

THE ROMAN PRIMACY IN THE SECOND CENTURY AND THE PROBLEM OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOGMA

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THE DOCTRINE which distinguishes Roman Catholicism from all other Christian communities is the primacy of the bishop of Rome. The prevailing Roman Catholic interpretation of the New Testament and the early Christian record is that Jesus commissioned Peter to be the ultimate foundation and source of unity for the apostolic Church. Peter, as he neared the end of his career, determined that the bishop of the Roman community was to be his successor. Henceforth each successive bishop of the Roman See is to the Church of his age what Peter was to the Church of the age of the apostles.

In consequence of this general view of how things must have transpired in the first and second centuries it is supposed that each successive Roman bishop was aware of his special primatial authority and that his contemporaries—at least those who were properly informed—recognized this primacy. The paucity of evidence for the Roman primacy during the hundred years or so after the apostles is explained by the fact that there was really little occasion for its exercise. However, it is maintained that there is some evidence and that its quantity is about what one would expect given the situation of the Church at the time. What development takes place is thus a development in the exercise of the primacy. As certain problems became more and more pressing, the primacy became more important in the life of the Church; but the primacy was always “there,” claimed and recognized, just waiting to come into greater prominence.

It will be the very limited aim of the first portion of the present paper to review the evidence customarily adduced for the existence and recognition of a Roman primacy in the second century. My contention here will be that this evidence will not support the view which I have just outlined. Indeed, it will be argued that the second century does not recognize a Roman primacy in any theologically meaningful

sense of the phrase. If this contention is true, then it will be incumbent upon Roman Catholic theologians to give more careful attention to the problem of the development of the Roman primacy both as an institution and as a doctrine.

In the second portion of the paper I shall attempt a sketch of this development. Unfortunately, this is at present only a sketch, as anyone who has worked with the relevant materials will immediately recognize. I present it here simply as a report of work in progress and for whatever benefit it might prove to be to others concerned with the same problems. It is hoped that the evaluation of the first section will not depend upon that of the second. The existence of a problem ought not be made to depend upon the discovery of its solution.

I

Two preliminary considerations are necessary. First, it may well be asked whether the view of the second century which I am here anticipating is in principle reconcilable with Roman Catholic orthodoxy. A full discussion of this fundamental matter will be possible only within the context of our subsequent discussion of the development of the primacy. For the present I limit myself to the following remarks.

We have grown accustomed to the fact that dogma has a history, that in the course of time the Church has developed and deepened its understanding of God's revelation of Himself to us in Jesus Christ. It is a commonplace that the Trinitarian dogmas of Nicaea and Constantinople, the Christological dogmas of Chalcedon, were reached only gradually. Similarly, the canon of the New Testament is not given in perfect clarity right from the beginning. Agreement, for example, on the Apocalypse or the Epistle of St. James came about but gradually. It is the responsibility of Catholic theologians to show that the subsequent stages are authentic developments, that is, that they actually safeguard and deepen what was already explicit in the earlier stages. Catholic theologians cannot demand, as though it followed from a general principle, that the earlier periods give all the answers or even ask all the questions which we find later.

But are these general considerations relevant to the dogma of Roman primacy? I think that the only reason for hesitation is the tendency to think of the doctrine of the primacy as a kind of metadoctrine. We

tend to think of the Church as deriving from the papacy as from a unique source: Christ creates the pope, the pope creates the bishops, the bishops create the congregations. Within such a framework it is difficult to imagine how the papacy could be anything but central. How have any dogma at all without a pope to define it? This view of the place of the pope in the Church is, however, more narrow than orthodoxy allows and demands. The development of the Church's life and thought during the second and much of the third centuries did not depend upon the leadership exercised by the popes. Even those who would argue that the second century clearly recognized the primacy of the bishop of Rome will admit that this primacy was exercised only sparingly and more often than not in matters of secondary importance. Thus the main second-century developments—the clear articulation of the doctrine of the episcopate and the apostolic succession, the formation of the New Testament canon, the battle against Gnosticism—were not dependent upon an initial acknowledgement of the primacy of any particular see. Therefore there seems no reason to suppose a priori that the postapostolic Church was immediately in such full possession of itself, of its own structure, that it immediately asserted (or assented to) the doctrine of the primacy of the bishop of Rome. We are therefore justified in asking what the second century says about the primacy and are obliged to listen carefully for the answer.

The second preliminary is to provide a working definition of the Roman primacy. According to the doctrine of the Roman primacy, the bishop of Rome, as successor to Peter, holds a position of ultimate authority and responsibility in the universal Church. To maintain the doctrine of the Roman primacy is therefore to maintain (1) that Peter was the primate, the foundation of the apostolic Church, and (2) that the bishop of Rome has succeeded to this Petrine office.¹ As we proceed, we shall ask whether various second-century writers recognize a Roman primacy in this sense. Thus we shall not be satisfied that a given writer recognizes a Roman primacy simply because he considers

¹ On the reconciliation of the uniqueness of the apostles with the claim of the bishops to be their successors, see Otto Karrer, *Peter and the Church: An Examination of Cullmann's Thesis* (New York, 1963) pp. 61–62. This work is an English version of the third part of Karrer's *Um die Einheit der Christen* (Frankfurt, 1953).

the Roman Church to be important. On the other hand, we will not require of a second-century witness the refinements of Vatican I. The definition which we are using provides a minimal statement of the substance of the primacy.

There are four main pieces of evidence around which discussion of the Roman primacy in the second century has revolved: 1 *Clement*, Ignatius' *Epistle to the Romans*, Irenaeus' *Adversus haereses* 3, 3, 2, and Eusebius' account of the paschal controversy in his *Ecclesiastical History*.² We shall consider these in their chronological order.

FIRST CLEMENT

1 *Clement*, the oldest extant Christian writing outside the canon of the New Testament, was written in the last years of the first century, perhaps in 96 A.D.³ The letter is addressed by the Church at Rome to the Church at Corinth, and is an attempt by Rome to put an end to disorders that have arisen at Corinth. Certain members of the community at Corinth have removed from office the officials who had been placed over them. Rome writes urging that the deposed ministers be restored and that the rebellious submit to their rule.⁴

This letter is interpreted by most Catholic scholars as evidence for the existence and recognition of a Roman primacy. As sober a patrologist as Johannes Quasten could write:

The Epistle of St. Clement is also of supreme importance for another point of dogma, the primacy of the Roman Church, of which it furnishes unequivocal proof. That it contains no categorical assertion of the primacy of the Roman See is undeniable. The writer nowhere states expressly that his intervention binds and obligates by law the Christian community of Corinth. Nevertheless the very existence of the Epistle is in itself a testimony of great moment to the authority of the

² I shall not here consider the evidence for the growing importance of Rome during the second century. To the best of my knowledge, no one seriously questions the fact that the Roman Church was increasingly prominent during the second and third centuries. The point at issue is the contemporary understanding of this importance. To get at that, it has seemed advisable to concentrate discussion on those documents which best promise to reveal the thinking of the period.

