

THEOLOGICAL TRENDS

THE PAPACY I

NINETEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT was the 'year of the three popes', with its double experience of loss; but there was also the double experience of gratitude and excitement, at the creative way in which each loss was more than repaired. There were many people throughout the world, and not merely Catholics or even Christians, who were prompted by these sorrows and joys, not so much to indulge in the idle pastime of trying to 'spot the winner' as the respective conclaves assembled, but rather to consider what qualities the man should possess who is the leader of the largest unified religious body in the world. It seems appropriate, then, to devote three instalments of *Theological Trends* to the examination of recent writing concerning the nature of the papacy. No attempt, however, is made to provide an exhaustive account of such writing, or even to be systematic about selection.

The qualities required in a pope

After the death of Pope Paul VI, a group of theologians associated with the journal *Concilium* offered some suggestions for the guidance of the electors at the approaching conclave, concerning the qualities that might be looked for in Pope Paul's successor.¹ The signatories included theologians of long-recognized authority and respectability, such as Congar and Chenu, as well as more controversial figures like Schillebeeckx, Küng, Gutiérrez and Greely. Starting from the premiss that 'the pope has a decisive role in the Catholic Church' and therefore in that Church's 'service of humanity', they drew up a list of six criteria, which, with a notable lack of diplomatic sense, they proceeded to 'call upon all the cardinals to discuss . . . together in the conclaves before naming the candidate, and to base their decision on them'. Understandably, some critics castigated the theologians for presumptuousness, naïvety or self-indulgent moralizing; but their criteria repay study.

1. A pope of our time must be *a man open to the world*. 'He should know the world as it is, in its heights and in its depths, in its glory and in its misery; he should accept without reservation all that is good in the world, wherever it be found. He should, with all due respect for the past and for tradition, feel at home in a critical way in the present Church and in the contemporary world. . . . He should accept critically the findings of contemporary science; he should abandon the outmoded curial style and should speak credibly in

¹ Cf 'What kind of a Pope now?', in *The London Tablet* (19 August 1978), p 811.

the language of people in this day and age. He should radiate genuine humanity'.

2. He should be a *spiritual leader*, possessing 'real authority', which is not authoritarian, nor should it be simply 'formalistic, official and institutional', but also 'personal, objective and charismatic'. He should exercise this authority 'not by issuing decrees but by giving reasons, not by commanding but by inspiring, not by making lonely decisions in isolation but by wrestling for common consensus in open dialogue. In all, he should be the guarantor of freedom in the Church'.

3. He should be an *authentic pastor* not a bureaucrat: 'a leader resolved not to rule but to serve', 'free of all personality cult', 'open in kindness and simplicity to the needs of others . . . ; able to give positive guidance rather than prohibition in all the decisive questions concerning life and death'; not a 'doctrinaire defender of ancient bastions', but a 'pastoral pioneer of a renewed preaching and practice in the Church'.

4. He should be a *true fellow bishop*, 'confident enough of his own office to risk sharing his power with other bishops, conducting himself not as a master over his servants, but as a brother among his brethren. . . . He should give up the principle of centralism in the Church . . . and renew the Curia not only externally and organizationally but in the spirit of the Gospel', preserving in it a balanced representation of traditionalist and contemporary Catholic theology.

5. He should be an *ecumenical mediator*.

6. He should be a *genuine Christian*, 'a convincing herald of the good tidings of Christ . . . , taking as his goal not only the promotion of the interests of church institutions but also the broadest realization of the christian message among all men'.

Many readers, though perhaps suspecting that a tendency to take themselves too seriously is an occupational disease of theologians, will find these suggestions sensible enough, and share the signatories' conviction that the Church needed a pope with the imagination and the personality to liberate the papacy from an accumulation of constricting traditions. However, the Religious Correspondent of *The Times* of London placed his finger on the document's central weakness: the theologians were themselves still suffering from the false assumption that the Church should look to the Pope, above all, for the solution of its problems. Though denouncing 'the principle of centralism', they were themselves allowing too great a burden of responsibility to remain at the centre. Perhaps what a pope today needs more than anything, is the power of imagination to envisage how the local churches can become mature enough to fulfil their own responsibilities, and sufficient strength of character to keep refusing to allow those responsibilities to be thrust on his own shoulders. However, to justify this remark we must turn our attention from the personal qualities needed in a pope to the theological nature of the papal office itself.

