

# The anti-Roman attitude\*

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The Catholic community must overcome the deep-seated anti-Roman attitude while appraising the misgivings about the Church's leadership.

The intention of this presentation is to show that there is a deep-seated anti-Roman attitude within the Catholic Church—for the moment what is without does not concern us—and that this attitude has not only sociological and historical grounds but also a theological basis, and that it has to be overcome ever anew by the community of the Church. Nothing is further from us than "Papolatry." We shall take seriously and appraise realistically the misgivings about the Church's leadership, from the very beginning, through developments in the course of history, down to the present.

We are aware that in the twentieth century we have been blessed with several selfless popes who were sincerely devoted to the cause of Christ, and we shall resist being influenced by this fact. We shall not dissociate, as if by magic, the events of this century from the, at times, shady history of the papacy. Though we do not deny the past, we remember Montalembert's admonition: "To judge the past, we should have lived it; to condemn it, we should not be indebted to it for

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anything."<sup>1</sup> And we recall Mohler's wise remark about the anti-papal sects of the twelfth century who dreamed of a spiritual and holy Church: "They dared to accuse the indomitable Church which endured many storms and upheavals with having failed her mission. Had these creations of fantasy and selfishness—and we cannot but recognize them as such while not denying whatever good was in them—had they borne the burden that weighed on the Catholic Church, they would have vanished into the void from which they emerged."<sup>2</sup>

We shall attempt first to substantiate theologically the truth of these statements. Then we will look at the disputed reality of the Church, and lastly—keeping in mind theological verities—we will outline a proposal.

### 1. The postulate: "The Word became flesh"

In this axiom St. John captures the essence of God's revelation, given more specifically in the Gospels. The Greek word *logos*, the Hebrew "Wisdom" eternally with God, is the divine principle by which God creates all things, the light by which he forever illuminates all things.

The Word is God's artistry: creating and ordering in sovereign freedom; omnipotent, not bound by anything except his own plan and will; not limited by the darkness of finiteness and sin that cannot apprehend, obstruct, or arrest this all-pervading light. To comprehend a thing, a truth, to understand it—Latin *perstare*—means to have intellectual command of it and be able to contain it in comprehensible categories. A dawning comprehension of the unfathomable divine is already shown in the Law of the Old Testament, manifestly intended to point to the indwelling *mysterium* of divine light and divine truth. But it was allowed to harden into a quasi-magical formula for discernment and action, through which "darkness" managed to obscure the inpouring light. The Old Law thus became contradictory and tragic.

Something new and unheard-of happened when the Word—of himself, of God in whom he is—became flesh. Flesh is the existential man whose presence and present is his individual body. True, the "man of flesh" is infused with a soul that issues from God's breath and sets him apart from animals and plants. Still, according to Scripture man remains—together with his fellow creatures—"flesh."

Flesh means being born; it means growing, depending on nourishment, being able to procreate, and it means dying.

Flesh means a link in a chain of ancestors through whom the individual becomes mysteriously identified and determined. This is why two Gospels begin with the family tree of Jesus. No carnal being initiates himself. All are born into a community that has existed before them and are introduced into a tradition that molds them.

The tradition into which Jesus, the Word-made-flesh, was born is the Old Testament. Hence the law: *factus ex muliere* and *factus sub lege* belong together (Gal. 4: 4). For the Jews of Jesus' time, the Spirit of God was present where the Law of Moses—the expression of God's covenant with Israel—was being kept. In the episode of the Presentation, Luke emphatically repeats five times: "the Law of the Lord," "the Law of Moses" (Lk. 2: 22-39). Everything is to be fulfilled according to this law. And in the midst of the event, the Holy Spirit inspires Simeon threefold. It is by obedience to the Law that the flesh of Jesus is circumcised, the flesh of Mary is "cleansed," and the old and new Covenants are reconciled. The child will become a sign of contradiction "for the downfall and rise of many," and the mother's heart "shall be pierced by a sword."