³ Cf. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* 1 (Westminster, Md., 1950) 49-50. J.-P. Audet, *La Didache* (Paris, 1958), has argued that the *Didache* was composed between 50 and 70 A.D.

⁴ In addition, 1 *Clem.* 54 urges that the offenders be willing to go into exile should this be necessary to put an end to the schism.

Roman Bishop. The Church of Rome speaks to the Church of Corinth as a superior speaks to a subject. In the first chapter the author apologizes forthwith because he had been unable to devote his attention earlier to the irregularities existing in far-off Corinth. This clearly proves that primitive Christian vigilance and solicitude of community for community did not alone inspire the composition of the letter. Had this been the case an apology for meddling in the controversy would have been in order. But the Bishop of Rome regards it as a duty to take the matter in hand and he considers it sinful on their part if they do not render obedience to him: "But if some be disobedient to the words which have been spoken by him through us, let them understand that they will entangle themselves in transgression and no little danger but we shall be guiltless of this sin" (59, 1-2). Such an authoritative tone cannot be adequately accounted for on the ground of the close cultural relations existing between Corinth and Rome.⁵

Quasten's interpretation requires the following three points: (1) Rome writes to Corinth as a superior to a subject. (2) It is the bishop of Rome, and not merely the Roman Christian community, who is exercising authority over the Church at Corinth. (3) The authority involved is a primatial authority: the bishop of Rome has authority over the Church at Corinth because he has authority over the universal Church.

Each of these points is open to serious objection. First, does *1 Clement* speak as superior to subject? Many, and not all of them Roman Catholics, have thought that it does.⁶ This view, however, would seem to derive from too simple an identification of responsibility and hierarchical office. The remarks of a recent (Roman Catholic) student of *1 Clement* are relevant here:

The Roman community with its chief pastor is solicitous for the peace, the esteem, and the good name of the Corinthian community. This concern can have its origin in genuine charity and in the strong sense of solidarity that animated early Christianity; it can also be the concern of a superior for his subjects. As far as early Christian solidarity is concerned, it is well known that the first Christian communities were distinguished for their vigilance and sense of responsibility; each Christian felt himself responsible for the unity of the Church and for its doctrine and life. This was true in the case of the Corinthians; for they are praised

⁵ *Patrology* 1, 46-47.

⁶ E.g., E. Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church* (London, 1952) p. 78; J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Part 1 (London, 1890) 69. Among Roman Catholics, see G. Glez, "Primauté," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 13 (Paris, 1936) 267; James A. Kleist, *The Epistles of St. Clement of Rome and St. Ignatius of Antioch* (Westminster, Md., 1946) p. 4.

by Clement (2, 4, and 2, 6) because they tried to outdo one another in charity and solicitude, in order to preserve the number of the elect, and they are likewise praised because they regarded as their own the failings and shortcomings of their neighbors.⁷

The fact is that Rome does "interfere" in Corinth's affairs, Rome does show the Corinthians the way in which they should order their affairs; but whether Rome does this because it has a special responsibility for its subjects or out of fraternal concern for an erring brother can be determined—if at all—only by a closer examination of the letter and of the general practice of the second-century Church.

Quasten, in commenting on *1 Clement* 59, 1–2,⁸ remarks: "The Bishop of Rome regards it as a duty to take the matter in hand and he considers it sinful on their [the Corinthians'] part if they do not render obedience to him."⁹ To what extent "the Bishop of Rome" figures in at all, we shall consider subsequently. For the present I wish only to consider the final phrase, "obedience to him."¹⁰ It is true that the letter calls the Corinthians to obedience, but it is not obedience to the writer of the letter. It is obedience *tois hyp' autou di hēmōn eirēmōis*, "to the things which God (or Christ) has spoken through us." The writer relies wholly upon the substance of what he says, and makes no claim that the fact that he is saying it adds any weight to the admonition. Again and again the writer appeals to the common ideal to which both are subject, and the tone is always one of exhortation rather than of command.¹¹ Otto Karrer comments on this: "Clement acted exactly as Peter in *1 Peter* 5:2–3 had required that a pastor should act: with

⁷ Adolf W. Ziegler, *Neue Studien zum ersten Klemensbrief* (Munich, 1958) p. 112.

⁸ "But should any disobey what has been said by Him through us, let them understand that they will entangle themselves in transgression and no small danger. But for our part we shall be innocent of this sin, and will offer earnest prayer and supplication that the Creator of the universe may preserve undiminished the established number of His elect in all the world through His beloved Son Jesus Christ. . . ."—Unless otherwise noted, the text of Clement and Ignatius will be as in K. Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers* 1 (London, 1912), and the translation provided will be that of J. Kleist, *The Epistles of St. Clement of Rome and St. Ignatius of Antioch* (supra n. 6).

⁹ *Patrology* 1, 47.

¹⁰ The argument which is developed here will only be strengthened if, as I shall attempt to show, *1 Clement* is intended as a letter from the community at Rome rather than from its bishop. Hence I leave the phrase "obedience to him," though "obedience to them" might seem more appropriate.

¹¹ See, for example, 7, 1; 51; 58.

authority and with love, 'not as lording it over the clergy, but, being made a pattern of the flock, from the heart.'"¹² However, one could just as well compare Clement's comportment with that urged in Mt 18:15: "If your brother commits a sin, go and take the matter up with him, strictly between yourselves, and if he listens to you, you have won your brother over." Indeed, in 56, 2, Clement seems to indicate that the admonition which he is giving is the kind of thing that can and should be mutual: "Let us, beloved, accept correction, which no one must take in bad part. A reproof which we administer to one another is honorable and extremely helpful, for it unites us to the will of God."¹³ The authority behind such admonition would thus not be the status of the admonitor but the truth of what is said. Rome here admonishes Corinth; *mutatis mutandis* Corinth would admonish Rome.

