

## COLLEGIALITY AND THE PETRINE OFFICE IN THE PASTORAL WORK OF THE CHURCH

### I. INTRODUCTION—PASTORAL CONCERN IN AN AGE OF RENEWAL

#### A. *New Trends in Church and World*

Fidelity to its mission requires of the Church a constant process of renewal and adaptation. For the gospel will be effectively understood only if it is proclaimed in terms intelligible to succeeding generations. Society today evolves at an accelerated pace. Man's understanding of himself and of his world has been deeply modified by recent historical and scientific developments. The Church's understanding of its own task must take into account the new forces which influence humanity and condition the future. These forces have been a source of ferment in society for many decades. The prolonged delay in recognizing them aggravated the upheaval which the Church faces today. Our belated adaptation to this modern social and cultural revolution explains in part the current crisis of religion. Superficially it may appear to be a simple crisis of faith.<sup>1</sup>

Two movements especially have modified the relationships of church and society. The deeper one represents the intellectual transition from the classical mentality or classicist understanding of men to modern historical consciousness. Man is no longer the passive subject of history. He intends to master his own destiny. The other movement is of a socio-political nature. It marks the affirmation of an autonomous secular society as opposed to the previous sacral concepts of the world. This is a logical development from the first movement.

The Church has long affirmed the autonomy of secular society in principle. But it reacted negatively to many of the forms in which the above movements asserted themselves in society. Church leaders were

<sup>1</sup> B. Lonergan, S.J., in *Catholic Mind*, May 1970, pp. 11-19. Cf. also The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, art. 4.

slow to recognize the signs of the times which they conveyed.<sup>2</sup> The reconciliation which occurred at the Second Vatican Council explains in part the direction our renewed pastoral approach is taking.

For a long time it had been common to stress the separation of the Church from the world. If the world was not considered hostile, it was feared as dangerous to the faith. More recently, the Church and the world were considered as two complete societies side by side. Today we prefer to underline their mutual relationships, while still recognizing their autonomy. Or we may also describe history as a single process of human development or liberation. We are more aware that Christ preached a kingdom both heavenly and of the earth, both historical and eschatological. As God was truly incarnate in an historical man living among men, so the heavenly community is already present in a certain way in the earthly assembly. The kingdom is already growing in our midst as a mystery. Christ has risen in glory, but the glorious character of the Church has not yet been revealed. Only at the end of time will the pilgrim people reach the promised goal. The kingdom of Heaven will embrace the whole reality of creation. Christianity does not only reach up towards heaven, it also reaches out horizontally to animate and perfect the whole of human culture.<sup>3</sup>

A new Christian humanism is developing. We recognize increasingly our solidarity with all the members of the human family and with all creation. We accept our responsibility for the temporal values interwoven with our history. As it corrects the former over-emphasis on supernaturalism, the Church finds a new equilibrium between fidelity to God and fidelity to man. Love for humanity once more becomes a pivotal point of concern.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> J. C. Murray, S.J., "The Vatican Declaration on Religious Liberty: its Deeper Significance," an Address for the 125th Anniversary Convocation of Fordham University. *NCWC*, April 12, 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J. H. Walgrave, O.P., *Person and Society* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press); or *Cosmos, personne et société* (Paris: Desclee, 1968).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. The Church in the Modern World, art. 1,3,55; Pope Paul in his closing address to the Council, Dec. 7, 1965; also J. Girardi, S.D.B., *L'église face à l'humanisme athée* (Éditions du Cerf, 1967), pp. 329-84.

### B. Accent on Different Values

Theology is currently engaged in a development that holds great promise. It is attempting a synthesis of the various theological movements which have emerged during recent decades: kerygmatic, pastoral, existential and historical. This new theology is influenced by a fuller understanding of man seen through the discoveries of modern science. It seeks to embrace human activity in its totality. It emphasizes the indispensable role lay people play in the total mission of the Church, and the relationships of the Body of Christ to the realities of earthly existence. It looks on culture as a continual process of human creation: cultural activities reflect the development of humanity in the course of history.<sup>5</sup> As a result of theological reflection on the various movements affecting society, we are rediscovering traditional values which take on renewed significance today. We can illustrate a few which bear more directly on our topic.

#### FRATERNITY

Modern culture places great emphasis on the value of fraternity. The conquest of outer space gave us a graphic illustration of our interdependence. We have all seen pictures of our planet from outer space: a small globe on which all men are huddled together. Geographic and political boundaries appear very secondary in this new perspective. This experience parallels the rediscovery at the Second Vatican Council of our common baptismal priesthood. From parishioner to pope we are brothers in Christ. This basic relationship is primary, more important than any other. No office or function in the Church can override this fundamental relationship. Through Christ, the "first born of the Father," we have all become "sons in the Son."<sup>6</sup> The Pastoral Constitution on The Church in the Modern World recalls this doctrine of universal brotherhood. It urges its application

<sup>5</sup> J. Comblin, *Vers une théologie de l'action* (Bruxelles: La Pensée Catholique, 1964).

