation for the way the draft of *De Revelatione* II, §12 emphasized the importance of modern exegesis in the interpretation of Scripture: "No. 12, which deals with the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, contains excellent elements concerning to the contribution of human sciences to exegesis, in particular literary criticism." These lines are not included in the Latin version of the Edelby discourse. They were added by the author(s) to the French version: "Le n. 12 qui traite de l'interprétation de la Sainte Écriture contient des éléments excellents concernant l'apport des sciences annexes de l'exégèse, en particulier la critique littéraire" ([The Vatican Apostolic Archive 1964](#)). Nevertheless, Edelby was of the opinion that the lines exposing the theological criteria for the interpretation of Scripture were very weak (*timiditas*) by comparison and required further elaboration. Echoing the discussion he had with Scrima on 2 October, Edelby pointed to the fact that the timidity of this paragraph is explained by the difficulty of the Latin Church getting out of the post-Tridentine controversy on Scripture vs. Tradition, which remained completely irrelevant to Eastern Churches or to the new Churches of Africa and Asia. According to Edelby, it was necessary to abandon this obsession and enter the totality of the mystery of the Church, especially because it was the whole Church that was at stake in this scheme: "But the period of controversy with the Reformers must now be over. For the Eastern Churches, as for the new Churches of Africa and Asia, this preoccupation does not exist. . ." [*Atqui periodus controversiae cum Reformatorebus iam revoluta esse debet. Pro Ecclesiis orientalibus, sicut pro novis Ecclesiis Africae et Asiae, huiusmodi praeoccupatio non existit. . .*] ([AS III/3 1974](#), p. 306). The next paragraphs of the discourse unfolded the principles of an Eastern Christian interpretation of Scripture, whose theological and spiritual depth placed the issue under debate with a perspective that was new and enriching for many of the conciliar fathers present at Vatican II.

The first principle advocated the need to re-integrate the Holy Scripture within the mystery of the Church and depart from the artificial opposition between the Bible, the Church, and Tradition, which resulted from the nominalist and juridical mentality adopted by post-Reformation Western theology. What the first principle wanted to convey was that the reintegration of the Holy Scripture within the mystery of the Church requires an interpretation of the Bible that does not reinforce a disjunction between Christology and pneumatology. As Edelby pointed out, "one cannot separate between the mission of Holy Spirit from the mission of Incarnate Word" [*Separati enim non potest mission Spiritus Sancti a missione Verbi Incarnati*] ([AS III/3 1974](#), p. 306), precisely because "the goal of Christian exegesis, beyond the role of all the auxiliary sciences, is the spiritual understanding of the Holy Scripture in the light of the risen Christ, as our Lord himself taught the Apostles in Luke 24" [*praeter scientias auxiliares cuiusvis generis, finis ultimus exegeseos christianae est intelligentia spiritualis Sacrae Scripturae in luce Christi Resurrecti, sicut ipse Dominus noster apostolos edocuit iuxta Lucam, cap. 24*] ([AS III/3 1974](#), p. 306).

The second principle underlined the idea that "the Holy Scripture is a liturgical and prophetic reality" [*Sacra Scriptura est realitas liturgica et prophetica*] ([AS III/3 1974](#), p. 306). This is to say that "it is a proclamation rather than a written book" [*Est proclamatio potiusquam liber scriptus*] ([AS III/3 1974](#), p. 306). In other words, "the Holy Scripture constitutes the testimony of the Holy Spirit about Christ" [*Est testimonium Spiritus Sancti circa Christum*] ([AS III/3 1974](#), p. 307). The celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy is the privileged moment of this testimony. Edelby claimed that whereas post-Tridentine Western Church "sees the Holy Scripture as a written norm" [*Controversia autem post-tridentina videt praeprimis in Sacra Scriptura aliquam normam scriptam*] ([AS III/3 1974](#), p. 307), the Eastern Church considers "the Scripture as a consecration of the history of salvation under the species of the human word, which cannot be separated from the Eucharistic consecration in which is recapitulated the whole Body of Christ" [*videt in Sacra Scriptura consecrationem quamdam Historiae salutis sub*

speciebus verbi humani, quae separati non potest a consecratione eucharistica in qua recapitulatur totum Corpus Christi] (AS III/3 1974, p. 307).