"Flesh" means further that human potentialities are determined by a complicated and specific biological structure of which the thinking and acting individual is for the most part not conscious. The ordinary acts of seeing and hearing demand nearly inconceivable, not yet fully understood, physical and psychological prerequisites which are always imperiled. They can malfunction: there are the blind, the lame, the deaf, and people stricken by all kinds of illness. There are also the prisoners, the oppressed, the destitute, the persecuted, and those who are impeded by the narrow limits of physical reality. For the sake of all these comes Jesus to us in the flesh (Is. 61: 1ff.; 58: 6; Lk. 4: 18).

Flesh is delivered defenseless to flesh. It can be left lying at the gate as was Lazarus; it can be imprisoned and beheaded as was John the Baptizer. It can become a "plaything" of Christian, Jewish, and pagan factions, as the rejected Jesus was in his passion. ("They did entirely as they pleased with him" Mk. 9: 13.) Though these factions may hate each other, they still are united in the game: "The Man must go." "His own did not

<sup>1</sup>Pour juger le passé il aurait fallu le vivre; pour le condamner il faudrait ne rien lui devoir. Discours à Malines, 1863.

<sup>2</sup>Symbolik, par. 37.

accept him" (Jn. 1: 11). He must "die outside the gate" (Heb. 13: 12). Flesh cannot withdraw. It can be slapped, spit upon, scourged, crowned with thorns, nailed to two girders, and mocked unto death.

The relatedness of the individual to the community is an accomplished fact in the flesh. The individual is born into ethnic and human history and is formed accordingly by others. The complexity of his own organs and limbs (of which some can be missing from the outset or can be severed later) reminds him that he, too, is merely a member of a body, the *polis*, the people, humankind—and moreover, a member that can be dispensed with easily. Just as his bones and his muscles have their particular place in his body and can be linked and meshed with the other parts only in this and no other manner, so to be able to function meaningfully the individual must find his place in the social body. His physical and political function there is specific. He must perform his function, fulfill his role.

To be socially effective, the Word-made-flesh cannot free himself from the hard reality of this individual and social determinism. The Word having become flesh will never be made null and void. "Touch me and see that a ghost does not have flesh and bones and I do" (Lk. 24: 39). And neither can the organism that is called his Church avoid being flesh. She is the Body of Christ (Eph. 1: 22f.)—and this is the precise meaning of "flesh" (1 Cor. 6: 13-20), a body that has "members" (Rom. 12: 4f.). Only insofar as the individual fits into the place assigned to him by Christ (Eph. 4: 11), and functions according to the laws of the entire body, does this body mature, and with it also the member "to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4: 13). "We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love" (Eph. 4: 15f.).

What an image! Not that of a community of unengaged individuals on the loose, choosing to gather together in a *contrat social*, each for his own benefit, but rather of a community decreed and determined from above, that nevertheless reaches its "fullness," its "maturity" and "unity" only through cooperation of all the intimately related members.

But where in all this is the loudly proclaimed "freedom of the Christian"? Why not first ask what constitutes the freedom of the Christian? The fundamental premise is that the Word became flesh. The *logos* was not "cast into" the de-

terminism of the flesh but stepped into it freely willing and unconstrained. His whole existence in the flesh is accomplished by an act of his own free will. This, however, is an act of the divine free will of the one who is "with God," who is "sent" by God into the flesh, and who freely fulfills this intention of God. "Sacrifice or oblation you wished not, but a body you have prepared for me. Then I said: As is written of me in the book, I have come to do your will, O God" (Ps. 40: 7-9; Heb. 10: 5,7).

By this *a priori* act of free will, determinism is transformed to its very depths. With this, however, the complete, unprotected exposure of the flesh to other flesh becomes also freely accepted. Here the mentality of the world will show itself; it cannot endure such a freely willed desire by God, which it feels is an onslaught on the unimpeachable "security" of cosmic laws. Therefore, it pours resentment and hatred on the one who, though supported by God, is delivered defenseless to the world.

The Church, which is the Body of Christ, will be in exactly the same position. Those who are of this body have been "born" before the world existed, "not by blood nor by carnal desire, nor by man's willing it, but by God" (Jn. 1: 13). And because of this they find themselves, with Jesus, exposed: "Blest are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me" (Mt. 5: 11). "They will harry you as they harried me" (Jn. 15: 20). This is the shape of our Christian freedom: we are united with Jesus from "before the world existed" (because with the Son we are children of God), closely bound to him in the determinism of flesh, delivered defenseless to the contradiction that the world is given a demonstration of this freedom and—in the unfathomable mystery of Christ and the Church—is made even a recipient of this gift of representative suffering.