<sup>6</sup> J. Ratzinger, "The Pastoral Implications of Episcopal Collegiality" in *The Church and Mankind: Concilium 1* (Paulist, 1964), pp. 39-67.

not only to all men individually, but also to the fraternal community of nations.<sup>7</sup>

#### COMMUNION

The theology of the Church which we inherited still suffers the effects of the counter-Reformation. It is frequently accused of being "post-Tridentine," too apologetic, too juridical. Many reasons, ecumenical, pastoral, doctrinal, call for the development of an adequate ecclesiology to complement our current theology.<sup>8</sup> The Church universal is a church of communions. Communion forms the local community. The local church in turn communes with the universal fellowship of all the other local churches, thus constituting the communion of churches. The basic principle of fraternity, or the brother-relationship, finds an application here on broader levels.

#### COLLEGIALITY AND CO-RESPONSIBILITY

World opinion readily accepted the principles of co-responsibility and collegiality which were enunciated by the latest Council. These values are traditional to Christianity, but we have achieved new insights into their practical application. And their impact on church structures is only beginning to be felt.

The expression most frequently applied to the hierarchical government of the Church is that of collegiality. The final responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the members, and the ultimate authority here on earth rests in a corporate group known as the college of bishops with the pope at its head. The paramount importance of understanding the corporate nature of leadership and authority in the Church has been illustrated by a number of theologians.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The Church in the Modern World, art. 38,78,90.

<sup>8</sup> T. Jimenez-Urresti, "The Ontology of Communion and Collegial Structures in the Church," in *Pastoral Reform in Church Government: Concilium 8* (Paulist, 1965), pp. 7-17.

<sup>9</sup> J. Ratzinger, *op. cit.*; K. Rahner and J. Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962); Y. Congar and B. Dupuy, *L'épiscopat et l'église universelle* (Éditions du Cerf, 1962); H. Vorgrimler, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. 1 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967).

Scripture illumined by exegesis shows that Christ called twelve men to form the nucleus of a new community. Their calling signified that the eschatological era of restoration had begun for the new Israel as People of God. Only later did the twelve become witnesses to the resurrection. Then with the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost they received their specific apostolic mission. And in the vocation of Paul they perceived a new understanding of their mission to the world at large.

Vatican II used the words "body," "order," "college" or "stable group," to show the communitarian character of the function bishops fulfill as successors of the twelve apostles. It also clarified the earlier tradition which had become obscured, maintaining the unity of order and jurisdiction. It restored the link between the sacramentality of the episcopate and communion with the episcopal order.<sup>10</sup> The relevant passages from Chap. 3 of the Constitution on the Church, covering the hierarchical structure and the episcopate, need not be recalled here.

### C. *Conflict with Structures*

Institutions conditioned by a previous cultural context tend to resist the emergence of new values. History tells us that every major period of transition experienced conflict caused by such resistance.

Our current problem can be illustrated by referring to the history of the eleventh century Gregorian reform. This movement sought to promote the autonomy of the ecclesiastical society and to free it from national or political tutelage. It also gave Christianity in Europe a sense of unity, of transcendency, and of responsibility toward the whole world. But it was centered on the ideas of power and authority. Church government was influenced by medieval patterns and was inclined as a result to reflect the social model of the absolute monarchy.

The Gregorian reform led to a vast movement of centralization in teaching, liturgy, discipline and administration. Conformity became the normal pattern. Unquestioning submission to norms established in Rome became synonymous with orthodoxy. Given the

<sup>10</sup> J. Ratzinger, "La collégialité épiscopale" in *Unam Sanctam* 51 c (Éditions du Cerf, 1966).

troubled nature of the times, this was not entirely without advantages. But it also had grave disadvantages. The Oriental churches are still struggling against an overly Western and Latin mentality imposed on the Church at this time. Some of the legitimate aspirations of the Protestant Reformation were not met, as the painful progress of ecumenism today still illustrates so well. And local churches throughout the world have yet to rediscover fully the legitimate freedom to develop their own charismatic qualities. They still hesitate to assume prophetic initiatives for the welfare of the universal Church. It is especially in this area of local initiative and responsibility that the results of over-centralization are felt.

This reform movement also influenced theology. The initial treatises on ecclesiology, written in the fifteenth century, reflected church structures of the Gregorian reform. They concentrated on the legal and constitutional aspects of the Church. The dimensions of mystery and communion became secondary. In the area of theology, manuals began to look more like treatises on ecclesiastical public law. They concentrated on the juridical aspects of authority, rights, power and validity. The limitations of such ecclesiology become quite obvious when compared with patristic theology. The Fathers understood the Church as humanity in communion.