St Peter in the New Testament

It is not only a traditional pious opinion, but a dogma defined by the First Vatican Council, that the Pope is the successor of St Peter as primate of the universal Church.² Recently, several scripture scholars have sought to reassess the biblical foundations of this belief. For example, the *Agreed Statement on Authority in the Church*, published by the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission, mentions the anglican suspicions that 'claims on behalf of the Roman See as commonly presented in the past have put a greater weight on the Petrine texts . . . than they are generally thought to be able to bear', as well as the admission by many Catholic scholars that it is not necessary 'to stand by former exegesis of these texts in every respect'.³ In fact, the New Testament evidence needs re-examination at two stages of the argument: first, with regard to St Peter's position in the early Church; secondly, with regard to the claim that St Peter's position was not unique to himself, but is inherited by the Pope.

(a) A very careful and unprejudiced study of St Peter's own status was made by a joint group of participants in the U.S. Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue.⁴ Their report concludes that there are sound historical grounds for thinking that Peter enjoyed a special status among the Twelve. During Jesus's ministry, he was one of the first to be called, often acted as the spokesman, and was prominent in other ways. He probably confessed his faith in Jesus in terms of Jewish expectation, but failed to understand his master fully. After the resurrection, he came to be known as Cephas, the Rock, a title which was probably given him by Jesus, a fact in which three of the gospels concur, even though they each set the naming in a different context.⁵ He was granted a special resurrection-appearance, probably the first (setting aside the appearances to the women, who in Jewish tradition would not rank as official witnesses).⁶ He was the most important of the Twelve in Jerusalem and its environs, though his relations with Paul and with James, the 'brother' of the Lord, are not so clear-cut. He conducted missionary work, certainly to the circumcized, perhaps also to the gentiles, despite Paul's claim of a monopoly in the latter field:⁷ there is incontrovertible evidence of Peter's influence in largely gentile areas,⁸ which accords with the tradition that it was he who took the decision to admit gentiles to baptism.⁹

² Cf Denzinger-Schönmetzer (DS) 3058.

³ *Agreed Statement*, § 24a.

⁴ Cf *Peter in the New Testament*, eds. R. E. Brown, K. P. Donfried and J. Reumann (Minneapolis/New York, 1973; London, 1974).

⁵ Cf Mt 16, 18 (Caesarea Philippi); Mk 3, 16 (the appointment of the Twelve); Jn 1, 42 (the first call of Peter).

⁶ Cf Lk 24, 34; 1 Cor 15, 5.

⁷ Cf Gal 2, 7.

⁸ Cf 1 Cor 1, 12; 1 Pet 1, 1.

⁹ Cf Acts 10.

At the 'Council of Jerusalem', Peter gives the decisive witness; James, who seems by now to be the leader in Jerusalem, the decisive 'judgment'; and the apostles and elders, the letter enforcing the decision. St Luke envisages an exercise of collegiality, with a decision taken 'with the whole Church', 'in assembly'.¹⁰

The authors of the report, however, believe that the foregoing restrained historical conclusion does not do full justice to the New Testament data. For Peter in the New Testament is assigned a place in church life which exceeds historic *fact*. He is regarded as a 'symbol for christian thought'. Accordingly, a biblical theology of Peter will not be complete unless it includes the implications (the authors prefer the term 'trajectory') of the Petrine *Images*.¹¹ He is the great Fisherman, or missionary, who is destined to strengthen his fellow-Christians by his missionary preaching.¹² At a later stage, when the emphasis is on settled communities rather than missionary expansion, he is seen as the Shepherd entrusted with the keys and the power of binding and loosing.¹³ He is the christian Martyr.¹⁴ He is not only the spokesman of the Twelve, but the recipient of special revelation.¹⁵ He is the Confessor of the true christian faith, the guardian of the faith of his fellow-Christians, the magisterial interpreter of prophecies and of the writings of Paul.¹⁶ At the same time he is a weak man, who denies the Lord, is rebuked by Jesus and by Paul, misunderstands Jesus's words and intentions, but once he repents, is rehabilitated.¹⁷

