

IS THERE A CATHOLIC ECCLESIOLOGY?

The remark is nearly commonplace that ecclesiology as a distinct theological tractate or discipline developed relatively late, toward the end of the Middle Ages. Of course there had been a great deal of reflection on the Church long before that period. St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians would not make sense if Paul had no ecclesiology. St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* showed a profound concern about the Church and its relation to the Empire and the world. All patristic liturgies express the sense of responsibility felt by the Christians toward the community of the faithful, both in its local embodiment and in its universal dimension. The Church of the Fathers was not a nude fact, as though the Fathers lived the faith in the community without realizing the meaning of the community in the faith. Louis Bouyer is undoubtedly right in his book, *L'Église de Dieu*,¹ to present the Church of the Fathers in strict continuity with that of the New Testament.

Yet whatever major elements for a developed ecclesiology one finds among the Fathers, it remains that until the eve of the Reformation the Church was never looked at *in directo*, but was always seen *in obliquo*. In a more modern language, the Church was connoted but not denoted by the kerygma, by its formulation in the *regula fidei*, by the normative decisions of the great councils, and by the expository and systematic reflections on the Christian experience which abounded in patristic and medieval literature.

The first tractates *De ecclesia* grew out of the conflicts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The earliest seems to be the *De regimine christiano* by James of Viterbo (1301-1302), occasioned by the struggle between Philip the Fair of France and Pope Boniface VIII. The most complete is certainly the *Summa de ecclesia* of John of Torquemada (d. 1468); it opposes a papalist to a conciliarist ecclesiology. A whole series of other works was written on the occasion of the papal schism of 1378-1417.² Born in a crisis, these ecclesiologies were

¹*L'Église de Dieu* (Paris, 1970).

²Yves Congar, *L'Église, de saint Augustin à l'Époque Moderne* (Paris, 1970).

conditioned by it. The treatises that were written then were focused on unity and its means. The unity in question was structural and raised problems of government. Thus it is not surprising that the ecclesiological decrees of the Councils of Constance (sessions IV and V, March-April, 1415) and of Basle (session XI, April, 1433) dealt with the question of the supreme hierarchic authority, located in the difficult area of the relations between the council and the pope. Admittedly, other aspects of the Church were not forgotten; thus John of Torquemada explained at length the interior structure of the Church as sacramental mystery. Yet the balance was weighted toward the canonical rather than the sacramental or the spiritual aspects of the Church. The emerging systematic ecclesiology of the later Middle Ages studied structures of government within the Church no less than its essence or nature, and more than its life or experience. This dominant characteristic has survived to this day, despite some important reactions that have taken place in the meantime.

The most thorough-going of these reactions was that of the Reformers. Certainly, the beginnings of the Reformation were not auspicious from this point of view. In his reformatory writings of 1520, the crucial year for his theology, Martin Luther opposed the Church as external sacramental system, which he tried to reduce to what he considered to be its proper size according to the Scriptures (*The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*), and the Church as interior realm of spiritual freedom, which he described and extolled in *The Freedom of a Christian Man*. Responsibility for government he placed in principle, at least for times of emergency, in the hands of Christian princes (*Appeal to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*). This three-prong assault on medieval conceptions and practices was to lead to manifold ambiguities in Protestant ecclesiological views.

In Lutheranism, the external forms were eventually abandoned to secular authority, with the help of Luther's "two kingdom" theology.³ After Calvin's bold but utopian attempt to reconstruct the Church on a theocratic rather than a prelacy-centered model, the external forms came to be considered unimportant in Calvinism. In both cases, the freedom of the gospel determines the essence of the Church. But since the freedom of the gospel is perceived by each believer under the interi-

³George Forell, *Faith Active in Love* (Minneapolis, 1954).

or testimony of the Spirit, the recognition of the Church is ultimately an individual rather than a corporate problem. Fortunately, the standard definition of the marks of the Church, which is found in Lutheranism, in Calvinism and in the Anglicanism of the 39 Articles, tries to steer clear of the two dangers of the irrelevance of the Church's social forms and of the invisibility of the true Church. In the *Apology for the Augsburg Confession* Melancthon writes:

The Church is not just a society with its distinguishing notes and rites like other human societies. She is principally a society of faith and the Holy Spirit in our hearts; though she has indeed her exterior notes, that she may be recognized: pure Gospel doctrine, and an administration of the sacraments which is in harmony with the teaching of Christ (Art. VIII, 5).