A reaction against juridicism has now set in. We have everything to gain from reintroducing into our ecclesiology a genuine anthropology enriched by modern scientific insights. One starting point could be that of man as the image of God in a universe called to transformation by co-responsibility, communion, and universal fraternity. It could lead towards a theology of service and communion in triple dimension: theological, sacramental, and fraternal.<sup>11</sup>

## II. PROBLEMS OF AUTHORITY

### A. *Power and Authority under Scrutiny*

We have noted how the structures and laws that make up the institutional forms of the Church are deeply influenced by the social ideas, values and forms of a given period of history. Christians are

<sup>11</sup> E. Menard, O.P., *L'ecclésiologie hier et aujourd'hui* (Desclee, 1966).

also citizens and draw their ideas from everyday life, even when thinking about the ecclesial community. But the Church is a mystery. When speaking about its life it is important to recognize the limitations of terms taken solely from other aspects of our lives. This is particularly true with regard to authority in the Church, where everyday notions about class, status, prestige, influence and power tend to intrude.

A deeper understanding of the role authority must play in Christian life will be reached by a return to Scripture and tradition. Scripture, especially, gives us a powerful countertheme, relating church authority to a divine covenant of love and fraternal communion. Christ's teaching about authority differs immensely from most current popular ideas about authority and its exercise. The evangelists Mark and Luke teach us that Christ's authority was exercised quite differently from that of rulers in the pagan world. Similarly, the leader in the Christian community is expected to be the servant of all the others, for the Son of Man himself came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life so that others might be set free.<sup>12</sup>

The highly publicized "crisis of authority" in the Church really comes down to an issue of confidence and credibility concerning its exercise. The question is whether a Christian entrusted with authority, at whatever level, conveys in its exercise the gospel message of service to the brotherhood and to humanity that is truly a sign of the Church. If our exercise of authority reflects the image of worldly class concepts it can be justly criticized in the name of the gospel itself. Father John Courtney Murray suggested that the crisis of authority was a crisis of community. He asked that the vertical relationship of command and obedience be completed by a horizontal relationship of dialogue. He believed that if the polarity between authority and obedience was placed within the community, in an atmosphere of communion, the vital tensions would remain healthy, creative and constructive.<sup>13</sup>

Modern concepts of leadership and authority are difficult to reconcile with those reflecting the sociological environment of a pre-

<sup>12</sup> Mk 9:36, 10:43-45; Lk 22:24-27; Mt 20:25-28; Rom 12:2.

<sup>13</sup> J. C. Murray, S.J., "Freedom, Authority, Community" in *America* December 1966.

vious era. Many Christians today are critical of the identity too easily established between the obedience in morals demanded of members in a society and the speculative obedience to truth required for faith. They distinguish between human and divine obedience in the Church and want the distinction between the two applied in practice. They are aware that intellectual attitudes to non-infallible doctrinal pronouncements are primarily governed not by obedience but by the light of understanding. They also want to see a clear relationship between the exercise of ecclesiastical authority and the proclamation of the Gospel. They respond more readily to the concept of authority as collectively shared by the hierarchy. They would like to see the substitutional functions of authority reduced wherever possible, maintaining only those functions which are really necessary for the common good. Contemporary Christians value very highly the precious freedom of a good conscience under God. They believe that the central mystery of the Church is the obedience of faith rather than the guidance of authority. They are also convinced that the more authority fulfills its proper service of truth and love (cf. 1 Tim 1:5; Eph 4:15; Jh 8:32), the happier the community will be and the better it will function.<sup>14</sup>

Authority is at its best when it does not consider itself beyond correction, and when it does not claim infallibility in areas where it enjoys no such prerogative. In our complex society, everyone in a position of responsibility gains immeasurably from the art of listening. For the Spirit speaks freely through various members of the Church. He also speaks through the secular order, in the signs of the times. The hierarchy are frequently not equipped to read these signs or to interpret these voices alone and unaided. An attitude of humble listening will encourage creative response, initiative and responsibility on the part of others.

#### *B. Petrine Office and Collegiality in Tension*

The tensions between the Pope's role as successor of Peter and the collegial responsibilities of the other bishops have been the subject of much debate. Our perception of their mutual relationships is

<sup>14</sup> A. Muller, *op. cit.*, pp. 1081, 109, 139, 165, 169 etc. Also E. Simon, *Nature and Functions of Authority* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), pp. 93, 143-7, 161.



evolving rapidly. The discussions at the 1969 synod in Rome indicated that many of the issues are still far from solution. The doctrinal debate also illustrated the insufficiency of our present theology relative to the primacy and collegiality.<sup>15</sup>

The world became acutely aware of the practical implications of these tensions as a result of the exchanges between the Church in Holland and Rome over the question of celibacy. The Dutch bishops insist that full collegial dialogue involve the horizontal as well as the vertical dimensions.<sup>16</sup> Cardinal Suenens, in his recent interview with Henri Fesquet of *Le Monde* has raised once more the basic issues which underlie these tensions. He reminds us that what is primarily at stake "is the very conception of the government of the Church and the implementation of certain principles which are at the heart of Vatican II."<sup>17</sup> Counter positions have been taken by spokesmen like Cardinals Danielou, Staffa, Siri and others. They seem to be influenced by an image of the Church modelled on the pattern of an absolute monarchy. They believe that the pope alone should decide if, when, and how he will use the collegial contributions of the bishops.<sup>18</sup>

### III. PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS OF COLLEGIALITY

In the light of the points mentioned above let us take a look at the pastoral implications of collegiality. Theology reflects on reality and applies the Gospel to life. It would seem useful to consider what is actually happening in the pastoral domain before we suggest possible orientations for primacy and collegiality in the future.