(b) It would be surprising now to find a Catholic biblical scholar arguing that the texts prove that Jesus in his lifetime appointed St Peter to be the first in a succession of popes. This is partly due to the difficulty of attaining with certainty to Jesus's own mind, through the filter of the interpretations made by the New Testament authors. But in addition, there are well-known hints that Jesus did not envisage a permanent Church, because he believed that the Last Times were imminent.¹⁸ It is more pertinent to ask whether the New Testament writers themselves suggest that Peter's unique role in the Church was to be continued after his death. Traditional Roman Catholic apologetics have long argued that the Matthaean Petrine text seems to envisage a permanent Church — 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' — founded on Peter, the Rock;¹⁹ for the continuing Church would need

¹⁰ Cf Acts 15, 22. 25.

¹¹ Cf *Peter in the New Testament*, pp 162-63.

¹² Cf Lk 5, 10; Jn 21, 11.

¹³ Cf Jn 21, 15-17; Mt 16, 19.

¹⁴ Cf Jn 21, 22-23; 1 Pet 5, 1.

¹⁵ Cf Mt 16, 17.

¹⁶ Cf Mt 16, 16 and parallels; Jn 6, 69; Lk 22, 32; 2 Pet 1, 20-21; 2 Pet 3, 15-16.

¹⁷ Cf Mk 14, 66-72 and parallels; Mt 16, 23; Gal 2, 11-14; Mk 9, 5-6 and parallels; Mt 16, 22; Jn 13, 6-11; Jn 18, 10-11; Lk 22, 32; Jn 21, 15-17.

¹⁸ Cf Mk 14, 62 and parallels.

¹⁹ Cf Mt 16, 18.

a rock on which to endure, no less than the original Church needed one on which to be built. This argument can be remodelled on more scientific lines. Two facts about Peter are confirmed by three of the gospels, but by each in a totally different context: his naming as the Rock;²⁰ and his appointment to unique authority, at Caesarea Philippi,²¹ after the Last Supper,²² or in Galilee after the resurrection.²³ What were the concerns of the several communities in which each of the four gospels was finally put together, whereby three redactors, independently (because the contexts differ), were induced to include an account of Simon's new name, and equally independently (for the same reason), to include an account of Simon's appointment to be foundation or strengthener or shepherd of the Church? In other words, what was the *Sitz im Leben* of these fragments? What was their relevance to the life of the community in which the final redaction of each gospel took place? The most obvious answer seems to be that the question of succession was of widespread concern in the sub-apostolic age. A similar conclusion might be deduced from the 'trajectory' of the petrine images spoken of above.

Yet the fact remains that, outside the New Testament, though there is clear evidence about concern over the apostolic succession as early as the end of the first century,²⁴ there are no signs of a particularized concern over a successor to St Peter in serving as a Rock for the whole Church. Moreover, though the evidence for Peter's martyrdom at Rome is very strong, the absence of any reference to a Bishop of Rome at the turn of the century, in documents where one would expect to find such reference, should make one chary of claiming that Peter was the first in an unbroken line of bishops of that city.²⁵ Avery Dulles sums up the problem as follows:

The idea that Christ's establishment of this office was known from the beginning, and was continuously handed down in oral tradition, runs up against the great difficulty that no one seems to have thought of the papacy as a permanent office until about the middle of the third century. Rome did indeed have a certain pre-eminence among christian Churches, but this status was not ascribed to the fact that Peter had been Bishop of Rome, or that the pope was Peter's successor in that office. Rather, the emergence of the Roman 'primacy' was apparently due to the convergence of a number of factors: for example, the dignity of Rome as the only apostolic Church in the West, the tradition that both Peter and Paul had been martyred there, the

²⁰ See above, pp 220, note 5.