An immeasurable ecclesiological advance is made possible by such a text: ecclesiology is oriented away from structures of government towards the inner consistence of the Church in the graciousness of God. From peripheral questions of power and jurisdiction we reach to a central knot: the oneness between God and man in the grace of Christ. By and large, Protestant ecclesiologies since then have preserved this interior level; but they have done so with an increasingly atomistic view of community, without sufficiently working out the consequences of communion with God for the Church as communion and for its insertion in human society in the form of a social body living from and under the gospel.

The Counter-Reformation elaborated its own doctrine of the Church largely in opposition to the Reformers' ambiguities, yet at the cost of other ambiguities. As was commonly done on both sides of the sixteenth-century controversies, the *Roman Catechism* of Pius V, published in 1566, treated of the Church in the context of the ninth article of the creed. Let me quote the following definition:

Communi . . . sacrarum scripturarum consuetudine, haec vox (ecclesia) ad rempublicam christianam fideliumque tantum congregationes significandas usurpata est; qui scilicet ad lucem veritatis et Dei notitiam per fidem vocati sunt, ut, rejectis ignorantiae et errorum tenebris, Deum verum et sancta colant illique ex toto corde inserviant . . . (Part I, ch. X, ii).

The Church is thus defined: (1) in contrast with non-believers' gatherings, (2) in relation to a call from God to his true knowledge and service through faith, (3) as the gathering of the faithful who constitute (4) the Christian republic. Thus the Catechism constitutes a full tractate in succinct form. The faithful are called interiorly by the Spirit, exteriorly by pastors and preachers (III). The Church has many scriptural names (IV). It has two parts, triumphant and militant (V), which are closely united (VI). It is visible (VII). It is exclusive, as infidels, heretics and schismatics and the excommunicate do not belong to it (IX). It comprises both good and evil men (VIII). Although the word *ecclesia* has several meanings since it is used for many local churches (X), the Church is one (XI). A visible sign of its oneness is the Roman Pontiff, "visible head of the Church of Christ" (XII-XIII); yet there are other reasons why the Church is one (XIV). The Church is also holy (XV), catholic (XVI), apostolic (XVII). It is endowed with inerrancy in *fidei ac morum disciplina tradenda* (XVIII). It was anticipated in the Old Testament (XIX). Finally the Catechism explains why "believing the Church" is included in the articles of faith (XX) and examines some implications of this belief (XXI). It notes that if we believe the Church, we do not believe *in* the Church as we believe in God (XXIII). Five chapters on the communion of the saints (XXIII-XXVII) follow: this is another aspect of the Church and does not constitute a separate article.

In its subsequent developments, Counter-Reformation ecclesiology followed three main lines, with of course a great number of additional nuances of thought. Bellarmine emphasized papal jurisdiction in the whole Church and episcopal authority in each diocese. The mainstream of the Gallicans, of which the theology of Bossuet constitutes a good example, affirmed the relative autonomy of the Church in France, placed "by ancient tradition" in the care of the bishops and the king. Both remained strongly anti-Protestant. Another kind of ecclesiology, which favored conciliarism, tended toward a populist view of the Church. With Paolo Sarpi (1551-1623) this was blended with a leaning toward Protestant theological positions on the matters examined by the Council of Trent. With most Catholics of the times, whether they belonged to the papalist or to the Gallican-conciliarist side, ecclesiology had become largely a matter of law and customs, of powers and jurisdiction. The chief question was to determine what powers are wielded