#### A. *The Local Church*

Practically speaking, Christians cannot truly experience what is meant by Church, the sacramental presence of Christ's transforming

<sup>15</sup> A summary of the various issues discussed at the Synod in Rome is contained in *Herder Correspondence* 6,12 (December 1969).

<sup>16</sup> *Catholic Mind* June 1969. Cf. also D. de Broucker *Le dossier Suenens* (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1970); English edition expected shortly.

<sup>17</sup> *Le Monde*, Paris, May 12, 1970. In a sermon at Malines on Whit Sunday he further stated that "in the present crisis . . . not to engage the local churches in this examination would be seriously harmful for multiple reasons."

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Herder Correspondence* and *L'Osservatore Romano*.

grace which renders visible the unity of mankind in love, unless they find it expressed concretely in their local, ecclesial community.<sup>19</sup> Nothing matters more from a pastoral viewpoint than the consciousness the local community of believers should have of being the Church. Too many ecclesial communities still consider themselves as smaller administrative units responsible primarily for the salvation of individual souls. Their style of life does not reflect the conviction that what the Council teaches about the mystery of the Church applies to their own diocese or parish.

Vatican II reminds us that in the reality of the local diocesan community everything is found that is vital to the essence of the Church. The total ecclesial reality becomes present there. The assembling of believers with their bishop or his representative around the altar forms the living community which causes the Church to become "event," to become present in the local community and thus in the world. The local church is not an atom or parcel of a larger church. It is the actualization of the Church in the midst of humanity. This becoming, happening, or event, finds its highest degree of realization in the celebration of the Eucharist.

A number of practical pastoral applications will flow from this awareness that the whole Church is by nature oriented to its local incarnation in the diocese. They will affect social, economic and political endeavours as well as church life. Both the members and the leaders of the diocese will accept as natural the fact that they may develop quite differently from other neighboring dioceses. They will be less inclined to look for models outside, more aware of the work of the Spirit in their midst. Hence there will be more openness to the charismatic impulses of the Spirit and less tendency to wait for higher levels of authority to foster initiatives.

A number of dioceses are already deepening their understanding of their role as a community of believers by the development of diocesan pastoral councils and the restoration of the presbyterium, under the leadership of the priests' senate as recommended by

<sup>19</sup> K. Rahner, S.J., "Observations on Episcopacy in the Light of Vatican II" in *The Pastoral Mission of the Church: Concilium 3* (Paulist, 1965); Cf. also K. Rahner and J. Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, (Herder and Herder, 1962).

Vatican II.<sup>20</sup> If these bodies counteract the tendencies towards extreme centralization and clericalism and stimulate local initiative they will exercise a truly creative influence in the community. In the presbyterium, bishops and priests form a sacramental organism where an essential and a dependent ministry complement each other. As the presbyterate, with the bishop at its head, shares in the government of the diocese, it parallels at the level of the local church certain principles of collegiality which apply more strictly to the government of the Church universal. The development of an active presbyterium in each diocese appears to be an urgent necessity for a fuller understanding of collegial government. The permanent diaconate may also be expected to play an important role as it renders visible the mission of service or diakonia inherent in the Christian vocation.

In similar fashion, the diocesan pastoral council can help to shape church policy according to the principles of the gospel. While not strictly collegial, it is a pragmatic expression of co-responsibility, an application of the brother-relationship and of the principle of communion. It renders more effective the sharing of responsibility by all for the welfare of the diocesan church. It also provides channels whereby charisms of the Holy Spirit can make their influence felt more effectively.

These new organisms will bring about a significant modification of the bishop's role in the diocese. While remaining the promoter and symbol of unity he will be expected to discern, encourage and express the legitimate diversity of his diocesan community.<sup>21</sup> When the bishop sustains and develops his own people, the universal Church is enriched.<sup>22</sup> In like manner, priests can assist their parish councils and other leaders in promoting local initiative and developing their parishioners' talents for the good of the entire local Church.

A vital instrument in developing ecclesial growth today is an

<sup>20</sup> Senates are now mandatory. Cf. the circular letter from the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy dated April 11, 1970.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Bishop Mark McGrath at the 1969 Synod in Rome, *Documentation Catholique* 16 (1969) p. 1024.

<sup>22</sup> Pius XII had stressed the importance of an active laity before Vatican II: cf. Address to the Cardinals on February 20, 1946 (*AAS* 38, 141); Address to the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate on October 5, 1957 (*AAS* 49, 922).

informed public opinion. Granted, all power in the Church does not come from the people in the superficial sense often ascribed to democracy.<sup>23</sup> But the Holy Spirit works freely through the members of the believing community. There is an intimate bond between the *sensus fidelium* and enlightened public opinion.<sup>24</sup> A doctrine stressed by Cardinal Newman was given recognition by Pope Pius XII when he declared that the absence of public opinion in the Church would indicate a weakness, an illness. Pope Paul VI's encyclical on dialogue also proclaimed the necessity of a healthy exchange of ideas for the enrichment of persons.<sup>25</sup> The Constitution on the Church proclaims that the body of the faithful as a whole cannot err in matters of belief. (Art. 12). The moral unanimity of all the faithful manifests the infallible sentiment of the Church. It is the powerful criterion to determine authentic values and the best direction for the Church. This *sensus fidelium* is the most ancient manifestation of democratic freedom, since it is linked with the very Spirit of God moving the Church towards perfect liberty.