²¹ Cf Mt 16, 17-19.

²² Cf Lk 22, 32.

²³ Cf Jn 21, 15-17.

²⁴ Cf First Epistle of *Clement*, 42.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Introduction, and 65.2 (Coptic Text); Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Romans*, Introduction.

long history of Rome as capital of the Empire, and its continuing position as the chief centre of commerce and communications. . . . Historical investigation shows that the claims made by and on behalf of the Bishop of Rome developed very gradually.²⁶

The Petrine Office

However, this long silence concerning the papacy does not invalidate the conclusion drawn above that the early Christians believed that, even after Peter's death, the need and concern for the unity and well-being of the Church as a whole, and not just of its local communities, would continue. Modern ecclesiologists, especially those with ecumenical concerns, sometimes speak of this service as 'petrine' without intending the use of the term to imply that the petrine ministry was invested in one man, the Bishop of Rome, seen as St Peter's successor in this universal responsibility. Thus the U.S. Lutheran/Roman Catholic joint statement *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church* expressed agreement upon the Church's need of a 'petrine function' for the Church as a whole, which would 'promote or preserve the oneness of the Church by symbolizing unity, and by facilitating communication, mutual assistance or correction, and collaboration in the Church's mission'.²⁷ This responsibility is not confined to a single office-holder. Indeed all Christians can be said to have an incidental share in it. But the statement notes that the Reformers did not reject all aspects of the papal expression of the petrine function; they were concerned only that abuses be removed.

Another ecumenical group, however, the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission, felt able to attach the petrine function to the papacy more firmly. The Commission views the Church as essentially a community, which 'like any human community . . . requires a form of leadership and unity, which the Holy Spirit provides in the ordained ministry'.²⁸ At the local level, this service belongs primarily to the bishop, and is 'intrinsic to the Church's structure, according to the mandate given by Christ and recognized by the community'.²⁹ But the bishop's authority is not dictatorial:

The perception of God's will for his Church does not belong only to the ordained ministry, but is shared by all its members. All who live faithfully within the *koinonia* [communion or fellowship] may become sensitive to the leading of the Spirit. . . . Ordained ministers commissioned to discern these insights, and to give authoritative expression

²⁶ 'Papal Authority in Roman Catholicism', in *A Pope for All Christians?*, ed P. J. McCord (New York/London, 1976), p 53.

²⁷ *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue*, V, eds P. C. Empie and T. A. Murphy (Minneapolis, 1974).

²⁸ *Agreed Statement on Ministry and Ordination*, § 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, § 5.

to them, are part of the community, sharing its quest for understanding the gospel. . . . The community, for its part, must respond to and assess the insights and teaching of the ordained ministers.³⁰

One commentary on the Agreed Statement has spoken of 'two complementary elements':

On the one hand there is the people seeking to be faithful to the word of God, in their belief, in their worship, and in their lives; on the other hand there is the bishop (and under him the priests and deacons), unifying and directing this energetic response by the people to God's call.³¹

In the course of history, bishops of important sees were entrusted with a leading role among the bishops and Churches of the surrounding region. This authority again was not dictatorial: first, because it existed as a service to the local Churches and their members, and for their sake; secondly, because it was not exercised by the leading bishop or primate alone, but 'in co-responsibility with all the bishops of the region'.³²

The Agreed Statement then applies these principles at the universal level:

If God's will for the unity in love and truth of the whole christian community is to be fulfilled, this general pattern of the complementary primatial and conciliar aspects of *episcopo* serving the *koinonia* of the churches needs to be realized at the universal level. The only see which makes claim to universal primacy and which has exercised and still exercises such *episcopo* is the see of Rome: the city where Peter and Paul died.