by the pope, the bishops and the priests. In such a context, the laity became, to borrow Yves Congar's expression, the *materia circa quam* these powers were to be exercised. The spiritual aspects of the Church were never, I believe, forgotten. The Tridentine Catechism, which had stressed them so well, remained too influential for such a thing to happen. Yet the canonical rather than the theological dimension of the Church had now pride of place. This focus was further marked in the second half of the nineteenth century. To all practical purposes, Catholic ecclesiology became, with Vatican Council I, a theology of hierarchic authority. It was focused on the bishop of Rome, this focus including the episcopate since papal authority was described and defined in terms of its episcopal nature and model. I do not myself think that this streamlining of ecclesiology as hierarchology was intended, although little effort was made to avoid it when the major part of the projected Constitution on the Church was laid aside owing to the political and military events which brought the Council to a premature end. From 1870 to 1962, the most authoritative conciliar documents of the Catholic Church taught an overdeveloped hierarchology in the context of an underdeveloped ecclesiology.

Vatican Council II applied itself to the task of restoring the balance. The Constitution *Lumen gentium* sets the theology of powers (ch. 3) in the broad context of the mystery of the Church seen through a number of scriptural images (ch. 1) and chiefly that of the People of God (ch. 2). This leads to extensive reflections on the laity (ch. 4), on the universal call to holiness (ch. 5), on the charismatic hierarchy as exemplified in the religious vocation (ch. 6) and on the eschatological orientation of the Church (ch. 7). The final chapter treats of the one person in whom holiness, charisms and eschatology converge, the Virgin Mary (ch. 8). Notwithstanding several conciliar addresses of Pope Paul and the recent pastoral letter of the American bishops, Mary is not entitled by the Council "Mother of the Church"; she is "Mother of God and of men" and *ecclesiae typus*, model of the Church, in so far as the Church also is mother and virgin.⁴

⁴Paul VI, Address for the closing day of the third session of the Council, November 21, 1964 (*Doc. cath.*, 1964; n. 1427, col. 1543-4); National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Behold Your Mother. Woman of Faith*, November 21, 1973, Washington, 1973, p. 27.

On the whole, little notice has been taken of the obvious fact that, in restoring the balance of Catholic ecclesiology, Vatican II did no more than return on most points to the Catechism of Pius V. Only chapters 4, 6 and 7 are, in relation to the Catechism, new. Chapters 4 (the laity) and 6 (the religious) reflect the cultural mood of our times, concerned with the status of individuals in society: chapter 4 looks at the majority and chapter 6 at some minorities. There remains chapter 7, on the eschatological dimension of the Church, as the most original contribution of Vatican II to ecclesiology. The Council, at this point, was inspired by the ecclesiologies of Möhler, Newman and Scheeben. Though both Hans Küng and Louis Bouyer devote a sizable space to eschatology in their widely divergent studies on the Church, post-conciliar discussions have paid little attention to eschatology.⁵

That Catholic ecclesiologies were long in the making may teach us that it is not only possible but even quite normal for the Church to live without an elaborate self-definition. I would even venture to think that it would be better if no ecclesiology had ever emerged. For ecclesiology implies that the Church has looked at, and reflected about, itself. This in turn presupposes that Church members at all levels and especially theologians, thinkers of many disciplines and members of the clerical and charismatic hierarchies have taken time out for a sort of collective introspection. But when Cardinal Suenens, speaking at the Council on the 30th of November, 1963, asked the question: *Ecclesia catholica, quid dicis de teipso?*⁶ he could well have been given an answer like the following: "About myself I have nothing to say, for I speak only of Christ as Christ speaks of God. If you wish to know what I am or who I am, do not look at me, but look at the one to whom I point. When I speak, whether to pray, to teach or to exhort, do not pay attention to me but to my words. Do not scrutinize the faithful when they gather for worship or for service, but see if you can share their experience before God. Do not ask about my life, but seek the one from whom I live. If you wish to interrogate the witness, ask him to be truly a witness and to describe to you what he has perceived. Do not wonder if the faithful look saved, but ask yourself if you need salvation. By all

⁵Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York, 1967), Part B, chap. 3; Bouyer, *L'Église de Dieu*, chaps. 11-12.