Since the truth of the gospel is not imposed but imposes itself, church leaders have cause to reflect when large bodies of the faithful express grave reservations or differ in opinion on issues which directly affect their lives. Recent controversies surrounding marriage, responsible parenthood, celibacy, etc. raise grave questions about what the gospel says to the people here and now. Too often we lag behind contemporary social and cultural evolution. Thus it would seem better today to abandon certain policies of secrecy in the decision making processes of the Church which express the paternalistic social patterns of a bygone era. Even protest and challenge or contestation have a legitimate place in the ecclesial community, provided they are supported by gospel principles rather than mere numbers. Here too the Church can prove that great internal freedom is compatible

<sup>23</sup> Opening speech of Pope Paul to the Synod, October 11, 1969.

<sup>24</sup> Archbishop Amissah of Ghana suggested to the 1969 Synod that in certain cases the *sensus fidelium* and public opinion can be identified.

<sup>25</sup> J. H. Newman *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, edited by Coulson (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961). Cf. also address of Pius XII to the Congress of Catholic Press, June 1950; and Paul VI, Encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*.

with its unity and cohesion as a society. As an eschatological sign of the Kingdom, the Church should spearhead the drive of humanity towards greater maturity and freedom.

### B. *Regional Responsibility*

Few people will quarrel with the necessity of regional government in modern society. There are very few moral or social problems which do not, by their very nature, transcend diocesan boundaries. In fact many of them are impossible of solution except on a broader scale. The Church is becoming increasingly aware that present parochial or even diocesan structures are frequently inadequate to cope with social issues.

Hence it is encouraging to see bishops' conferences establishing special commissions to deal with specific issues at the regional level.<sup>26</sup> A modernized application of the synodal principle could also improve church government locally. It is normal that the human methods used by the Church to communicate its message of life should be adapted to the needs of the society in which we live. Pope John XXIII recognized this in his encyclical *Mater et Magistra* when he spoke of the phenomenon described as "socialization," as did also the Vatican Council in its Pastoral Constitution on The Church in the Modern World.

The promotion of regional pluralism is another application of collegiality. Vatican II established a new policy by recognizing in principle that the local bishops were the competent territorial authority in matters liturgical. Other fields are gradually opening up. It remains for the bishops individually and collectively to assume greater responsibility and to practice collegiality in such a way as to prevent possible excesses of centralization. The Decree on Bishops proclaims that as successors of the apostles they "automatically enjoy in the diocese entrusted to them all the ordinary, proper and immediate authority required for the exercise of their pastoral office." It also

<sup>26</sup> Sociologists like Houtart, Goddijn and Greeley have published documents indicating that the problems of modern pastoral organization call for comprehensive care and the regional co-ordination of projects. Cf. *Concilium* 3, pp. 24-42; also, *Unam Sanctam* 39, pp. 497-535.

calls for better geographical representation in the offices and central agencies of the Catholic Church, so that they might exhibit a truly universal character.<sup>27</sup>

The principle of local ecclesiastical responsibility and pluralism is as old as the Church, but its application had left much to be desired in recent centuries. Early church history provides many examples of local bishops and their churches making distinct contributions to the welfare of the Church universal, and sometimes even exercising the role of guardians for the faith. Since the Council, an increasing number of local hierarchies are participating in the teaching mission of the Church universal by interpreting general principles for the welfare of their people and of the whole Church. The pastoral statements of several bishops' conferences after the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* can be cited as one example.

Cardinal Dearden indicated his deep understanding of local collegial responsibility in a recent address. He requested that bishops learn to accept the complementary dimension of co-responsibility for the entire Church which broadens their ministry of service beyond the limits of their diocese. He pointed to concern for the regional church as a special duty. He also suggested that the reason why attempts at collegial collaboration in the pastoral field have been only partially successful lies in "reluctance to accept a corporate commitment as a personal responsibility."<sup>28</sup> This same acceptance of personal responsibility for group decisions is vital to healthy initiative and development in the local diocesan and parochial spheres.

Late nineteenth century concepts of unity combined with the centralizing tendencies of modern political, social, and economic forces underlie strong trends toward uniformity and centralization both in the Church and in the world. The successful combination of these factors may well tend to further stifle local autonomy. It would seem to follow that while avoiding the dangers of provincialism or regionalism, local bishops' conferences may have to become more than ever guardians of legitimate local autonomy. This is not only because it is proper to preserve the special character of the individual local

<sup>27</sup> Decree on Bishops, *Christus Dominus*, art. 8,10.