Moreover, we do know that it was not unknown for churches or bishops to write letters of counsel or correction to other churches. For example, we read the following in Eusebius of Dionysius of Corinth (bishop there while Soter was Bishop of Rome, 168-77):

Concerning Dionysius it must first be said that he was appointed to the throne of the episcopate of the diocese of Corinth, and that he communicated his divine industry ungrudgingly not only to those under him but also to those at a distance, rendering himself most useful to all in the general epistles which he drew up for the churches. Among them the letter to the Lacedaemonians is an instruction in orthodoxy on the subject of peace and unity, and the letter to the Athenians is a call to faith and to life according to the gospel, and for despising this he rebukes them as all but apostates from the truth since the martyrdom of Publius, their leader in the persecution of that time. He mentions that Quadratus was appointed their bishop after the martyrdom of Publius and testifies that through his zeal they had been brought together and received a revival of their faith. Moreover, he mentions that Dionysius the Areopagite was converted by the Apostle Paul to the faith, according to the narrative in the Acts, and was the first to be appointed to the bishopric of the diocese of Athens. There is another extant letter of his to the Nicomedians in which he combats the heresy of Marcion and compares it with the rule of the truth. He also wrote to the church sojourning in Gortyna together with the other Cretan dioceses, and welcomes their bishop Philip for the reputation of the church in his charge for many noble acts, and he enjoins care against heretical error. He also wrote to the church sojourning in Amastria, together with the churches in Pontus, and mentions that Bacchylides and Elpistus had urged him to

¹² *Peter and the Church*, p. 120.

¹³ I would call attention to the phrase "to one another," *eis allous*.

write; he adduces interpretations of the divine scriptures, and mentions by name their bishop Palmas. He gave them many exhortations about marriage and chastity, and orders them to receive those who are converted from any backsliding, whether of conduct or heretical error. To this list has been added another epistle to Cnossus, in which he exhorts Pinytos, the bishop of the diocese, not to put on the brethren a heavy compulsory burden concerning chastity and to consider the weaknesses of the many. To this Pinytos replied that he admired and welcomed Dionysius, but exhorted him in turn to provide at some time more solid food, and to nourish the people under him with another more advanced letter, so that they might not be fed continually on milky words, and be caught unaware by old age while still treated as children. In this letter the orthodoxy of Pinytos in the faith, his care for those under him, his learning and theological understanding are shown as in a most accurate image.¹⁴

It is difficult to imagine that these letters could have been less imperative, less authoritarian than *1 Clement*.

It is often alleged, nevertheless, that the opening paragraph of *1 Clement* cannot be explained as an expression merely of fraternal solicitude:

Owing to the suddenly bursting and rapidly succeeding calamities and untoward experiences that have befallen us, we have been somewhat tardy, we think, in giving our attention to the subjects of dispute in your community, beloved. We mean that execrable and godless schism so utterly foreign to the elect of God. And it is only a few rash and headstrong individuals that have inflamed it to such a degree of madness that your venerable, widely-renowned, and universally and deservedly cherished name has been greatly defamed.¹⁵

Quite clearly, the author considers that he (his church) has an obligation to concern himself with the affairs of Corinth, so much so that some apology is necessary for the delay in writing. When Quasten states that "this clearly proves that primitive Christian vigilance and solicitude of community for community did not alone inspire the composition of the letter,"¹⁶ he goes too far. A sense of obligation could quite conceivably arise from "Christian vigilance and solicitude of community for community," and it is difficult to see precisely what in

¹⁴ *Hist. eccl.* 4, 23. Translations of Eusebius, unless otherwise noted, are as in K. Lake, *Eusebius, The Ecclesiastical Histories* (London, 1926). Immediately after the passage quoted here, Eusebius provides excerpts from Dionysius' letter to Soter. This letter sheds no light on our problem, beyond testifying that *1 Clement* was still being read publicly in the Corinthian Church.

¹⁵ *1 Clement* 1, 1. ¹⁶ *Patrology* 1, 46.

this opening passage of the letter forces one to postulate more. If we suppose that there was some degree of communication between the two churches¹⁷ and that Rome was already one of the pre-eminent churches,¹⁸ then it is not so very surprising that Rome should have come to the aid of the Church at Corinth in its hour of need.

The second point of the primatial interpretation of *1 Clement* is that it is the authority of the bishop of Rome, and not simply that of the Roman Christian community, which is exercised. In a significant way it is Clement who is admonishing and commanding the Corinthians.

There are, it is true, good reasons to suppose that it was Clement who wrote the letter.¹⁹ Moreover, it is an attractive hypothesis to identify this Clement with the one referred to by Hermas:

You shall therefore write two little books and send one to Clement and one to Grapte. Clement then shall send it to the cities abroad, for that is his duty; and Grapte shall exhort the widows and orphans; but in this city you shall read it yourself with the elders who are in charge of the church.²⁰

Whether or not Hermas is reliable on this point,²¹ one must agree with Eusebius' description of the letter: "it was written in the name of the Church at Rome to the Church of the Corinthians" (*Hist. eccl.* 3, 38, 1). It is Clement who writes, but it is in the name of his community that he writes. The address of the letter makes this clear: "The Church of God which resides as a stranger at Rome to the Church of God which is a stranger at Corinth; to those who are called and sanctified by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. May grace and peace from Almighty God flow to you in rich profusion through Jesus Christ!" Nowhere in the entire letter does the author call attention to himself, his office, or his authority. Thus, if one were to maintain that *1 Clement* is an act of authority, one would have to conclude that the authority is that of the Roman community, not of an individual within that

¹⁷ Dionysius of Corinth considers the fact that both churches were founded by Peter and Paul to be a special bond between them. See Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2, 25, 8.

¹⁸ On this see below, on Ignatius' salutation to the Christians of Rome.

¹⁹ Second-century tradition is unanimous on this, and there is no serious reason to dispute it.

²⁰ *Pastor*, Vis. 2, 4, 3. The translation is as in K. Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers* 2 (London, 1913).

²¹ It is possible that the author is simply trying to give his work the appearance of greater antiquity by using names of well-known figures of the past in this way.

community. To carry through a consistent primatial interpretation of *1 Clement*, therefore, one would have to maintain that universal ecclesiastical authority resided in the entire Roman community.

It might be objected that Clement writes in a self-effacing way from a deep sense of the solidarity between bishop and people.²² Clement is not writing in his own name, after consultation with the community; he writes as spokesman for the community.²³

To come finally to the third point, even if one still maintained that *1 Clement* implies that the bishop of Rome has ecclesiastical authority over the Church at Corinth, one may still ask what evidence there is that this is a primatial authority, extending in principle over the entire Church. It is well known that in the early Church certain churches were held to be of special importance because of their antiquity, their size, their apostolic credentials. Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria very early came to play a special role in the life of the Church. One could argue—as indeed I would—that in *1 Clement* we see at least the beginning of this development, but it is difficult to see how one can detect a universal claim in the letter. Only if we suppose that the spheres of influence of the leading churches were sharply defined by 95 A.D., and that Corinth was definitely subordinate to Antioch, can we conclude that Rome is here exercising an authority which is unique in the Church. Since the lines were not sharply drawn at that time, the conclusion seems unwarranted.

In summary, then, we may say that *1 Clement* may be interpreted most naturally as an exhortation to repentance addressed by one community to another.²⁴ Whatever the views of the author concerning the ultimate visible source of the unity of the universal Church, whether or not he had views on the matter, they simply do not appear in the letter he wrote. Thus, while his silence in this regard may be compatible with the thesis that primacy was recognized and exercised in the first century, it hardly provides *proof* for the thesis. We shall subsequently return to the problem of the significance of this silence.