⁶*Doc. cath.*, 1963, n. 1391, col. 4-7.

means investigate the psychological, social, historical, dialectical explanations of what I seem to be; but when you have exhausted explanations, ask yourself still if another approach is not possible, whereby the Church is known by interior experience and connaturality."

By suggesting such an answer, I wish to say that the first characteristic of a Catholic ecclesiology is to be entirely superfluous as long as the Church truly fulfills its proper function. When it is seen as the witness to Christ, questions are about Christ and not about the witness. One should not even speak of the Church showing its credentials. For whatever its credentials, it stands or falls with the value of its proclamation about Jesus. When the Church confronts its Lord, it has neither the inclination nor the time to confront itself. In the light of Mount Tabor where it perceives the great glory of the Lord and give thanks for it, the Church is necessarily in darkness about itself. Being inebriated with love, it forgets itself and does not seek a self-definition. The mystical Church cannot escape the law of all mystical life.

As a point of fact, the request for an ecclesiology has characterized periods of crisis. The desire to objectify the Church's self-identity has been proportionate to its temporary inadequacy to the task of being the Church. The Church tries to define itself when its empirical existence is threatened. If the separation between Rome and Constantinople did not inspire efforts to ecclesilogize, it was because the Church did not feel deeply endangered by it. The "schism" took place within a Church at peace. Far more perilous were the papal schism of the Western Middle Ages and the polemics of the Reformation. And the contemporary turmoil may be the most fearful, when so many of the Church's members feel overwhelmed by the tasks to do and by our inability to do them. The result, however, of this crisis context of ecclesiology is that we have no ecclesiology of peace but only ecclesiologies of crisis.

One aspect of these ecclesiologies has been constant. The models that have emerged from the confrontation of the Church with itself have all been centered on something to do. The tasks of the hierarchy have held the attention of Catholic ecclesiologies, as the work of preaching and ministering has held that of Protestant ecclesiologies. That is, although their subject matter has been the *ecclesia*, the communion of God with men, most ecclesiological models have been focused on a selective orthopraxis. Of the different praxes that could be

envisaged because they correspond to the tasks of ministry, the praxis of government has been at the heart of Catholic reflection, under the title of participation in the royal function of Christ. Admittedly, some authors have tried to counterbalance this trend. Shortly after Vatican I, Dom Adrien Grea⁷ placed papal and episcopal government in a Trinitarian context that gave it unusual depth. Shortly before Vatican II, Pius XII crowned the efforts of many with his encyclical on the Church as Mystical Body of Christ (*Mystici corporis*, 1943). Vatican II carefully analyzed the Church as mystery, thus bringing to the fore the Pauline doctrine on the paschal dimension of the *ecclesia*. Still more, in my judgment, did Pope Paul attempt to stem the orthopractical tide with what I consider a great encyclical, *Ecclesiam suam*, of the 6th of August, 1964. The view of the Church outlined in these pages comes nearest among all Church documents to an ecclesiology of the *mysterion*. Granted that an ecclesiology should be functional, that it must promote the function of the Church and its ministry, I would not recognize the mark of catholicity in ecclesiologies where orthopraxis would be substituted for orthodoxy. From this point of view, I have misgivings about the urge felt by Vatican II, after describing the Church in itself, to try a complementary approach, envisaging the Church "in the world of these times." However much it may help the members and especially the ministers of the Church to see themselves in the perspective of the coming end of the second millennium after Christ, *Gaudium et spes* betrays the underlying fear that it may be possible for the Church to live outside of the world, for orthodoxy to be disfunctional. Indeed, one should eschew so-called monophysite views of the Church. But such views are not ruled out by describing tasks and functions in the evanescent light of "signs of the times" that are in constant flux. Monophysitism should be avoided antecedently to all concrete tasks, by a correct focusing of the Church's self-understanding, in the paradox that it need not understand itself as long as it understands its Lord. This points to *mysterion* rather than government or peoplehood as the proper ecclesiological model.