<sup>28</sup> John F. Cardinal Dearden, Opening address to the American Bishops' meeting, November 10, 1969; cf. *The Catholic Mind* Feb. 1970, pp. 1-2.

churches; it is in the interests of the Church universal to counteract the tendency to make it an absolutely homogeneous unitary religious state. A church truly catholic cannot in practice afford to be identified with one area of the universe or one culture. The stagnation of so much of our missionary effort shows how vital the development of pluralism is for the advancement of the gospel. An episcopate of divine right has a unique responsibility to be the embodiment and guarantor of diversity in unity.<sup>29</sup>

### C. Councils and Synods

Bishops are members of the Church listening to the Word before they become themselves teachers and judges of the faith. In this way one might say that the consensus of the bishops is founded upon the *sensus fidelium*, or belief of the Church universal. On the other hand, the entire communion of the faithful is concentrated in the episcopal communion which has the special charism of ministry to the whole. As such the authority of the bishops does not depend on the consent of the faithful, but on the Spirit dwelling in the Church. A bishop represents the universal Church in his particular church. He represents his local church in the Church universal. He fulfills this role not as the delegate of a church but as the pastor through his ordination and configuration to Christ the Head.<sup>30</sup>

The bishops rediscovered the reality of episcopal communion at the Second Vatican Council. We can conclude that if regular councils and synods are not part of the "being" of the Church, they certainly contribute to its "well-being." Inasmuch as every local bishop and every regional episcopal conference acts in communion with the whole episcopate rendered visible round the bishop of Rome, this communion of bishops will in turn become present in all the local churches as a "column and pillar of truth."<sup>31</sup> We further suggest that councils are necessary because of the very nature of the Petrine office. The central authority who is the Rock needs the witness of a universal

<sup>29</sup> K. Rahner, "On the Divine Right of the Episcopate," in *Episcopate and Primacy* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1962), pp. 112-3.

<sup>30</sup> Constitution on the Church, Chapt. III, art.23; On the Liturgy art.41; On Bishops, art.6,11.

<sup>31</sup> J. C. Groot, "Aspects horizontaux de la collégialité," *Unam Sanctam* 51c, pp. 805-28.

episcopate. The bishops testify in concrete fashion to the universality of the Church. They thereby fulfill, or perfect, the universality in unity which is characteristic of the office or function of the pope. The bishops make present and visible universally that unity to which the office of the pope stands as a witness.<sup>32</sup> We may hope, therefore, that councils and synods will become once again a regular feature of a renewed Church. If this is done, and if they become effectively collegial in their preparation, agenda, and application, collegiality and pluralism may bear more realistic fruits in the Church.

We are becoming increasingly conscious of the extent to which the Church must respond to the conditions and influence of on-going life. Statements of principle alone rarely solve problems. The bishops of the various nations are called today to act together rapidly and regularly in communion with the pope. They will be required to coordinate programs and carry them out efficiently in accordance with the increasing tempo of the times. Regularly scheduled councils or synods would increase our hopes that collective responsibility and action may more rapidly become manifest in the Church. The vertical ties between the Petrine office and the bishops have been abundantly stressed since 1870. What appears urgent now is the development of more horizontal relationships resulting in genuine collective responsibility and collegial government.

#### D. *Pluralism and Christian Unity*

The promotion and defence of pluralism are vital to the proper growth of the Church today. The Church, while being one, is pluriform, not uniform. Pluralism is necessary not only with regard to individuals, but also with respect to larger groups such as the local churches, the various peoples and regions. Tensions which normally ensue between the local churches and the Church universal will call for a deeper understanding of the values of complementarity, subsidiarity and solidarity.

The doctrine of St. Paul concerning the variety of gifts has its application here. The collegiate character of the Church's government serves its permanent pluralism and also explains why the College of

<sup>32</sup> J. Ratzinger, "*Primacy, Episcopate and Apostolic Succession*," p. 62.



bishops governs the Church most effectively by being scattered throughout the world.<sup>33</sup> After centuries of insistence on conformity with a central model, there are growing signs that the Church may again come to recognize that legitimate pluralism enhances true unity. This seems to be the thrust of the declaration Pope Paul made before the symposium of African bishops on July 31, 1969. While insisting that the Church in Africa must be first of all Catholic, he declared that there should be an African Christianity formulated in terms congenial to African culture and contributing to the universal Church "the precious and original contribution of 'negritude,'" particularly necessary at this time in history.<sup>34</sup>

The pluralistic principle of the Church has a direct application in the area of ecumenism. The Decree on Ecumenism recognizes that the Spirit of Christ has used the other Christian churches as means of salvation, and that they have preserved many of the most significant endowments which enliven and build up the Church. The question now is how sincerely the Roman Catholic Church is willing to promote that aspect of legitimate pluralism which other Christian communities have developed in the last four centuries outside the Catholic Church, and which so many of them are anxious to restore to the one *Catholica*.