It seems appropriate that in any future union a universal primacy, such as has been described, should be held by that See.³³

Thus the Anglican/Roman Catholic Agreed Statement goes further than its Lutheran/Roman Catholic counterpart in stating that the petrine ministry needs to be exercised by a single person, whose authority is balanced by a college of co-responsible sharers. This position is reached by extrapolation of the principle (on which Roman Catholics and Anglicans are agreed) that an ordained ministry for the promotion of unity is 'intrinsic to the Church's structure according to the mandate given by Christ'.³⁴ If justification of

³⁰ *Ibid.*, § 6.

³¹ E. J. Yarnold, S.J., 'Venice, A Roman Catholic Analysis', in *The Ampleforth Journal*, 83 (1978), p 50.

³² *Agreed Statement on Authority in the Church*, § 10.

³³ *Ibid.*, § 23.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, § 5.

the principle itself were sought, the inquirer might be referred simply to the common scripturally-based tradition of the two Churches, or an appeal might be made to the personal relationship one can have with an ordained minister but not with a council or college. There is a well-known saying to the effect that 'a committee cannot be a father in God'.

The divine right of the papacy

The conclusion of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Statement quoted above concerning the universal primacy is very carefully phrased.³⁵ That there should be such a universal primate is said to be a *need* of the Church if God's will is to be fulfilled; and that this universal primacy should be exercised by the Bishop of Rome is simply said to be *appropriate*.

This conclusion has been attacked from both flanks. Some critics think that it goes too far, as it seems to suggest that there can be no true Church without a universal primacy; others have judged that it ought to go further in asserting that the papacy is essential to the Church.

Both lines of criticism can be expressed in terms of *ius divinum* (divine law or right). The Lutheran Smalkaldic Articles of 1537 contained the affirmation that 'the pope is not the head of all Christendom by divine right',³⁶ while the Agreed Statement itself noted a difficulty felt by Anglicans regarding the use by the First Vatican Council of the language of 'divine right' in reference to the successors of Peter.³⁷ (The Latin term is perhaps better translated by the words 'divine law', since to speak of the divine *right* of the papacy carries the overtones of a personal prerogative, of the kind claimed by the 'divine right' for kings.) On the other hand, some would have wished the Statement to affirm that the primacy of the Bishop of Rome is a matter of divine law, even though Vatican I itself spoke only of the continuance of universal primacy as such in succession to Peter, as a matter of divine law. That the bishops of Rome are these successors is stated as a fact, but the sanction of divine law is not explicitly claimed for it.³⁸

One obstacle in the way of solving this problem is the fact that the term 'a matter of divine law (*iure divino*)' has not an agreed meaning, even in Roman Catholic theology. In the days when it was thought that the New Testament contained a more factual account of Jesus's words and intentions than most scholars now admit, the term was taken to refer to those elements in the Church which were explicitly established by Christ before the Ascension, to the exclusion of other features of the Church's life, which were of purely human devising. Many Catholic writers on the Church nowadays apply the

³⁵ Cf Avery Dulles, S.J., 'Ius Divinum as an Ecumenical Problem', in *Theological Studies*, 38 (1977), pp 681-708.

³⁶ J. A. Burgess, 'Lutherans and the Papacy: a review of some basic issues', in *A Pope for All Christians?*, p 31 (see note 26 above).

³⁷ *Agreed Statement on Authority in the Church*, § 24b.

³⁸ DS 3057-8.

term also to the middle ground between explicit institution by the historical Jesus (of the eucharist), and mere human invention (for example, of the order of subdeacon). This middle class of ecclesial features would be attributed to the post-ascension Church, which adopted a practice (for example, the baptism of the uncircumcized) as the practical realization of Jesus's implicit intention in founding the Church. Some writers, like Karl Rahner, believe that such developments can be attributed to divine law only if, once introduced, they are irreversible; others, such as Edward Schillebeeckx, believe that, in some cases at least, what has been a matter of divine law in one age may cease to be so in changed circumstances.