A third characteristic of Catholic ecclesiology emerges, in relation precisely to the Church as people. In the context of Vatican II, the

⁷Adrien Grea (1828-1917), *L'Église et sa Divine Constitution* (Paris, 1884).

ecclesiology of the People of God counterbalances the hierarchic conception of the Counter-Reformation and of Vatican I. But all ecclesiologies of peoplehood are profoundly ambiguous.

Firstly, the concept of God's people may be taken in a universalist perspective. In final analysis, the People of God must be the entire people of the universe, including the creatures who may live on remote planets of distant galaxies, too far for our ever contacting them and presumably too smart for contacting us. This of course seems attractive in a post-Teilhardian age. But it does not help us to understand the Church on earth in its fourfold function of proclamation, adoration, education and service. It even befuddles the discussion by removing the missionary task of preaching the gospel to those who are not the Church and by obscuring the corresponding eschatological nîsus toward the fulfillment of the Church's mission.

Secondly, the Church as People of God may be interpreted on the pattern of the Old Testament, from which the idea evidently derives. Then one tends to see the People as a nation, be it the chosen one. But the *tertium genus* of which Tertullian spoke differed both from the Jewish *genus*, identified with a nation, and from the Gentile *genus*, identified with a world empire. It was the *genus* of the eschaton, the latter-day saints, the heralds of the end, united among themselves neither by blood nor by citizenship but by the Lord's *agape*. The present tendency to see all men as "anonymous Christians" and therefore as anonymous members of the Church threatens the radically eschatological dimension of the Church. As People of God, the Church is not just people. It is "of God," the small remnant gathered in the upper room in expectation of the Spirit. It is the community locally convening in the Eucharist of the Lord. This People has meaning because of its nearness to the eschaton. But this is not the general sense of the current ecclesiology of peoplehood.

Thirdly, it would be no less fatal to analyze the peoplehood of the Church in terms of modern democracies. Then we would fall into a populist model. Then, as Hans Küng, if I read him correctly, has suggested in his disastrous volumes, *Infallible?* (1971) and *Why Priests?* (1972) and already in his otherwise admirable study, *The Church* (1967), the Church would be identical with the universal gathering of all believers in Christ, a people's spiritual democracy. Such a trend

undermines a fundamental point: the people of the world are not the People of God in their horizontality, but only in their verticality. To be the People of God, they must be seen vertically, in relation to the Lord of the People and to the eschaton already present in our midst. Admittedly, the *Heilsgeschichte* unfolds itself in time, horizontally. But I hold, with the older tradition, that the *Heilsgeschichte* as such ended with the resurrection and the ascension of the Lord. The events of our times are not *heilsgeschichtlich*. Their meaning lies in their connection with the parousia by anticipation, or contrast, or opposition. Indeed, we are still passing, in a certain sense, from promise to fulfillment to further promise. The Old Testament pattern of promise-fulfillment is still operative in the Church of Christ. But this is saying that we are on pilgrimage, a people on the move. As members of the Church we have our citizenship in heaven and we cannot rest in any abiding city on earth. The Church hopes for the return of the Lord in judgment, when all promises shall be fulfilled. A Catholic ecclesiology is profoundly eschatological. This is its focus.