But has not Christ freed us from the law (Gal. 5: 1)? "Therefore . . . we are not children of a slave girl but of a mother who is free" (Gal. 4: 31), of "Jerusalem on high" (Gal. 4: 26). Yes, we are made free of the superimposed extraneous law that relentlessly prompted us to capture God and his free light in the nets of our wisdom and expertise. Paul refers to this when he says that we are "freed from the law of sin and death" or more simply, "freed from sin" (Rom. 8: 2; 6: 3; 6: 22). But we are freed

by the Word-made-flesh. This is "freedom's ideal law" (Jas. 1: 25)<sup>3</sup> that bonds us deeply with the Word in the flesh so that we are not merely "hearers of the (law-giving) Word" but "abide by it in deed" (Jas. 1: 22-25). It is thus that we come to be "Church," living by Christ's freedom out of obedience to the Father and ending exposed on the cross.

## 2. The fact: anti-Rome

Looking from this point of view at the anti-Roman attitude in the Church, we cannot but suspect that it has something to do with the Church being flesh and with the close interdependence of its members. Neither is her leadership pure spirit nor angelic idea. This would not be appropriate to the Church of the Incarnation. The members clash hard with each other, and they get weary in their actions. Man can take pleasure in his functioning but can also feel constrained by the limits of his ability of expression, bored by its staleness and pained by the work it entails. But on a deeper level the human body is moved by a spiritual principle intrinsic to it. The system, man, has a certain autonomy and integrity. The body of the Church is guided by a "head" who is above her and is "supernatural" in relation to her. The function of the Church's leadership, particularly that of the papacy, is unceasingly to focus attention on this transcendence and even to represent it.

Awareness of its immanent sociological reality is uncomfortable to the body. In this sense Corinth was made uncomfortable by the "phenomenon" of Paul, and it remonstrated loudly. It sought the reason for its anti-Pauline attitude in the personal character and behavior of the apostle, in his seemingly autocratic actions—his opposition to the Jerusalem root-community—and this was not softened by Paul's lengthy self-defenses. *Qui s'excuse, s'accuse*.

The person of Paul disappears, but the office of Peter remains, as does that of the apostles, the bishops. The anti-Pauline feeling lives on as an anti-Petrine attitude. It is with this that we are concerned, and therefore we strictly limit our investigation and omit a great many related, pertinent problems. We do not become involved with the theology of the papacy or even with the theology of the Church. Nor do we discuss catholic collegiality and whether or not the origin of the bishops' authority derives from the college of apostles, nor what the relationship of the "twelve"—and consequently the structure of the hierarchical offices in the Church—is to the "priesthood of the

people of God." There is rich material and information available on all these questions. Our inquiry is directed solely to the strangely irrational phenomenon of anti-Roman attitude among Catholics, while this same attitude outside the Church interests us here only marginally.

We find Luther's legacy, "*Hoc unum me mortuo servate: odium in pontificem Romanum*,"<sup>4</sup> less disturbing than the habitual parting words of an English priest acquaintance: "Goodbye, keep away from Rome." Perhaps this priest in his studies of Church history came to believe that he had more reason for an anti-Petrine attitude than the people of Corinth had for a resistance to Paul. But Vatican II proclaimed the ideal of ecclesial reality and self-image as a balance between collegiality and papal supremacy and, even more importantly, as a balance between the responsibility of the people of God and that of their leaders. Therefore, the good cleric could at least have asked himself whether his negative attitude toward the leadership did not isolate them more from their flock, and, hence, put obstacles in the way of the desired integration.