The third principle takes the Eucharistic consecration in Eastern Christianity as a starting point. According to Edelby, just as the priest invokes the Holy Spirit to descend upon the gifts of bread and wine to transform them into the Eucharistic Body and Blood of Christ, so too the interpretation of the Holy Scripture requires an epiclesis that turns the written word into the living Word of God. Sacred Tradition is precisely the epiclesis that gives life to the words of Scripture: “*Tradition is the epiclesis of the history of salvation, the theophany of the Holy Spirit, without which the history of the world is incomprehensible, and Scripture remains a dead letter*” [Traditio igitur est Epiclesis historiae salutis, nempe theophania Spiritus Sancti sine qua historia mundi est incomprehensibilis, atque Sacra Scriptura remanet littera mortua] (AS III/3 1974, p. 307).

The fourth principle follows naturally from the previous one and speaks of “the totality of the history of salvation as a hermeneutical key to read and understand Scripture. As Edelby emphasized, “*Scripture ought to be interpreted in the context of the totality of the history of salvation*” [Sacra Scriptura interpretari debet in totalitate historiae salutis] (AS III/3 1974, p. 307), which comprises three main stages. The history of the Old Testament is the first stage, followed by the economy of the Incarnate Word and the advent of the Church. The epoch of the Church, which continues even today, inaugurated the economy of the Holy Spirit, whose work is to make present the economy of Christ and the power of his resurrection. Edelby concluded by saying that “this is the economy of the Holy Spirit, or Sacred Tradition in the epoch of the Church” [haec est oeconomia Verbi Incarnati, seu Sacra Traditio in aevo Ecclesiae] (AS III/3 1974, p. 307).

The fifth and last principle refers to the sense of mystery. In Eastern Christianity, the God who reveals himself to humanity is “*Deus absconditus*”. That being said, “*Revelation should not allow us to forget the depths of the life of the Triune God, from which the faithful live and which can never be exhausted*” [Revelatio nos oblivisci facere non debet abyssum vitae Dei, Uni et Trini, quam vivit populus fidelis, sed quam nullo modo exhaustire potest] (AS III/3 1974, p. 308). Differently said, “*Revelation is first of all ‘apophatic’,*” which means that “*it lives in the mystery before being expressed in words*” [Revelatio est imprimis ‘apophatica’, scil. quae vivitur in mysterio antequam verbis proferatur] (AS III/3 1974, p. 308). The apophatic characteristic of Divine revelation in the Church is the foundation of the richness of lived Tradition. In Edelby’s view, one of the difficulties is that theology in recent history tried to capture the mystery into conceptual formulas, although the fullness of this mystery transcends all theological notions and the very limitations of the words of the Holy Scripture. Therefore, the end of Edelby’s intervention argued that *De Revelatione* ought to affirm “the need to read the Holy Scripture ‘spiritually’, that is, in the Holy Spirit” [deberet, ni fallor, necessitate legend S. Scripturam ‘spiritualiter’, scil. in Spiritu] (AS III/3 1974, p. 309), especially because it is the Spirit who gradually actualizes in the Church the totality of the risen Christ.

The intervention of the Melchite bishop, drafted either by Scrima alone or in collaboration with Edelby and Corbon, did not remain without an impact upon the final version of *De Revelatione* (*Dei Verbum*), which was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 18 November 1965. The Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation engages with the principles for the interpretation of Scripture in Chapter III, §12. The first two sections of §12 speak of the usefulness of literary and historical tools throughout the exegetical process, whereas the third section refers to the theological criteria for the interpretation of Scripture as follows:

Further, holy scripture requires to be read and interpreted in the same Spirit through whom it was written. Consequently, a right understanding of the sacred texts demands attention, no less than that mentioned above, to the content and coherence of scripture as a whole, taking into account the whole church’s living tradition and the sense of perspective given by faith. It is the function of exegetes to work, in accord with these rules, toward a more perceptive understanding and exposition of the meaning of Holy Scripture, so that through their study, the Church’s judgement may mature. All

that concerns the way to interpret Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the Church, to which God has entrusted this commission and ministry of preserving and interpreting the word of God.

[Sed, cum Sacra Scriptura eodem Spiritu quo scripta est etiam legenda et interpretanda sit, ad recte sacrorum textuum sensum eruendum, non minus diligenter respiciendum est ad contentum et unitatem totius Scripturae, ratione habita vivae totius Ecclesiae Traditionis et analogiae fidei. Exegetarum autem est secundum has regulas adlab-orare ad Sacrae Scripturae sensum penitus intelligendum et exponendum, ut quasi praeparato studio, iudicium Ecclesiae maturetur. Cuncta enim haec, de ratione interpretandi Scripturam, Ecclesiae iudicio ultime subsunt, quae verbi Dei servandi et interpretandi divino fungitur mandato et ministerio].