This brings in a fourth characteristic of a Catholic ecclesiology. The central approach must be what I would like to call descending rather than ascending. That is, the Church does not come into being by the initiative of its membership, but solely by the will and the power of the "head" of the body, the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason the early Fathers antedated the Church, seeing it already in existence and at work in the Old Testament and even starting with "Abel the Just." And if the origin of the Church is marked by God's sole initiative in his Word, it follows that the Church transcends all and each of its members. I do not think it is quite appropriate to speak in this context of the Church as a person in the real, though corporate, sense of the term, as Jacques Maritain does in his suggestive meditation, *De l'Église du Christ* (1970). In a somewhat different sense from the one it has in Russian sophianism, I would like to speak of the Church as God's created Wisdom, imprinted upon creation from the beginning. We also have a perfectly good biblical term in Paul's notion of the *pleroma* which fills all in all. The Church is God's created *pleroma*, in strict dependence on, but also in, indefectible fidelity to, the uncreated *Pleroma* of the Word. I therefore have no hesitancy to say that the suggestions that have lately been made about the Church being both

justa and *peccatrix*, being sinful no less than holy, are less than Catholic. The oneness of the Church and its members must be, to use the expression of the Council of Chalcedon according to the analogy of faith, "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation."⁸ It is in this sense that I understand the notion, introduced by Vatican II, that the Church of Christ organized as a society "subsists" in the Catholic Church:⁹ the institution is a conglomeration of members according to the historical structure of Catholicism; and the Church is present and alive within it, without ever being totally co-terminous with it, still less limited to it. It follows from this, however, that such a "subsistence" in the visible institutions of the Catholic Church is not extraneous or accidental. By analogy with the descent of the incarnation, the Church's embodiment in social forms endowed with a visible hierarchy and with all the trappings of a human organization, is a necessity of the gospel.

Finally, a Catholic ecclesiology must be unreservedly Catholic. Catholicity here implies two dimensions. On the one hand, the Church knows itself to be, not a part or a level or a stage in the cosmos, but the cosmos itself. It is the created Wisdom of God, the counterpart and the mirror outside of God of his eternal Wisdom, the Word, within God. Filled with the *Pleroma* and *pleroma* itself, it can be no less than the religious dimension of the universe, or the universe in its religious dimension. But it is evident that the whole escapes definition, as no higher viewpoint may be found from which it can be defined. What we see or sense of the Church is only a small ripple at the surface of its oceanic depths; and what an ecclesiology describes or defines is only part of what we see or sense. A Catholic ecclesiology has a cosmic horizon unlimited even by the shortcomings of ecclesiological reflection.

On the other hand, the theory of what we see of the *ecclesia* must include all those who are, in one way or another, related to Christ. Because Vatican II was aware of this, it included sections 15 and 16 in chapter 2 of *Lumen gentium*, to the effect that Christians out of communion with the see of Rome and also non-Christians who believe in God are positively related to Catholic Christians. Taking one step fur-

⁸DS, 302.

⁹*Lumen gentium*, 8.

ther, the Decree on Ecumenism explained positively the relation of whole communities, and not only of individuals, to the Catholic Church. This, as I see it, is only a tentative groping toward an ecclesiology where other Christian communities may find their place without jeopardizing any of their legitimate traditions. A Catholic ecclesiology should be ecumenical. This is admittedly a tautology. But it ceases to be a tautology if we realize the implication that it must be, by the same token, paradoxical. The contemporary bilateral dialogues have a great role to play in developing awareness of the fully Catholic dimension and in helping the Church to discover the shape of the paradox.¹⁰