It is commonly said, "You cannot trust Rome," meaning that Rome will always be the same: she wants to rule, and she misuses the supreme authority given her for service to impose legalistic obedience on the people. Hence her adherents regress with her from evangelical freedom to the alienating religion of the Law, the old Covenant. Newman, in his early, still-Anglican work, "The Prophetic Office of the Church," strongly expresses this lack of trust. We should listen to him:

Roman teaching by its profession of Infallibility, lowers the standard and quality of Gospel obedience as well as impairs its mysterious and sacred character; and this in various ways. When religion is reduced in all its parts to a system, there is hazard of something earthly being made the chief object of our contemplation instead of our Maker. Now Rome classifies our duties and their rewards, the things to believe, the things to do, the modes of pleasing God, the penalties and remedies of sin, with such exactness that an individual knows (so to speak) just where he is upon his journey heavenward, how far he has got,

<sup>3</sup>H. Schlier, *Das vollkommene Gesetz der Freiheit*, in *Die Zeit der Kirche* (Herder, 1956), pp. 193-206.

<sup>4</sup>H. Preuss, *Martin Luther, der Prophet* (Gütersloh, 1933), p. 173. I am indebted for this quotation to Father Yves Congar who, a few days before I finished the present work, most graciously lent me his paper on *Le Complexe Antiromain* which will appear in German later. He concentrates nearly exclusively on this attitude in the Middle Ages and in the sects which dissociated themselves from the Catholic Church. This is exactly the topic that we have excluded from our study.

how much he has to pass; and his duties become a matter of calculation. It provides us with a sort of graduated scale of devotion and obedience, and, so far, tends to engross our thoughts with the details of a mere system, to a comparative forgetfulness of its professed Author. But it is evident that the purest religious services are those which are done, not by constraint, but voluntarily, as a free offering to Almighty God. There are certain duties which are indispensable in all Christians, but their limits are left undefined, as if to try our faith and love. For instance, what portion of our worldly substance we should devote to charitable uses, or in what way we are to fast, or how we are to dress, or whether we should remain single, or what revenge we should take upon our sins, or what amusements are allowable or how far we may go into society; these and similar questions are left open by Inspiration. . . . A command from authority, to a certain point, acts as a protection to our modesty, though beyond this it would but act as a burden. . . . This is the true Christian liberty, not the prerogative of obeying God, or not, as we please, but the opportunity of obeying Him more strictly without formal commandment. In this way, too, not only is our love tried, but the delicacy and generous simplicity of our obedience consulted also. Christ loves an open-hearted service, done without our contemplating or measuring what we do, from the fullness of affection and reverence, while the mind is fixed on its Great Object without thought of itself. Now, express commands lead us to reflect upon and estimate our advances toward perfection, whereas true faith will mainly contemplate its deficiencies, not its poor attainments, whatever they be. It does not like to realize to itself what it does; it throws off the thought of it; it is carried on and reaches forward towards perfection, not counting the steps it has ascended, but keeping the end steadily in its eye, knowing only that it is advancing, and glorying in each sacrifice or service which it is allowed to offer, as it occurs, not remembering it afterwards. But in the Roman system there would seem to be little room for this unconscious devotion. Each deed has its price, every quarter of the land of promise is laid down and described. Roads are carefully marked out, and such as would attain to perfection are constrained to move in certain lines, as if there were a science of gaining heaven. Thus the Saints are cut off from the Christian multitude by certain fixed duties, not rising out of it by the continuous growth and flowing forth of services which, in their substance, pertain to all men. And Christian holiness, in consequence, loses its freshness, vigor, and comeliness, being frozen (as it were) into certain attitudes, which are not graceful except when they are unstudied.<sup>5</sup>

Does not the young Newman here give a summary of the objection of the anti-Roman attitude against the "system" which stands like the Great Wall of China, hard and impenetrable, between the soul and God, between the believer and the living Christ of the Gospel? And even if the Christian could find, as in a code or hieroglyph, the original living meaning of God's communication, the Roman form achieves merely an unnecessary distancing. Mediation offered is of no use; it invites contradiction.

As it happened, Newman learned better when he became acquainted with the Catholic saints and the Fathers of the undivided Church. He found not alienation but a blessed intimacy with God and self, guarded in faith and in love by the

unifying power of the Church. The Church's **minimal demands** to the lukewarm and the mediocre are all open-ended and are meant to stimulate free spontaneity. And while a **demand of the Gospel** professed only in books can—and frequently does—leave us mired in sloth, what comes to us from the living authority of the Church challenges us unremittingly. Even if it does not affect us in practice, just knowing that in the midst of what is happening now in the world there is such a living, guiding, and goading center does not permit us to remain indifferent. And if we listen to her, she gives us a sublime, soaring certainty that we are not straying from the right path and are not subject to the risks and dangers that threaten lonely seekers.