(Lumen Gentium §12, [Tanner 1990](#), p. 976; emphasis mine)

In fact, the phrase about the need of the exegetes to read and interpret Scripture “in the same Spirit through whom it was written” constituted an addition made to the final version of the Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation during the weeks prior to its official promulgation. Undoubtedly, it was the immediate result of the 1964 Edelby discourse *in aula*. Indirectly, it represents Scrima’s contribution to the final version of *De Revelatione*.

It is perfectly true that the first draft of *De Revelatione* (October 1962) contained a few sections in Chapter V (*De Sacra Scriptura in Ecclesia*), §19 (*De exegetis catholicis*) that instructed theologians and scholars to interpret Scripture with the help of the Spirit in whom it was written, as well as in the light of the analogy of faith, the Tradition of the Church, and the norms of the Apostolic See (Rome). Unfortunately, the second draft of *De Revelatione* (May 1963) removed the lines about the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of Scripture from the paragraph on Catholic exegesis (chapter V, §19). The paragraph emphasized instead that the act of interpretation ought to be carried out according to the “norms of rational and Catholic hermeneutics, under the guidance of the magisterium of the Church.” In Chapter III, §12, the third draft of *De Revelatione* (July 1964) recovered some important exegetical principles from the first draft, especially the analogy of faith, the content of Scripture, and the Tradition of the Church. However, it was only after the Edelby discourse that the final drafts of *De Revelatione*, especially the last one (November 1965), added “the living tradition of the whole Church” as a hermeneutical and exegetical principle, in addition to the one that requires attention to “the content and coherence of scripture as a whole.” More important was the recovery of the pneumatological dimension of Christian exegesis, which was the result of the final suggestion made by Edelby in his speech.

2.2. October 1965: *De Revelatione*, Paul VI, and Scrima

As shown by the previous section, Scrima’s main contribution to *De Revelatione* (*Dei Verbum*) was made in the context of his participation in the third session of the Second Vatican Council, when Edelby’s speech *in aula* (co-/written by Scrima) in October 1964 led to some changes in the text of the conciliar document. Even though Scrima did not play any major role in the debates on *De Revelatione* in the fall of 1965, his name was mentioned in the course of the debates related to Paul VI’s intervention to amend the text of the document. During the fourth session of Vatican II, the text of *De Revelatione* was rediscussed *in aula* and new modifications were asked of by the conciliar fathers toward the end of September 1965. However, during mid-October 1965, Paul VI considered that it was opportune to intervene in the debates and ask for the improvements of some points in the schema (see [Theobald 2006](#), pp. 321–42).

Concerning the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, Paul VI wanted *De Revelatione* to emphasize that Tradition is broader than Scripture, because it contains certain divine truths that are not recorded in the Bible. His amendment was implemented in the final text of the schema, which made clear that the doctrine of the Church is not derived

from Scripture alone: “the church’s certainty about all that is revealed is not drawn from holy scripture alone” (*Dei Verbum*, Tanner 1990, p. 975). Furthermore, Pope Paul VI was of the opinion that the expression “*veritas salutaris*” [saving truth] needed to be changed in the chapter on the inspiration and interpretation of Scripture. According to the Pope, the draft on revelation restricted the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture to saving truth alone, whose content was left undefined. As a result of the Pope’s observation, an alternative formula was found and implemented in *De Revelatione* §11: “such truth as God, for the sake of our salvation, wished the biblical text to contain” (*Dei Verbum*, Tanner 1990, p. 976). As Anthony N. S. Lane pointed out, “this was meant to exclude any division of Scripture into inspired (inerrant) and uninspired (errant parts). The whole of Scripture is inspired by and has God as its author, but not in such a way as to remove human limitations” (Lane 2016, p. 309). The last major amendment of Paul VI referred to the historicity of the Gospels, asking the replacement of the formula “the evangelists tell us the honest truth about Jesus” with an expression saying that they communicate to us “what is true or worthy of historical faith” (Theobald 2006, p. 331). Therefore, the old version of §19 was rephrased to reflect the request of Paul VI: “the four gospels [...] are historical documents and faithfully communicate what Jesus, the Son of God, during his life among men and women, actually did and taught for their eternal salvation” (*Dei Verbum*, Tanner 1990, p. 978).