²² Karrer, *Peter and the Church*, p. 97.

²³ Here we touch on the difficult problem of the development of the monarchical episcopacy at Rome. For an idea of the difficulties involved, see Jean Colson, *L'Evêque dans les communautés primitives* (Paris, 1951) pp. 67-75.

²⁴ This would seem to be Irenaeus' opinion of the letter as expressed in *Adv. haer.* 3, 3, 3.

IGNATIUS TO THE ROMANS

We may suppose that the letters of Ignatius of Antioch were written about 110 A.D. Though there is no consensus as to the exact date, there is no serious doubt that they were written within a few years of 110,²⁵ and for our purposes greater precision is of no importance. A significant number of Catholic writers have found in his *Epistle to the Romans* another early witness to the Roman primacy. Quasten brings to a focus virtually all the relevant material, and so we once more quote him at some length:

When one compares the opening words of the various epistles to the communities of Asia Minor with the salutation of that addressed to the Church of Rome, there is no doubt that Ignatius holds the Church of Rome in far higher regard. The significance of this salutation cannot be overestimated; it is the earliest avowal of the Primacy of Rome that we possess from the pen of a non-Roman ecclesiastic. . . . But, aside from the problem presented by so difficult an expression, the Epistle to the Romans, taken in its entirety, shows beyond cavil that the position of honor accorded the Roman Church is acknowledged by Ignatius as her due, and is founded not on the extent of her charitable influence but on her inherent right to universal ecclesiastical supremacy. This is borne out by the passage in the salutation, "which also presides in the chief place of the Roman territory"; again by the remark, "you taught others" (3, 1); and still again by the plea to espouse the Church in Syria as Christ would and as a bishop should: "Remember in your prayers the Church in Syria which has God for its shepherd instead of me. Its bishop shall be Jesus Christ alone and your love" (9, 1). Significant also is the fact that although Ignatius admonishes to unity and harmony in all his Epistles he does not do so in the one addressed to the Romans. He does not presume to issue commands to the Roman community, for it has its authority from the Princes of the Apostles: "I do not issue any orders to you as did Peter and Paul; they were Apostles, I am a convict" (Rom. 4, 3).²⁶

The salutation from *Romans* is famous:

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the Church that has found mercy in the transcendent Majesty of the Most High Father and of Jesus Christ, His only Son; the church by the will of Him who willed all things that exist, beloved and illuminated through the faith and love of Jesus Christ our God; which also presides in the chief place of the Roman territory; a church worthy of God, worthy of honor, worthy of felicitation, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy of sanctification,

²⁵ Cf. Virginia Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch* (New Haven, 1960) p. 3.

²⁶ *Patrology* 1, 67, 70.

and presiding in love, maintaining the law of Christ, and bearer of the Father's name: her do I therefore salute in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. . . .

Simply on the basis of this passage, it is clear beyond reasonable doubt that for Ignatius the Church at Rome is of special importance. Though he begins most of his letters²⁷ with praise for the church addressed, none of the other encomia is really comparable to what we have here.²⁸ However, to say that Rome holds a special place in Ignatius' mind and heart is to say rather little. The problem is to define this "special place."

One's estimate of the salutation hinges on one's interpretation of the two occurrences of *prokathēmai*: *hētis kai prokathētai en topō chōriou Rōmaiōn* and *kai prokathēmenē tēs agapēs*. The first phrase is easier and has occasioned less dispute. The phrase *en topō chōriou Rōmaiōn* is pleonastic, but its meaning is clear enough. Rome is addressed as the Church which "presides in the land of the Romans." The Roman Church has some kind of authority—I do not think that the word is too strong—over the other churches in its area. This fact, however, does not raise Rome to a unique status. Ignatius on occasion refers to himself as bishop of the Church in Syria,²⁹ though in fact he was bishop of Antioch, thus suggesting a regional dominance of Antioch in Syria; and it is generally recognized that very early certain sees—Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome—came to play a leading role in their respective areas. Ignatius' *prokathētai en topō chōriou Rōmaiōn* is an early indication of *this* development, but by itself it does not testify to a universal Roman primacy.

The more ambiguous phrase is *prokathēmenē tēs agapēs*. Translated mechanically, this comes out "presiding over love (Christian charity)," but this is not too helpful. Various interpretations have been tried, but none has secured universal agreement. Harnack took the phrase to mean "pre-eminent in love."³⁰ It has been objected³¹ that this rendering ignores the fact that in the two other passages in which Ignatius

²⁷ *Magnesians* and *Polycarp* are the exceptions.

²⁸ Miss Corwin, *op. cit.*, finds *Ephesians* comparable. Is she perhaps overreacting to those who would find in the salutation of *Romans* unequivocal evidence for the primacy?

²⁹ *Eph.* 21, 2; *Mag.* 14, 1; *Trall.* 13, 1; *Rom.* 9, 1.

³⁰ See Quasten, *Patrology* 1, 69. I have not had access to the article to which he refers.

³¹ *Ibid.*

uses *prokathēmai*, the word clearly involves some kind of authoritative jurisdiction. This objection does not seem insurmountable. A more serious difficulty would seem to be that it ignores the fact that the genitive used with this verb is regularly used to designate the object of the verb.³²

The difficulty with alternative interpretations is that they have to find a meaning other than the customary one for *tēs agapēs*. It has been asserted that "Ignatius makes the term *agapē* a synonym for the respective Churches,"³³ and on this basis the phrase is understood to mean " 'presiding over the bond of love'—'bond of love' being merely another way of saying 'the Church universal.' " But a review of the passages cited for the identification of *agapē* and the respective churches does not substantiate the basic premise of this interpretation.³⁴ In one of the passages cited, he even speaks of "the *agapē* of the Churches" (*Rom.* 9, 3).

The least unsatisfactory rendering would seem to be, "guardian or protector of Christian love." Thus it would be a recognition of special responsibility and authority. However, coming as it does so close after *hētis prokathētai en topō chōriou Rōmaiōn*, it seems tendentious to read a recognition of universal guardianship into the second phrase. It seems more natural to read the second in subordination to the first: "presiding in the land of the Romans . . . guardian [there] of Christian faith and love." A difficulty with this translation is that it requires a slight shift in meaning between the two occurrences of the verb, but this seems less serious than the difficulties in which other translations become involved. Whatever version one adopts, it should be clear that the phrase provides a very uncertain foundation for generalizations about early second-century ecclesiology.