But can we trust a tribunal that has failed so often, failed humanly as well as frequently in those general instructions which though not in the "infallible" category in the narrower theological sense, were of history-making importance? The decision is not a matter of opinion because the Gospel speaks of Peter and his office in clear language. In his exposed position, placed there by Jesus himself, he has been put to a special test. "The gates of hell will not prevail against you" does not mean that the Church and the office of Peter will not be attacked from all sides, but rather that it will be the magnetic pole that attracts the darkest powers of world history: "Simon, Simon! Remember that Satan has asked for you, to sift you all like wheat" (Lk. 22: 31). How jolting this twice-repeated name! But the tempter and the tempted are brought even closer together—becoming nearly exchangeable: "At this he . . . reprimanded Peter: 'Get out of my sight, you satan! You are not judging by God's standards but by man's'" (Mk. 8: 33).

Infallibility, according to Vatican I, is not a personal trait of the empirical Church or of its representatives, but—to repeat Reinhold Schneider's words—it is the mast that juts out from temptation's foaming turmoil and by the merciful act of God saves the Church from foundering. Scandal reaches the Church not only from the outside but also from the inside. "Structure," which because of its impersonality seems immune to scandal, can become the prime seat of infection. Only discernment of spirits can help here, received in answer to ardent prayer, such as the saints have offered for themselves and for all of us. It is not the structure, not the form, not the skeleton of the

<sup>5</sup>John Henry Cardinal Newman, "Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church" in the *Via Media of the Anglican Church* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), pp. 102-105.

body or of the community that is dead and should be removed; it is the spirit that enlivens the body that is good or bad.

One should note with what *hardness* Jesus forms Peter to make him the "rock" and enable him to support his brothers. No censure, no humiliation is spared him. He must learn that the love of Christ is uncompromising at the very core of his "tender and humble" heart. Peter not only has to learn this; he has to teach it to those entrusted to him. He is forbidden to be merely tender and humble without—in the name of his Master—also representing the inexorable love of God, whose demand for "more" might seem to the lukewarm as a "law" superimposed on him, while in reality it is built into him. The saints could distinguish between the representation of this "more" and the weakness of the representative. But a further step is needed: one has to distinguish what in the harshness of the demand is the all-too-human element—the packaging—and what the content is to which obedience in faith and love is owed. Those who are not saints prefer to distinguish between the "sinful structure" against which revolt is permitted or even commanded, and the substance which, they presume, can be directly derived from the Gospel, bypassing any ecclesiastical structure. With this they already find themselves well within the ideological process that aims to disincarnate the existential Church as the flesh and body of Christ by splitting the "for me at present" subjectively valid *logos* and the "superfluous" structure to be discarded, the *sarx*. Yet, what the New Testament calls *pneuma* does not blow only in a *logos* stripped from its *sarx*. It is for this reason that we question—from the standpoint of the New Testament—the discrediting of ecclesiastical structures or the intent to "change" them radically and fundamentally. The New Testament shows us a Church which in a hard—through suffering hardened—shell shelters the tender and sweet fruit of the Spirit exhaled on the cross. *De forti egressa est dulcedo*.

As we refer back to the New Testament to find an explanation of the anti-Roman attitude that has persisted throughout history to the present day, we come to our third point, a recommendation.

### 3. The suggestion to integrate

Pascal says in his *Pensées*: "If one contemplates the Church as unity, then the pope who is her head is also the whole. If one perceives her as plurality, then the pope is only a part. From time to time the Fathers of the Church thought of the

Church in one way or the other, . . . but they emphasized both; they excluded neither. A plurality that cannot be integrated into unity is chaos; unity unrelated to plurality is tyranny." (And he adds: "Only in France can it be said that the council is over the pope.")<sup>6</sup>

We too will concern ourselves with unity and plurality, but we want to take a new approach. We do not claim to give practical directives for Church politics, and because of this some readers might lose interest. Mainly, we wish to argue—even after Vatican I—in a theological manner and adhering as closely as possible to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that the role of the office of Peter is both indispensable and, at the same time, relative. The anti-Roman animosity rests, today more than ever, on a narrow view of the fundamental doctrines laid down in the New Testament which should be self-evident to Catholic eyes. Some more profound thinking reveals the office of Peter as *one* of several indispensable elements in the ecclesiastical structure and thus frees it from the isolation—like the tip of a pyramid in the desert—to which it consented involuntarily by permitting itself to be modeled on the pattern of imperial Rome. But partly this model was voluntarily adopted as a reaction to the encroachments of the various medieval emperors.