Due to the fact that the amendments proposed by Paul VI sided with the more conservative minority at Vatican II, many conciliar fathers from the progressive side were afraid that an intervention of the Pope in the development of the Council might lead to a new *Black Week*, similar to that during the fourth session (14–21 November 1964), which witnessed changes in the documents on the Church and ecumenism at the direct and indirect request of Paul VI. On 18 October 1965, Cardinal Suenens met Pope Paul VI and spoke to him about the consequences of such an intervention. The Pope “told him [Suenens] that he was fully aware that [his intervention] could trigger a new *Black Week*, but that he had thought the matter over carefully before God; he judged that it was his duty to act, and that for the supreme good of the Church he had to run the risk of facing a new *Black Week* (*nouvelle settimana nera*)” (Prignon 2003, pp. 176–77). At the end of their discussion, Paul VI told Cardinal Suenens that he would see Bea before taking a final decision. The suggestion of Cardinal Suenens was that “the Pope consult Scrima, an Orthodox; since the latter had not yet returned from Istanbul, Bea had not been able to speak with him about *De revelatione*” (Theobald 2006, p. 331, no. 256).

Based on the available sources, it is difficult to tell whether Paul VI followed the advice of Cardinal Suenens and consulted Scrima on the matter. What is clear, though, is that Paul VI’s amendments did not push the Council into a new crisis. This was also because of the wisdom of some conciliar fathers and theologians from the more progressive side (especially Philips and Bea) who tried to soften the amending proposals of Paul VI, coming up with formulas of compromise in the final version of *De Revelatione*. Moreover, Suenens’ suggestion that the Pope consult Scrima in such a delicate moment was indicative of the high consideration he enjoyed among top Catholic officials during the Second Vatican Council.

3. Reading the Final Version of *Dei Verbum*

Scrima’s contribution to *Dei Verbum* did not end in 1965. In the years following the closure of Vatican II, he was invited by Catholic theologians to comment on the final version of the document. His engagement with *Dei Verbum* after Vatican II is part of the story of the reception of the conciliar work by non-Catholics. Scrima’s reflections on *Dei Verbum*—“*Révélation et tradition dans la Constitution dogmatique ‘Dei Verbum’ selon un point de vue orthodoxe*” [Revelation and Tradition in the Dogmatic Constitution ‘*Dei Verbum*’]—were published in 1968 in French in the second volume of the commentary of the *Unam Sanctam* series on the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, coordinated by Bernard-Dominique Dupuy (Scrima 1968). In the volume, Scrima’s contribution stands

alongside other important chapters by Henri de Lubac, Charles Moller, Aloys Grillmeier, Roger Schutz, Max Thurian, Edmund Schlink, and Karl Barth, to name but a few of them. Though it focuses exclusively on the first two chapters of *Dei Verbum*, Scrima's assessment of the document offers an insightful analysis of ecumenical relevance, which does not fail to notice that the Dogmatic Constitution plays an important role in the overcoming of the era of controversies and misunderstandings on the issue of revelation between the Catholic Church and the Churches that issued from the Reform, also making progress in the rapprochement between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church (Scrima 1968, p. 523).

The chapter by Scrima is divided into three main parts. The first part, "The Directions of Renewal," engages with the positive changes brought by *Dei Verbum* in the understanding of revelation in Catholic theology, especially if compared with the polemical approach that marked the discussions between Catholics and Protestants on the topic during the post-Tridentine period. What Scrima identifies as a positive change in *Dei Verbum* is "not so much a break with what came before [Vatican II] (as if the conciliar text did not reflect a constant tradition that goes deeper than the historical conditioning of the controversy) but rather a refocusing of the theological theme of Revelation" (Scrima 1968, p. 524). According to Scrima, this means "a progress along the lines of theological realism," which sheds new lights on "the organic unity" between the content of divine revelation (God) found in Scripture and Tradition, as well as "on the substantial link between revelation and divine economy (the work of God in history)" (Scrima 1968, p. 524). Commenting upon Chapter I ("Revelation Itself") and its felicitous departure from the objectivization of revelation, which reduced divine truth to a corpus of conceptual statements (propositional revelation or propositional truths), Scrima notes that *Dei Verbum* brings Catholic theology closer to Orthodox thought in the sense that it rediscovers the connection between revelation and the mystery of salvation, which God brings about through Christ (fulfiller and fulfillment of revelation) and the Holy Spirit (Scrima 1968, pp. 524–28). Scrima regrets though that the intimate link between liturgy and the mystery of salvation lacks an in-depth exploration in *Dei Verbum*, even though the document speaks on it in the last chapter.