However, the primatial interpretation of *Romans* does not depend solely on this single, obscure passage. The following is also of moment: "You have never grudged any man. You have taught others. All I want is that the lessons you inculcate in initiating disciples remain in force."³⁵ Again, I would consider this as evidence that the Roman

³² In *Eph.* 1, 3, Ignatius uses the phrase *tō en agapē adiēgētō*. If he wanted to say "pre-eminent" or "presiding in love," we would expect a phrase parallel to this.

³³ Quasten, *Patrology* 1, 69. He is here presenting the interpretation of F. X. Funk.

³⁴ *Phil.* 11, 2; *Smyrn.* 12, 1; *Trall.* 13, 1; *Rom.* 9, 3.

³⁵ *Rom.* 3, 1.

Church possessed a certain prominence even prior to the time of Ignatius' letters, that Rome taught others—and surely this must be other churches—and even gave them commands (*entellesthe*).³⁶ But this does not take us beyond the vaguely defined regional pre-eminence which we have already seen in Ignatius. Indeed, the fact that Ignatius seems here to be reinforcing what Rome has said—"All I want is that the lessons you inculcate in initiating disciples remain in force"—suggests that he is thinking in the pluralistic terms so characteristic of early ecclesiology.

Finally, the following passage is of importance: "Remember in your prayers the Church in Syria, which now has God for her Shepherd in my stead. Jesus Christ alone will be her Bishop, together with your love."³⁷ The difficulty here—and it is a difficulty which one encounters constantly in interpreting first- and second-century material—is that what is said can be interpreted in at least two different ways, and that the interpretation which one makes will depend on one's general interpretation of the work, the author, indeed the entire period involved. The Church in Syria will have as its bishop Jesus Christ alone—"and your love (*hē hymōn agapē*)."³⁸ Ignatius says this to no other church. Is this because, in his opinion, it is true only or in a unique way of the Church at Rome? Or could he have said it of any other church, and thus is it only a historical accident that he says it only to Rome? Or could he have said it to any other church, but would it be especially appropriate to Rome because it had already emerged as one of the most solid and influential of churches? No analysis of the phrase *hē hymōn agapē* will give us the answer.

The alternative which I would favor is the last given: Ignatius could have addressed these words to any other church, but it was especially appropriate that he address them to Rome because Rome was already one of the most important and influential of the churches. Toward the end of each of his letters (*Eph.* 21, 2; *Mag.* 14, 1; *Trall.* 13, 1; *Rom.* 9, 1; *Phil.* 10, 1; *Smyrn.* 11, 1-2; *Polycarp* 7, 1-2) he urges upon the addressee prayer and solicitude for the soon to be orphaned Church of Antioch (Syria). The form varies from letter to letter, but always it is the love of the several communities that must watch over and pro-

³⁶ However, in *Rom.* 4, 1, Ignatius uses *entellomai* in the weaker sense of "inform."

³⁷ *Rom.* 9, 1.

vide for Antioch-Syria. This frequently repeated view is most strikingly expressed in *Romans*: the love of the Romans is to be, under Jesus Christ, the guardian-bishop³⁸ of the Syrian Church. Thus, though Ignatius recognizes that the Church of Rome is especially important in the life of the Church, it is difficult to see that he is here alluding to any authority or responsibility or gift that would be unique to that Church.

A final point of some importance. Ignatius looks upon the Church at Rome as the Church of Peter and Paul. Such at least would seem to be the import of *Rom.* 4, 3: "Not like Peter and Paul do I issue any orders to you. They were Apostles, I am a convict; they were free, I am until this moment a slave. But once I have suffered, I shall become a freedman of Jesus Christ, and, united with Him, I shall rise a free man. Just now I learn, being in chains, to desire nothing." The weighty apostolic credentials of the Roman community are at least partly the explanation of the importance which Ignatius accords Rome. However, the fact that he defers to the apostolic authority should not be taken as a recognition of Roman supremacy. He shows similar deference in addressing the Trallians (3, 3) and the Ephesians (3, 1).

In conclusion, when we ask whether or not Ignatius recognized Rome's "inherent right to universal ecclesiastical supremacy,"³⁹ we must answer that apparently he did not. The question of universal ecclesiastical supremacy, or better, of the ecumenical unity of the Church, nowhere arises in his letters. He clearly articulates an episcopal theory according to which the bishop is the *sine qua non* of all authentic Christian life. But this ecclesiology remains pluralistic. The question of the unity of the churches in the one Church is not raised, probably because it is not felt to be a problem. Nothing that he says justifies the conclusion that he saw in the successors of Peter the source of the world-wide unity of the Church.

IRENÆUS OF LYONS

Irenæus' *Adversus haereses* 3, 3, 2, has, like the materials already considered, given rise to an enormous literature. There is agreement

³⁸ It is difficult to know whether *episkopos* has become exclusively a *terminus technicus* in Ignatius, or whether it might still retain something of its older meaning of "overseer."

³⁹ Quasten, *Patrology* 1, 70.

on the approximate date at which the work was written: *ca.* 180. The passage relevant to the status of the Roman See is as follows:

Sed quoniam valde longum est in hoc tali volumine omnium ecclesiarum enumerare successiones, maximae et antiquissimae et omnibus cognitae, a gloriosissimis duobus apostolis Petro et Paulo Romae fundatae et constitutae ecclesiae, eam quam habet ab apostolis traditionem et adnuntiatam hominibus fidem per successiones episcoporum pervenientem usque ad nos indicantes, confundimus omnes eos qui quoquo modo, vel per sibi placentiam vel vanam gloriam vel per caecitatem et sententiam malam praeterquam oportet colligunt. Ad hanc enim ecclesiam, propter potentiorum principalitatem, necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam, hoc est eos qui sunt undique fideles, in qua semper, ab his qui sunt undique, conservata est ea quae est ab apostolis traditio.

But it would be very long in a book of this kind, to enumerate the episcopal lists in all the churches, but by pointing out the Apostolic tradition and creed which has been brought down to us by a succession of bishops in the greatest, most ancient and well-known church founded by the two most glorious Apostles Peter and Paul at Rome, we can confute all those who in any other way, either for self-pleasing or for vainglory or blindness or badness, hold unauthorized meetings. For with this church, because of its stronger origin, all churches must agree, that is to say, the faithful of all places, because in it the Apostolic tradition has always been preserved by the (faithful) of all places.⁴⁰

Prior to this, Irenaeus has elaborated his theory of apostolic-episcopal succession as the criterion for orthodox doctrine. We may be confident of the orthodoxy of any church in which we can trace a public succession of bishops back to an apostle. However, rather than trace back the lineage of all the churches, Irenaeus selects one that is well known and of particularly venerable origin.

Part of the difficulty in determining Irenaeus' precise attitude toward Rome is the fact that we do not possess the Greek original of the crucial passage. We do, however, have the Greek original for some other passages, and there the translation is quite literal.