But we have hardly begun to look at the problem of the wider ecumenism, which should include all the family of God in the great religions of the world. At this point I may risk some remarks that may well be unpopular. For many reasons, good and bad, Catholics have now become rather open in their thinking about Judaism's continuing place in the pattern of salvation. Our roots come from the same soil and have been nourished with the same food. The Holocaust has sensitized us to the permanent witness to the Most High rendered by the people of the Jews. The struggle of the State of Israel for viability has attuned us to the meaning of the relationship, in the Jewish context, between the national State of Israel and the religious hope of the Jews of many lands. But this facet of contemporary awareness ought not to blind us to the equally profound, equally mysterious, equally promising question of the meaning of Islam in the pattern of salvation. The excessively short passages of *Lumen gentium*, n. 16, and of *Nostra aetate*, n. 3, about Moslems have now been largely overlooked or forgotten. Yet, unlike Judaism, the Moslem faith shares with ours an unrestricted universality: it also wants to be the faith of all peoples regardless of ancestry, race or color. Our encounter with Islam, both in its official and in its mystical forms, and the example of the Moslem nations ought to teach us a great deal about the implications of catholicity for human solidarity. The recent zeal for things far-oriental should not lead us to overlook or minimize the stark eloquence of the Koran's testimony to the one God who spoke through the prophets and calls all men to

¹⁰See the volumes, *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue*, 1-4; also the Windsor Statement on the Eucharist and the Canterbury Statement on the Ministry (Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission).

surrender to himself. For no inward journey in the depths of introspection can be genuine unless it leads to a perception of the Transcendent One, the Unbegotten from whom "all good things come" (James 1:16).

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In a little book published in 1965, I described the Church as "the bearer of the Spirit," the "holy typology," the eschaton, the institution of salvation. I also sketched the future ecclesiology that was to emerge from Vatican II as an "ecclesiology of the cross," an "ecclesiology of the people" and "an ecclesiology of the kingdom."¹¹ This prophecy, if it was one, has been verified as far as the first two points are concerned. The call to the Church to be the Church of the poor has been widely echoed in the hierarchy itself, as at the second Conference of the Latin American Bishops (Medellin, August 24 to September 6, 1968). This has led among other phenomena to a theology of liberation. Seen as a whole, however, the ecclesiology which is implied in the theology of liberation developing at this moment in Latin America is indeed a mixed bag.¹² The call to arms of Camilo Torres rubs elbows with the half-baked Marxism of Gustavo Gutierrez and with the challenging prophecies, not devoid of puzzling oddities, of Ivan Illich. Yet the question must be faced squarely: can the Church (as institution) long remain the Church (as *mysterion*), fulfilling the four tasks of its ministry, proclamation, adoration, education, service, without supporting the struggle for justice wherever this takes place? I am not concerned here with anxieties about outside credibility. My point is ecclesiological and touches on the inner reality of the *ecclesia*. The Church is God's Church whatever we do or do not do. But we, the members, become the Church only to the extent that we share its hopes and carry out its tasks.

As regards an ecclesiology of the people, Catholic theologians have traveled many a mile since Vatican II. I have indicated that I have the gravest misgivings about some of the current orientations. These mis-

¹¹*The Church Tomorrow* (New York, 1965), pp. 94-114.

¹²See Arturo Paoli, *Dialogo de la Liberacion* (Buenos Aires, 1970); Gustavo Gutierrez, *Teologia de la Liberacion* (Lima, 1971); Rafael Avila, *Teologia, Evangelizacion y Liberacion* (Bogota, 1973) (with bibliography).

givings flow from my third point. For I understand the People of God in an eschatological perspective. And my forecast has not come true regarding an ecclesiology of the kingdom.¹³ This also I see as radically eschatological. Only in the light of the eschaton does the Church really make sense. Despite the apocalyptic features of our world as it reaches the end of the second millennium after Christ, the sense of the eschaton I find missing in the Church today and in the fashionable ecclesiological writings. We are not liberated from the political and ecclesiastico-political forms of the Ancien Regime; we have simply changed their shape. We listen to the sound of the promises, but we do not look forward to the surprise of their fulfillment. If we did, we would anticipate the new rather than bemoan the old and complain about the present. The Church would be experienced as the institution of salvation and of liberation, but also as the bearer of the Spirit, the holy typology, the eschaton. And it cannot really be the institution of salvation unless it carries with it and it proclaims abroad the promise of the eschatological fulfillment.

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¹³*The Pilgrim Church* (New York, 1967); *Meditation on the Word* (New York, 1968).