The tension between primacy and collegiality seems to us insufficient to describe the force fields that bear upon the Church. Translating these into categories of "monarch" and "democracy" is even less satisfactory. Much deeper, more fundamental tensions are in play, and only by perceiving these—if Christian theology would deign to do so—can the atmosphere be rid of poison.

To be truly of service, our thinking should delve into the theological depth of ecclesial reality. It is not sufficient to survey the papacy in general, from a cultural-philosophical or sociological point of view. Not even attempts to figure out the reigning pope with a shot of depth-psychology can clarify the situation and repair the damage done. Such personal "disclosures" can be sensational, but they are basically injudicious even

<sup>6</sup>*Pensées* (ed. Chevalier), p. 809.

if they are written in praise of the pope, as were the conferences of Jean Guitton with Paul VI,<sup>7</sup> in which the author admits that he put much into the mouth of the pope which the latter had not said. Such publications may claim to be based on information from "reliable sources," as the book of the two authors who call themselves jointly Hieronymus.<sup>8</sup> Or they can attempt to shed light on the tragedy of the papacy by applying a professional stethoscope to the souls of the three most recent popes from the ivory tower of a world-historical point of view (as did Reinhard Raffalt).<sup>9</sup> Or, finally, as Fritz Leist did in his *Der Gefangene des Vatikans*,<sup>10</sup> they can stir up past historical trash to muddy the presently clear waters.

We name these authors only to state emphatically that we will not do what they did. What we want to do is to revive a theological understanding of the constellation given in the New Testament in which every pope—including the present one—has his ordained place, which he can represent only together with the whole Church, and with which he can cope only in obedience to Christ.

We probably will be criticized that we take refuge behind abstractions to avoid the hard and dramatic personality problems. But the net of tensions with which we intend to deal—and which existed from the outset—seems to us much more dramatic than the small, passing, and unavoidable tensions between personalities and competences. In the real "body" of Christ, we are inserted inexorably together. We can no more shrug off co-responsibility than we can distance ourselves from the Catholic Church's past as something alien that does not concern us. How could we abrogate solidarity with the "structure" of the Church, as does, for example, Regina Bohne, when in reference to the Last Judgment, she dared to say: "This day . . . must be feared more by the structure . . . certainly feared much more than by us, the 'flock'."<sup>11</sup> We will not deny the uncomfortable past during which, no doubt, the papal power and rule was not always understood in the light of evangelical service. But who among the present critics of the Church can be certain that his criticism is purely for evangelical service and to bring about the unity desired by Christ?

That in the New Testament the concept of *exousia* means both supremacy and service, or rather supreme power given for service, should not be repeated *ad nauseam*. Finally this is understood by every citizen and from the president down to the most insignificant civil servant, that to give effective service to the community requires not only professional competence but

also officially assigned and socially accepted authority. And why cannot Catholics really understand St. Paul's distinction made for the Church between "bodily weapons" that he rejects and "spiritual weapons" that he certainly is empowered to use against every stronghold of pride that raises itself against the truth of God (2 Cor. 10: 4f.)? The *exousia* that Jesus entrusts to the twelve at their election can be expressed in Latin only as *potestas*, in English as "fullness of authority." It is the means by which they are empowered to effectively help the People of God whom they are to "judge" (Mt. 19: 28; Lk. 22: 30). Is this incomprehensible? It seems so, at least to some since, according to Bohne, Jesus wanted a "church of free brotherhood," "anarchical," "free from any authority . . ."<sup>12</sup>