The first important phrase is *maximae et antiquissimae*. "The greatest and most ancient" is not as obvious a translation as it might at first seem. Irenaeus would surely be aware that Rome was not the most ancient of churches. Jerusalem antedated it, as did many of the

⁴⁰ *Adv. haer.* 3, 3, 2. The text is as in F. Sagnard, *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les hérésies III* (*Sources chrétiennes* 34; Paris, 1952); the translation used is that given in Michael Winter, *St. Peter and the Popes* (London, 1960) p. 126.

churches spoken of in Acts. However, since both Latin and Greek frequently employ the superlative in a loose sense, we need not seek to explain how Rome can be considered *the* oldest.⁴¹ The Latin (and Greek) need mean no more than "very ancient."⁴² If we thus take *antiquissimae* to be a weak superlative, as we must, then there is good reason to treat *maximae* in the same way. Thus the old Roberts-Rambaut translation—"the very great, very ancient, and universally known church"—is very well founded and ought not to be dismissed as Anglican tendentiousness.

We come then to the final sentence. The phrase *propter potentio rem principalitatem* has defied exact analysis. Since the Latin *principalitas* has a broad range of meanings and the context provides little help in determining which one is intended here, many attempts have been made to guess the Greek which lies behind it.⁴³ I think that the likeliest guess is *archē*.⁴⁴ The phrase would then mean "because of its more imposing foundation." There is an apparent ambiguity in Irenaeus' thought. On the one hand, Rome is introduced as an exemplar: it is

⁴¹ Cf. Winter, *op. cit.*, p. 127: "The general tenor of Irenaeus' thought is first indicated by the epithet *antiquissimae* (most ancient). The same word was used by Origen to designate the Roman church. The epithet is unusual in view of the fact that Rome was a later foundation than the principal churches of the East, and Origen could hardly have been ignorant of the fact. From many points of view Jerusalem merited the title of mother church of the world, being the earliest by many years. Viewed thus, it is hard to understand the expression 'most ancient', unless it be taken as a reference to the office of St. Peter which was embodied in that church. This notion was well known to the early church, since they saw the origin of the episcopate in the promise of the keys of the kingdom." This explanation seems quite unnecessary.

⁴² Compare the English parallel: "a most learned man" does not have the same superlative force as "the most learned man." In *Adv. haer.* 3, 4, 1, Irenaeus writes: "Et si de aliqua modica quaestione disceptatio esset, nonne oportet in antiquissimas recurrere ecclesias, in quibus apostoli conversati sunt." I am inclined to suppose that Irenaeus thinks of the *antiquissimae ecclesiae* as a special class of churches, the apostolic churches, and that what he means when he calls the Church of Rome *antiquissima ecclesia* is simply that it is an ancient and apostolic church.

⁴³ See Quasten, *Patrology* 1, 302-3, for a list of the various suggestions that have been made. A more detailed discussion can be found in D. J. Unger, "St. Irenaeus and the Roman Primacy," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 13 (1952) 389-405.

⁴⁴ Winter's objection (*op. cit.*, pp. 127-28) seems to me to have no force. He argues that *archē* would have been translated as *antiquitas*, since the translator has just used *antiquissimae* to translate *archaiotētes*. The argument is based on an unnecessarily wooden view of the art of translating, and fails to notice that *archē* is simply not equivalent to *antiquitas*.

important not because it possesses anything that the other churches do not possess, but because it possesses in a clear and decisive way what any true church must possess: public transmission of teaching through the bishops back to the apostles. On the other hand, because of Rome's *potentiorē principalitatem*, all other churches must agree with its doctrine. I think that these two positions can be brought together by taking *potentiorē principalitatem* as a reference back to *a gloriosissimis duobus apostolis Petro et Paulo Romae fundatae et constitutae ecclesiae*. The reputation of Peter and Paul, their standing among the apostles, makes the apostolic foundation of Rome especially impressive. Whether or not Irenaeus was aware of Peter's primacy among the apostles is difficult to say. He was surely aware that Peter was the Apostle of the Jews and Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, and this in itself would make Rome's credentials most impressive, its foundation especially firm.

Ad hanc enim ecclesiam . . . necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam. Rome is being held up as a model or pattern of sound doctrine. All other churches must agree with Rome because Rome, qua apostolic, possesses the true doctrine. In theory, any of the apostolic sees could serve as a doctrinal standard. Rome, because it is so impressively apostolic and because of its cosmopolitan character and its extensive dealings with others, is a most convenient standard.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Quasten, *Patrology* 1, 303, and Winter, *op. cit.*, p. 128, concur in this. Unger, *art. cit.*, takes quite another view. "Moral necessity alone satisfies the purpose Irenaeus has in adding this sentence, namely, as a reason why the Roman Church suffices, in place of all the other Churches taken together, for finding the apostolic tradition. If the Roman Church suffices at all times for finding the truth, then she must be infallible by herself, independently of all the others. But Irenaeus has already clearly stated that principle, before offering it here as the reason for the need of conforming to the Roman Church. The self-sufficient infallibility of the Roman Church would, of itself, demand at least strict logical necessity of conforming to her. But the context demands more. The office of infallible teacher in the Church of Christ includes the office of authoritative teacher" (p. 385). The premise on which this argument depends has been stated earlier: "I should like to insist here that Irenaeus clearly means to state that the Roman Church is infallible by herself, because to find the truth it suffices that one consult her tradition. . . . Just as clearly does he assert that the other Churches taken singly are not infallible. Only when all are taken together can one find the truth . . ." (pp. 366-67). This last assertion simply is not correct. Unger apparently misses Irenaeus' point that an apostolic church is *ipso facto* orthodox. He interprets Irenaeus to mean that there are two (and only two) criteria of orthodoxy: the universal Church (including Rome) or the Church of Rome taken in isolation. Much of his article is distorted by this initial misunderstanding.

There thus seems to be nothing in Irenaeus to warrant the conclusion that he recognized in the Roman Church a unique authority or a unique role in the Church. That Rome was, by this time, one of the most prominent of churches has never been doubted; that it traced its origin back to apostolic times has always been beyond dispute. Irenaeus is important for his testimony to the Petrine and Pauline foundation⁴⁶ of the Roman Church. But he does not take us any closer than this to a doctrine of Roman primacy.

Irenaeus' ideas on the doctrinal role of the episcopacy are of major importance in the development of ecclesiology and even in the development of the doctrine of Roman primacy; but Irenaeus does not himself arrive at a doctrine of the primacy. The Church has been founded on the apostles; it is maintained by their successors, the bishops. Irenaeus is not worried by the problem of the unity of the episcopacy, serene in the view that the public succession of bishops would guarantee their agreement with the various apostolic founders and thus with each other. Indeed, from Irenaeus' point of view it is difficult to imagine what function a primatial bishop or primatial see could have.