It will be necessary also to quiet the fears of those other Christians who remain suspicious that the papal magisterium may be used arbitrarily and who therefore look on Roman Catholic participation in ecumenism as a trap. Practical application of ecumenical principles by local churches throughout the world will do more to win the trust and co-operation of our separated Christian brothers than repeated declarations. Archbishop Ramsey of Canterbury wrote years ago that the precise functions of the primacy would be defined in a manner acceptable to all Christians by the recovery and growth of authentic organic life in every part of the Church.<sup>35</sup> Most of the separated Oriental churches would probably subscribe to such a statement.

The responsibility of reassessing the Petrine office or function in the light of modern scholarship and current pastoral experience rests

<sup>33</sup> K. Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-8.

<sup>34</sup> *AAS* 61 (1969), pp. 576-8.

<sup>35</sup> A. M. Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (London, 1955).

with the entire College of bishops headed by the successor of Peter. Pope Paul has admitted publicly that the present style in which his office is exercised constitutes a major ecumenical problem. He will need the assistance of his brother bishops to exercise his service to the whole Church in a manner consonant with the teachings of Scripture and acceptable to the other separated Christian churches.

Many of our other Christian brothers recall the ancient tradition that Peter was established in grace by Christ after his triple denial and enabled to confirm his brothers in faith because so much had been forgiven him (cf. Luke 22:32). To them Peter, the foundation stone or rock, represents not a monarch who proclaims doctrine to less enlightened subjects, but a symbol of Christ's on-going forgiveness for all sinners. They would like to find in the Petrine office a greater accent on the confession of Christ's forgiveness to fellow pilgrims. They would accept the primacy of service of one with whom they could commune in joyful hope because he makes no secret of sharing their own temptations and frustrations. Separated Christians increasingly recognize the need for a center of unity such as can be found only in the Petrine office. It is not the office or role, but the historic style of its exercise to which they continue to object. Our hope is that the Petrine office may cease to be an obstacle to ecumenical advance and become the necessary bond of unity in charity for all Christ's followers.

Many ecumenical obstacles inherent in the present mode of exercise of the Petrine office have their counterpart in the local episcopal function or office. The current function of bishops has also been conditioned by previous cultural patterns. It will require similar courageous evangelical renunciation to remove these stumbling blocks in the interests of unity.<sup>36</sup> We need the living experience of renewed pastoral life at the level of both the local and universal Church. Christian sharing in authority and ecclesial communion in all their complexity will further unity more than reiterated statements of principles. The ecumenical responsibility to make this happen lies at the heart of the bishops' role.

Another legitimate question one might raise is whether ecumenism

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *The Future of Ecumenism* (Concilium 44; Paulist, 1969), pp. 89-130, 182.

would not be more effectively promoted if local church leaders assumed greater initiative. Given the diversity of historical and cultural situations, and the varying pace of change from country to country, it would appear possible to achieve limited common communion and unity among certain regional churches.

IV. PETRINE OFFICE AND COLLEGIALITY: INSIGHTS FOR  
TOMMORROW

A. *The Church and the Modern World*

All the fine theories about collective responsibility and collegial government will have little impact on modern society until people see concerted action resulting in verifiable results. Such is the condition of the modern world to which the church must be present by virtue of the principle of redemptive incarnation. Our witness to the gospel will have little effect on a generation which ignores the Church because it appears to be an introverted institution with limited relevance to the real needs of man.

The Church is gradually rediscovering itself, the world and the mutual relationships which exist between them in the light of its eschatological mission. For too long it saw itself as a power in opposition to the powers of the world. Today it must take up again and carry forward its humble service of humanity, not by claims of jurisdiction over the temporal city but through the influence of the faithful enlightened by the truths of the gospel.<sup>37</sup> Pastoral and doctrinal effectiveness in our service of the temporal order calls for the development of a theology of profane values. This will be achieved only through an empirical and theological process of dialogue where we will both listen to the voices of the world and return to the sources of faith. The example was set for us in the Vatican Constitution on The Church in the Modern World. It remains for us to apply this process to daily pastoral life.

To be effective today this pastoral concern should redirect its efforts towards the poor to whom the kingdom of God must be made visible. Poverty and under-development in all its forms, economic,

<sup>37</sup> Y. Congar, *Histoire des dogmes III: L'Église* (Éditions du Cerf, 1970), p. 463.

social, cultural, political, afford a unique opportunity to exercise collective responsibility. Mutual sharing of concern for human problems by bishops and pope together represents another new direction with great pastoral consequences for the Church. This corporate apostolate in the service of humanity may also provide more effective reconciliation to the tensions between the episcopacy and the primacy than merely theoretical considerations. For the Church's mission will be better understood in a context of service.

Where do all these considerations lead us? We began by outlining the deep intellectual and socio-political currents which are gradually transforming our world. We recalled some of the new values which accompany and modify the social and cultural upheaval of our era. We suggested that these new values will of necessity bring about dramatic changes in our ecclesiastical structures. We are already feeling some of the pressures, and they will probably increase in intensity and magnitude. Most tensions between primacy and collegiality currently center around the concept of the Church as a society wielding power and authority according to patterns conditioned by values from a past era. They will probably not find a solution in theory until further pastoral experience has responded to the new values modern man is experiencing. Fraternity, communion, collegiality, authority as service, must gradually modify the structures of the Church to enable it to proclaim the Gospel more effectively for our times.