As has already been said, Vatican I did not make it a dogma that the possession by the Bishop of Rome of universal primacy is a matter of divine law. But the question remains in what sense the sanction of divine law is claimed for the existence of universal primacy as such. If Rahner is right, there is no possible way in which the Catholic Church could vest the petrine office in any other person or persons, say in a council without a primate; if the other interpretation is correct, such a possibility may still be open. Avery Dulles sums up the situation as follows:

From the Roman Catholic point of view, the essential would seem to be that the petrine function should be institutionalized in some way, so that there is in the government of the universal Church an effective sign and instrument of unity. For symbolic efficacy, there are many advantages in having a single person as the bearer of this august office, and in view of the long tradition in favour of Rome as the primatial see, Catholics would be reluctant to see the primacy transferred elsewhere. While understandably attached to the good things in their own tradition, Catholics would be well advised not to assume too easily that the forms of government to which they have become accustomed will necessarily survive to the end of time.³⁹

The Nature of Primacy

It has sometimes been said by sympathetic non-catholics that they could not accept a primacy of jurisdiction, in which the pope would have authority over other Churches, but that they would look much more favourably upon a primacy of honour, in which the pope would be *primus inter pares* (first among equals). It was in terms of honour that the First Council of Constantinople referred to the primacy of the Bishop of Rome in 381. However, Pierre Duprey, a member of the Vatican Secretariat for Unity, has pointed out that 'honour is a totally inappropriate category in which to define primacy';⁴⁰ the pope is, after all, the 'servant of the servants of God'.

³⁹ 'Papal Authority in Roman Catholicism', pp 56-57 (see note 26 above).

⁴⁰ 'Brief Reflections on the Title *Primus inter Pares*, in *One in Christ*, 10 (1974), pp 7-12.

It has been suggested accordingly that the primacy in question is a primacy of *service*.⁴¹ St Ignatius of Antioch addressed the Roman Church early in the second century as 'pre-eminent in love'.⁴² The universal primate's purpose is neither to dominate nor to receive homage, but to be, as the decree of Vatican I explained, the 'perpetual principle and visible foundation' of the unity of the Church.⁴³

Cornelius Ernst, on the basis of the theology of Pope Leo I, argued for what he called an 'ontological' or 'sacramental' primacy of the pope. There is a 'sacramental' identity of Peter with his successors, which functions as follows:

. . . participation in Christ by faith, common to all believers, implies and requires a symbolic representation of that single and common participation, and . . . the petrine office in the Church provides such a symbolic representation of the one faith of all believers . . . Peter's public confession of faith continued in his successors, is the effectual symbol of the unity of the public faith confessed by the Church.⁴⁴

The limits of primacy

In a witty as well as perceptive article entitled 'The primacy: the small print of Vatican I', Mgr Garrett Sweeney wrote:

Pastor Aeternus [the primacy decree of Vatican I] is all the poorer in that it knows no other form of *principatus* than the *potestas iurisdictionis*. This is an ignoble restriction, and any re-statement of the Primacy would do well to put jurisdiction in its proper and very minor place — as no more than one of several routes by which the Holy See may fulfil its mission.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, even if it is admitted that to make jurisdiction the essence of primacy is to forfeit its theological foundation and its christian spirit, the fact remains that the 1870 definition condemned the view that 'the Roman Pontiff has only the office of inspection or direction, and not the supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole Church'.⁴⁶ At the very least therefore,

⁴¹ R. McAfee Brown, in the Introduction to *A Pope for All Christians?*, p 8.

⁴² *Epistle to the Romans*, Introduction (Loeb translation); Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church', *Lumen Gentium*, § 13, also quotes the phrase, taking it, however, in the sense of 'presiding over the whole assembly of charity'.

⁴³ DS 3051.

⁴⁴ 'The Primacy of Peter: Theology and Ideology, I', in *New Blackfriars* (April 1969), p 354.

⁴⁵ In *Bishops and Writers*, ed A. Hastings (Wheathampstead, 1977), p 201. The article originally appeared in *The Clergy Review* (February 1974).