THE PASCHAL CONTROVERSY

A most difficult piece of evidence to assess is Eusebius' account of the second-century controversy over the celebration of Easter.

At that time no small controversy arose because all the dioceses of Asia thought it right, as though by more ancient tradition, to observe for the feast of the Saviour's passover the fourteenth day of the moon, on which the Jews had been commanded to kill the lamb. Thus it was necessary to finish the fast on that day, whatever day of the week it might be. Yet it was not the custom to celebrate in this manner in the churches throughout the rest of the world, for from apostolic tradition they kept the custom which still exists that it is not right to finish the fast on any day save that of the resurrection of our Saviour. Many meetings and conferences with bishops were held on this point, and all unanimously formulated in their letters the doctrine of the church for those in every country that the mystery of the Lord's resurrection from the dead could be celebrated on no day save Sunday, and that on that day alone we should celebrate the end of the paschal fast. There is still extant a writing of those who were convened in Palestine, over

⁴⁶ "Foundation" should not be taken too literally. It would not be necessary from Irenaeus' point of view that Peter and Paul have been the very first to preach the gospel in Rome, but only that at some time they have preached there.

whom presided Theophilus, bishop of the diocese of Caesarea, and Narcissus, bishop of Jerusalem; and there is similarly another from those in Rome on the same controversy, which gives Victor as bishop; and there is one of the bishops of Pontus over whom Palmas presided as the oldest; and of the dioceses of Gaul, of which Irenaeus was bishop; and yet others of those in Osrhoene and the cities there; and particularly of Bacchyllus, the bishop of the church of Corinth; and of very many more who expressed one and the same opinion and judgement, and gave the same vote.

These issued the single definition which was given above; but the bishops in Asia were led by Polycrates in persisting that it was necessary to keep the custom which had been handed down to them of old. Polycrates himself in a document which he addressed to Victor and to the church of Rome, expounds the tradition which had come to him as follows. "Therefore we keep the day undeviatingly, neither adding nor taking away, for in Asia great luminaries sleep, and they will rise on the day of the coming of the Lord, when he shall come with glory from heaven and seek out all the saints. Such were Philip of the twelve apostles, and two of his daughters who grew old as virgins, who sleep in Hierapolis, and another daughter of his, who lived in the Holy Spirit, rests at Ephesus. Moreover, there is also John, who lay on the Lord's breast, who was a priest wearing the breastplate, and a martyr, and teacher. He sleeps at Ephesus. And there is also Polycarp at Smyrna, both bishop and martyr, and Thraseas, both bishop and martyr, from Eumeneae, who sleeps in Smyrna. And why should I speak of Sagaris, bishop and martyr, who sleeps at Laodiceae, and Papirius, too, the blessed, and Melito the eunuch, who lived entirely in the Holy Spirit, who lies in Sardis, waiting for the visitation from heaven when he will rise from the dead? All these kept the fourteenth day of the passover according to the gospel, never swerving, but following according to the rule of the faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, live according to the tradition of my kinsmen, and some of them have I followed. For seven of my family were bishops and I am the eighth, and my kinsmen ever kept the day when the people put away the leaven. Therefore, brethren, I who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord and conversed with brethren from every country, and have studied all holy Scripture, am not afraid of threats, for they have said who were greater than I, 'It is better to obey God rather than men.' "

He continues about the bishops who when he wrote were with him and shared his opinion, and says thus: "And I could mention the bishops who are present whom you required me to summon, and I did so. If I should write their names they would be many multitudes; and they knowing my feeble humanity, agreed with the letter, knowing that not in vain is my head grey, but that I have ever lived in Christ Jesus."

Upon this Victor, who presided at Rome, immediately tried to cut off from the common unity the dioceses of all Asia, together with the adjacent churches, on the ground of heterodoxy, and he indited letters announcing that all the Christians there were absolutely excommunicated. But by no means all were pleased by this, so they issued counter-requests to him to consider the cause of peace and unity

and love towards his neighbours. Their words are extant, sharply rebuking Victor. Among them too Irenaeus, writing in the name of the Christians whose leader he was in Gaul, though he recommends that the mystery of the Lord's resurrection be observed only on the Lord's day, yet nevertheless exhorts Victor suitably and at length not to excommunicate whole churches of God for following a tradition of ancient custom, and continues as follows: "For the controversy is not only about the day, but also about the actual character of the fast; for some think that they ought to fast one day, others two, others even more, some count their day as forty hours, day and night. And such variation of observance did not begin in our own time, but much earlier, in the days of our predecessors who, it would appear, disregarding strictness maintained a practice which is simple and yet allows for personal preference, establishing it for the future, and none the less all these lived in peace, and we also live in peace with one another and the disagreement in the fast confirms our agreement in the faith."

He adds to this a narrative which I may suitably quote, running as follows: "Among these too were the presbyters before Soter, who presided over the church of which you are now the leader, I mean Anicetus and Pius and Telesphorus and Xystus. They did not themselves observe it, nor did they enjoin it on those who followed them, and though they did not keep it they were none the less at peace with those from the dioceses in which it was observed when they came to them, although to observe it was more objectionable to those who did not do so. And no one was ever rejected for this reason, but the presbyters before you who did not observe it sent the Eucharist to those from other dioceses who did; and when the blessed Polycarp was staying in Rome in the time of Anicetus, though they disagreed a little about some other things as well, they immediately made peace, having no wish for strife between them on this matter. For neither was Anicetus able to persuade Polycarp not to observe it, inasmuch as he had always done so in company with John the disciple of our Lord and the other apostles with whom he had associated; nor did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it, for he said that he ought to keep the custom of those who were presbyters before him. And under these circumstances they communicated with each other, and in the church Anicetus yielded the celebration of the Eucharist to Polycarp, obviously out of respect, and they parted from each other in peace, for the peace of the whole church was kept both by those who observed and by those who did not."⁴⁷

This has been widely accepted as evidence of the assertion (by Victor) and recognition (by Irenaeus) of papal prerogatives *ca.* 180. At first view this interpretation might seem obvious, but it has been challenged by a number of scholars.⁴⁸ In brief, their objection is that

⁴⁷ *Hist. eccl.* 5, 23-24.

⁴⁸ E.g., T. G. Jalland, *The Church and the Papacy* (London, 1944) pp. 115-22; N. Maurice-Denis Boulet, "Titres urbains et communauté dans la Rome chrétienne," *Maison Dieu*, no. 36 (1953) 21.

Eusebius has misinterpreted his materials, a misinterpretation which we are able to rectify on the basis of the document which he quotes. His error has been to read a papal, interepiscopal significance into what was essentially an intradiocesan affair.