#### B. *Horizontal Collegiality*

Already we can see emerging some elements of solution. The clearer understanding of collegiality achieved by Vatican II gives us the basic principles whereby we can reconcile the universal papal primacy with the divine institution of the episcopate. The interlocking of episcopal and papal authority can also be better harmonized now that we are developing the doctrine of the local church and its relationships to the Church universal. We have reached a better understanding of the issues surrounding the divine right of the individual bishop by our renewed insights into the mystery of the divine right of the universal episcopate.

There are three distinct aspects of collegiality. The first expresses

the identity of one divine authority or diakonia shared by the whole episcopal College. Here, primacy and episcopacy remain in constant dynamic and creative relationship. A second aspect of collegiality is the plurality of members. The whole College of bishops, together and individually, share in the final responsibility for the Church. Finally, there is papal primacy, which while exercised over the other members of the College individually and corporately is a primacy within, not *vis-à-vis* this College.

Episcopal authority in the Church, in communion with Peter, both corporate and individual, comes directly from Christ. Advocates of authentic church renewal from many walks of life and representing many Christian Churches besides our own are conscious of this. They are deeply concerned that bishops should accept the full consequences of this doctrine in the pastoral guidance of the local churches entrusted to them. The Church was founded as one. Its unity is primordial. The College of bishops exists prior to the existence of primacy. The service of bishops to the successor of Peter is rooted in and required by their unity and communion with him in the College. Since the College also has a service to perform for the whole Church, the pope's service to the whole Church prevents his taking measures which would infringe on the original rights of the universal episcopate. Where restrictive measures may be needed against a member of the College they should not endanger the rights of the whole College of bishops.<sup>38</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

### *Petrine Office and Collegiality in a Church Pastorally Renewed*

It is significant that the modern problematic of balance in the mutual relationships between Petrine office and collegiality came to the fore during a council which stressed the pastoral aspect of the Church's mission. The second Synod of bishops in Rome later reached the conclusion that the theological problems affecting collegiality and primacy need not all be solved before effective work could begin. The

<sup>38</sup> K. Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 72, 73, 84; also J. Lecuyer, C.S.Sp., "Orientations présentes de la théologie de l'épiscopat," *Unam Sanctam* 39 (Editions du Cerf, 1962), p. 807.

irreducible tensions between universal and particular, unity and pluralism, primacy and collegiality, may well be divine instruments for keeping the Church alive and healthy. They are also signs of genuine humanity. Early Christianity was very conscious that its unity was characterized by both elements of catholicity or communion of churches, and apostolicity or the episcopal principle. The one form of communion calls for the other. The primacy which guarantees world unity and the episcopacy which assures local unity both complete each other. Healthy tension between them can be a source of life and deeper communion.

Pastoral collaboration and the sharing of responsibility between the bishops and the pope is intensifying gradually. Successive synods may eventually clarify the role of the curial offices: necessary but auxiliary bodies supporting collegial authority. Internationalization of the curia is no longer a contentious issue since Pope Paul began implementing its reform.

The vision of faith does not oppose primacy and collegiality, but finds a principle of reconciliation in the active presence of Christ and his Spirit of love. In this time of renewal greater priority should be given to the deepening and development of hierarchical communion than to assigning juridical categories to it. The *affectus collegialis* is not a question of sentiment, but an ontological relationship. The bond of brotherly love which binds the episcopal college together qualifies the very nature of the institution. Living communion is more essential than the ever necessary juridical powers, for this *koinonia* will survive into eternity.<sup>39</sup> At the closing of the Synod, Pope Paul likened himself to Peter, the vicar of Christ's love, placed at the crossroads of charity, like the heart of the Church loving and receiving all who come.<sup>40</sup> If we could de-emphasize our Western tendency toward juridicism and develop the theological aspect of the Church as communion in love, a strong central authority would be more easily recognized as indispensable by all the Christian churches.

Pope Paul deserves credit for promoting more meaningful dialogue with bishops' conferences throughout the world. One can only

<sup>39</sup> Cf. the eloquent plea by Msgr. G. Philips of Louvain at the 1969 Synod of Bishops in Rome, *Documentation catholique*, 1557 (Feb. 15, 1970), pp. 188-9.

<sup>40</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, October 27-8, 1969.

hope this trend develops into a full collegial process of policy and decision making. Is it too much to dream of the day when in the midst of vigorous local churches, the Petrine office will function more like a co-ordinative force than an imperial one? The pope's normal role would then revolve more around the universal liaison between churches, the promotion and arbitration of visible communion. He would ever remain the ultimate arbiter of definitions of faith, but would not be burdened to the extent he is today with the practical details of "quasi-imperial government" for the whole Church. The bishops' conferences would be responsible for matters of local harmony. Only in exceptional emergency situations would the pope have to intervene as successor of Peter.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See comments of Bishop Butler, *The Tablet*, Nov. 22, 1969, p. 1139; also his book *The Theology of Vatican II* (London, 1967).