⁴⁶ DS 3064.

a Catholic is committed to the belief that the exercise of jurisdiction may be a valid and truly christian way of promoting the unity of the whole Church. Accordingly, for the commending of papacy to non-catholics, it is helpful to be able to show that papal jurisdiction is not without limits. This is what Mgr Sweeney does, establishing that 'it was a common view-point of the Fathers [of Vatican I] that primatial power was not all-embracing, unlimited and able to do what it liked'.⁴⁷ But, to his regret, the Council did not explicitly define what the limits were.

They can, however, be discovered. Mgr Sweeney himself points to one limit: papal primacy is for the sake of preserving unity.⁴⁸ The decree provides another indication: the papal primacy is meant to 'strengthen' and 'vindicate' the jurisdiction of each bishop in his own diocese.⁴⁹ But the Council discreetly refrained from saying what should happen if a pope's actions were to weaken the unity of the Church or undermine the authority of the bishops.

Nevertheless a certain amount of canonical clarification may be possible, partly by a return to an earlier pattern. Avery Dulles recalls that:

Papal influence in the first three centuries had a different character in different zones. In Italy, the bishop of Rome exercised strict jurisdiction over all the bishops, whose metropolitan he was. In the remainder of the West (except for certain privileged areas such as Africa), the bishop of Rome was a super-metropolitan, intervening only in *causae majores*. In the East, the Churches enjoyed full canonical autonomy under their own metropolitans and super-metropolitans (the future patriarchates). The Eastern Churches, however, admitted a certain primacy in the Roman See, to which they accorded what was called a *praeexcellencia fidei* [pre-eminence of faith].⁵⁰

It would be understandable if Anglicans, while wishing to be in communion with the Pope, and even to accept his primacy of jurisdiction, might have scruples about subjecting themselves to the many directives that go out from Rome to the whole Roman Catholic Church, whether upon matters of essential morality or detailed points of ceremonial or worship. The act of trust they would be called upon to make would not be quite so enormous if a system of graded papal jurisdiction such as Dulles describes obtained today. This differentiation of jurisdiction does still exist to some extent. Thus, the Churches of uniate rites (such as the Maronite and Syro-Malabar rites) possess their own canon law; some have their own patriarchs. Fr Heiler recommends what is in effect an extension of the uniate system:

⁴⁷ *Bishops and Writers*, p 191.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p 196; cf DS 3051, quoted above. Another remark of Mgr Sweeney's from the same article (p 193) is worth reproducing: 'The Primacy can never become credible until its limits are defined'.

⁴⁹ DS 3061.

⁵⁰ 'Papal Authority in Roman Catholicism', p 58 (see note 26 above).

Different kinds of elements are symbolized in the tripartite division of the papal tiara: the office of *bishop of Rome*, who at the same time is metropolitan of the Roman Church province, the office of *patriarch* of the Western Latin Church, and the office of *primate* of all bishops. Many of the obstacles that stand in the way of a reunion of Christians are grounded in the combination of these three offices, in the extension of the authority of the sphere of the first office to the second, and of the first two to the third. But if the primacy of the pope is viewed as such purely in its providential ecumenical function of unity and separated from the mutable functions of the roman metropolitan and of the western patriarch, the historical meaning and the divine right of papacy will then also become understandable to those who dispute it.⁵¹

Such canonical definitions are necessary if other bodies contemplating union with Rome are not to be asked to sign a blank cheque or put their heads upon a block. But the greatest inducement and reassurance will be the sight of a papacy that is palpably a servant of unity in the spirit of Christ. It was with non-Catholics in mind that Pope Paul VI asked:

Should we try once again to present in precise terms what it [the papacy] purports to be: the necessary principle of truth, charity and unity? Should we show once again that it is a pastoral charge of direction, service and brotherhood, which does not challenge the freedom or dignity of anyone who has a legitimate position in the Church of God, but which rather protects the rights of all and only claims the obedience called for among children of the same family?⁵²

Edward Yarnold S.J.

⁵¹ Quoted in H. Küng, *Structures of the Church* (New York, 1964; London, 1965), p 217, note 45.

⁵² Allocution to the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, April 1967, quoted in Sweeney, 'The primacy: the small print of Vatican I', pp 179-80.