Under the title "Tradition and Presence," the second part of Scrima's contribution to the volume on *Dei Verbum* explores the second chapter ("Handing on Divine Revelation") of the conciliar document. In Scrima's opinion, although Western theology was painfully divided in the past on the complex issue of the transmission of revelation, which tended to oppose Scripture with Tradition, Chapter II restores the relationship between "'the localization of Revelation in time' and 'its present actualization', which is the constitutive element of the mystery of revelation" (Scrima 1968, p. 529). Expanding his reflections on the topic of the transmission of revelation according to *Dei Verbum*, Scrima points out that it subsumes the following essential elements: the univocity of the Scripture–Tradition relationships; the organic unity of Tradition understood as *traditum* and *actus tradendi*, which shows the inseparable link between the ontological content of revelation and its noetic expression; and the liturgical dimension of the process that involves the actualization of Tradition. When it comes to the first element, it is sufficient here to mention the way Scrima explains *Dei Verbum*'s understanding of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. According to him, the conciliar document "is keen to stress the reciprocal relationship between these two expressions of Revelation [...]. Scripture and Tradition cannot be summed up in a quantitative way; they do not complement each other by external addition. It would be a distortion to pit them against each other [...] or to affirm the anteriority or the 'mechanical' superiority of one over the other" (Scrima 1968, p. 529). Scrima continues by saying that "just as there is no region in the realm of Revelation that is really accessible only through Scripture [...] so there is no Tradition that could live and develop if it were not linked with Revelation by the same reference that constitutes the structural meaning of Scripture" (Scrima 1968, p. 530). Scrima comments upon the second element, which refers to the definition of the term "Tradition", by showing its similarities with the Orthodox understanding. While Chapter II of *Dei Verbum* does not aim at offering a conceptual

definition of “Tradition”, it captures the reality behind it, which is Christ, the fullness of revelation. In this sense, it comes closer to the Orthodox understanding, which does not reduce Tradition to a verbal and visible transmission of doctrines, rites, and institutions; it is rather an invisible sharing of grace and holiness (Scrima 1968, pp. 530–32).

The third and final part of Scrima’s engagement with *Dei Verbum* pays attention to “The Ecclesial Connotations of Tradition.” In fact, this part develops Scrima’s reflections on the third essential element covered by the umbrella theme “transmission of Revelation”. Before referring to the liturgical aspect of revelation, Scrima pauses to look at the way the role of the magisterium is articulated in connection to Tradition. He is appreciative of the fact that *Dei Verbum* highlights the idea that the magisterium exercises one of its *raison d’être* when it works in the service of the Word, discerning the truth of God in a state of receptivity, which means attentiveness to the signs of divine Logos both in the life of the Church and in the world (DV §10) (Scrima 1968, pp. 533–34). Scrima touches only briefly upon the topic of the liturgical actualization of Christ; yet, he notes that this actualization of Christ in the present is understood by *Dei Verbum* as a historical extension of God’s plan for us, which was fulfilled once and for all in Jesus Christ and is interpreted anew every time according to the new realities and challenges of the world.

At the end of this overview of Scrima’s engagement with the final version of *Dei Verbum*, it is worth mentioning the hermeneutics of generosity that accompanied his reading of the conciliar document, which primarily sought to uncover what can be learned and received by other Churches and traditions from the texts of Vatican II and their ecumenical orientation. Even though it is true that Scrima’s assessment of the document does not suffer from a lack of critical review, the overall purpose of his reflections was not to identify the still remaining disagreements between the Catholic view and the teachings of the Orthodox Church on various doctrinal topics related to revelation. What Scrima’s reflections illuminate and find ecumenically promising is rather the convergence process between Catholicism and Orthodoxy initiated by the work of the Second Vatican Council and its official documents.

4. Conclusions

At the end of this study, which explores André Scrima’s contribution to Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* III, §12, a very short conclusion is worth presenting.

André Scrima occupies a foremost place among the Orthodox theologians at Vatican II who exercised an important contribution to the final version of some conciliar documents. With Scrima’s nomination as the personal representative of Patriarch Athenagoras at Vatican II, his activity at the Council became quite prolific, although his status was equivalent to that of a non-Catholic observer, without the right to actively participate in the discussions in aula and without the right to vote. Nevertheless, Scrima’s participation in the meetings of the Secretariat for Christian Unity with the non-Catholics at Vatican II, as well as his formal and informal exchanges with prominent Catholic players in the Council on the documents that were simultaneously discussed in aula, allowed his concerns to be heard and taken into account by the conciliar fathers and theologians. Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* is a case in point. The fact that Orthodox theologians such as Scrima and others exercised an important influence upon the final version of some conciliar documents shows both the truly ecumenical dimension of Vatican II and the gradual rapprochement that was taking place at the time between the two major Christian traditions at Vatican II.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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