Since the network of tensions in the church is visible—as was the man Jesus—it has naturally a sociological and psychological exterior which should not be underestimated because we cannot (adequately) separate the visible from the invisible Church. Nevertheless, the Church is first of all a *mysterium* (as Jesus is God's only begotten Son first of all, not as an afterthought), and as this *mysterium* she is Christ's Body and his Bride. And only by being this *mysterium* does she become the People of God, a socio-psychological reality. Therefore, the tensions which we will describe all point to that *mysterium*; they are its necessary expression and not the Church's shortcomings that should be corrected perhaps by "changing the structure." The mystery of God cannot be manipulated. The visible contours of the Church's structure might perhaps be somewhat modified—always keeping in mind the mystery underlying the system—but only to bring out in bold relief the form that, from the very

<sup>7</sup>*Gesprache mit Paul VI* (Fischerbücherei 966, 1969). Much more serious and with more content is the well-balanced book by David A. Seeber, *Paul, Papst im Widerstreit: Dokumente und Analysen* (Herder, 1971). Seeber attempts to develop a psychology of the pope which does justice to his complicated personality. On the other hand, in view of the incredible complexity of the situation, one would like to ask the author whether in the instances where he expresses a prudent reserve—after allowing for all conditions—he would have had the courage to make other decisions? Is it at all possible in a world such as ours to expect an individual, whosoever he may be, to find a solution that suits everyone and that he can put into common practice all by himself?

<sup>8</sup>*Vatikan intern* (Stuttgart: Dt. Verlagsanstalt, 1973).

<sup>9</sup>München-Zürich: Piper-Verlag, 1973.

<sup>10</sup>München: Kösel-Verlag, 1971.

<sup>11</sup>*Das Katholische System, Kritische Texte 11* (Benziger, 1972), p. 46.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9.

beginning, attracted scandal. We may even say that what we are trying to remove is false scandal, so that the *real scandal* of the Church can become more evident to the whole world. We are not the Church because the fullness of Christ has been given *us*. The Church is ahead of us; we have been raised in Baptism in her and through her. We can debate about and dispose of the Church as little as we can of God. We *receive* the Word and the sacraments. We cannot change, increase or decrease them. In the same way we also receive the fundamental constellation. The Church is ahead of us, and we cannot make her more or less than what she is; we cannot manipulate her.

But we hope to accomplish one thing: to reintegrate that which we have isolated from the wholeness of this constellation and which in such isolation may seem abstract, unreal, even grotesque—into the mystery of the structure. The reconciliation of primacy and collegiality, announced by Vatican II, is one aspect of this integration. It has other aspects, too, which up to now have not been given sufficient attention, perhaps because they are more difficult to express in concepts and proportions that cannot be taken in at a glance.

Let us set aside for the moment the much-talked-about tension between office and charism because it cannot be adequately resolved. "Office" in the New Testament clearly has a charismatic aspect. But who has taken the trouble to look at great personal sanctity in its theological tension with the particular gift of charism that is accepted and actualized in the principle of ecclesiastical office? Who has looked at it nonpolemically but constructively so as to integrate it into the *summa theologica* of the Catholic Church? If we think that this is impossible, we must at least admit that the current theology comprehends only partially the *mysterium* of the Church. Only when someone sees the underlying problem can he try—non-polemically, impartially—to express how the tension-filled facets of Christ's *one* truth mirror one another: the truth of an objective teaching and the corresponding objective leadership; the truth of a personal, once-forever call, the truth of a simple, blind faith that does not wish to know any other truth than that of the guiding of God.... All this cannot be looked upon as unconnected and unrelated, as a tired "pluralism" maintains. We should rejoice over the richness of the Church's perspective and be challenged by it to see in three or more dimensions that which is usually presented rather flatly.

Exactly in this system, which is much richer than our school-wisdom ever dreamed of, is the essential form safe-

guarded from sinking into a purely external, and therefore "changeable," or even dispensable "structure." Spiritual Platonism or sterile structuralism cannot comprehend the living form of the Church. Yes, the struggle against external structures is in truth the last stage in the process of an illness diagnosed correctly by Madeleine Delbrel: "A world which once was made Christian, seems to empty itself from within: at first it gets rid of God, then of the Son of God, then that which he mediates of divinity to his Church, and frequently, it is the facade which collapses last."<sup>13</sup> Translated by Andrée Emery. □

<sup>13</sup>La Joie de Croire (Seuil, 1967), p. 29.