It is first of all clear that in Eusebius' view what Victor did was to try to cut off from the common unity of the Church the churches of Asia. It seems clear, therefore, that Eusebius thinks that Victor acts as one having authority over the universal Church, as the ecumenical bishop par excellence. But it is objected that the letter of Irenaeus does not bear out Eusebius' interpretation, and so Eusebius is charged with reading second-century materials in light of fourth-century practice.

Irenaeus' letter is quoted in two sections, which were probably continuous in the original,⁴⁹ of which the second is manifestly intradiocesan and the first allegedly so. The *historia* which Irenaeus gives, clearly has to do with the conduct of Anicetus toward Polycarp while the latter was in Rome. Eusebius has earlier reported that Polycarp had gone there to talk with Anicetus about difficulties which had arisen concerning the date of Easter.⁵⁰ What is the point of the narrative? Is it to show that Anicetus allowed diversity within his own diocese, or that he remained in communion with bishops who followed a practice different from his own?

The gist of Jalland's and Maurice-Denis Boulet's interpretation is that the point of the narrative (the point which Irenaeus wished to make) is that Anicetus lived at peace with those in his own diocese who followed another tradition, and that Victor should do likewise. I am inclined to accept this interpretation, though it gives rise to some questions which I am unable to answer. However, as I shall try to show, even if one rejects this interpretation, there is still good reason to question the primatial interpretation of the entire incident.

In favor of what, for brevity's sake, I shall call the Jalland thesis is the fact that the incident described has to do quite clearly with intra-

⁴⁹ *En hois* at the beginning of the second section seems to refer back directly to the *panles houtoi* of the first.

⁵⁰ *Hist. eccl.* 3, 14, 1. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 3, 3, 4, testifies that Polycarp also bore effective witness against the Gnostics during his stay in Rome.

diocesan uniformity.⁵¹ There is no question of the Romans tolerating other practices in other places, but only of their attitude toward those who come to Rome, from places that follow a different tradition: *kai ouden elatton autoi mē tērountes eirēneuon tois apo tōn parakiōn en hais elēreito, erchomenois pros autous*. This interpretation requires that when Irenaeus writes *pantes houtoi eirēneusan te kai eirēneuomen pros allēlous* (5, 24, 13), he is referring to intradiocesan practice. *Eirēneuomen pros allēlous* would mean that at Lyons or in Gaul peace and unity are maintained despite difference in practice.

The difficulty with this interpretation is that it does not explain how Eusebius arrived at his erroneous interpretation.⁵² He suggests (5, 24, 9–10) that he has seen a number of the letters written in criticism of Victor's action, and it is difficult to imagine that they would all have been ambiguous enough to allow Eusebius to make a full-fledged schism out of the internal affairs of the Roman See. One could suppose that Irenaeus' was really the only letter which Eusebius knew, but this would be an *ad hoc* assumption.

Consequently, though the Jalland thesis does make better sense out of Irenaeus, it is not without difficulties. However, I think that the interpretation of Eusebius 5, 23–24, can be made to hinge on something other than the point thus far discussed. Suppose that one rejects the Jalland thesis and maintains that Victor at least attempted to cut off the churches of Asia. What would such an action mean in a late-second-century context? Would it be seen as an act whereby the supreme bishop of the Church cuts off a number of churches from the Church universal? Or would it be seen as an act whereby the bishop of one church breaks off communication with other churches?

Eusebius seems to suggest the former view of excommunication: *apotemnein . . . tēs koinēs henōseōs peiratai, kai stēliteuci . . . akoinōnētous pantas ardēn tous ekeise anakērutōn adelphous*. This would be expulsion from the body of the Church and would presuppose primatial

⁵¹ N. Maurice-Denis Boulet, *art. cit.*, p. 21, has argued convincingly that when Irenaeus says that the presbyters sent the Eucharist to those from other dioceses, he is describing what came to be called *fermentum*, an intradiocesan practice, and that the Romans would not have sent the Eucharist all the way to Asia Minor.

⁵² Jalland thinks that Eusebius was led into this misinterpretation by his desire to find antecedents to Constantine's efforts to secure uniformity within the Church.

authority. However, Eusebius' paraphrase of the remonstrances of the bishops suggests another view: *ta tēs eirēnēs kai tēs pros tous plēsion henōseōs te kai agapēs phronein*. This suggests that the result of Victor's action has been the disruption of peace and unity and a violation of love. If the remonstrating bishops had understood that the "excommunicated" churches of Asia had been placed outside the Church, they are strangely silent on the point. Their view seems rather to be that Rome has acted unwisely and unjustly by cutting itself off from the Asian churches, and should now undo this wrong.

I favor this interpretation of Victor's action (on the supposition that the Jalland thesis is not accepted) because it fits in much better with what we know of the second and third centuries. When the claim is clearly made in the third century that the bishop of Rome is, *qua* successor to St. Peter, primate of the universal Church, this claim is hotly disputed by Tertullian (?) and Cyprian. It is difficult to believe that in the late second century, when the Church was even less centralized than in the third, an action clearly presupposing such primacy, unprecedented, and at the same time unjust would not precipitate a discussion of this primacy.

Moreover, we have many examples from the third and fourth centuries of bishops excommunicating bishops. The complicated history of the Church between Nicaea and Constantinople abounds in instances of this type, as do the Donatist struggles. It was assumed that a bishop could break off relations with other bishops (churches); such excommunication was not understood (or was only progressively understood) as expulsion from the Church universal. If we suppose continuity in the development of ideas and institutions during the second, third, and fourth centuries, then it is highly improbable that Victor and his contemporaries would have interpreted Victor's action as something which only the bishop of Rome could have done and which definitely severed the Asian churches from the Church universal.

Thus, to summarize, if one accepts the Jalland thesis, we have to do with a purely intradiocesan affair. If one does not accept the Jalland thesis, one still finds that Victor's actions do not imply a claim to and recognition of Roman primacy.

II

I would conclude from this survey of the second-century evidence that there is serious need for a reconsideration of the development of the doctrine of the Roman primacy. The common view that the Church in the second century recognized the primacy of the Church of Rome, and that the third and fourth centuries saw only an increase in the exercise of the primacy, is not easily reconciled with the documents. Where we might expect the recognition of the primacy to break through into writing—*1 Clement*, Irenaeus' *Adversus haereses*—we do not find it. If one accepts the analysis of the second-century record presented here, then the usual Roman Catholic view on this matter must be judged unsatisfactory.

Unfortunately, the general problem of the development of doctrine is anything but settled.⁵³ The dogmatic theology in general favor among Roman Catholics was first conceived in an age which, whatever its merits, had little sense of change and development; and the historical consciousness developed largely outside Roman Catholicism during the last two centuries has only gradually and partially been given its rightful place among us. Though in a general way development and change have been recognized and justified, the limits within which such development can take place have not been defined with any great precision. As dogmatic theologians and historians of doctrine learn more from each other, we shall come to a much fuller understanding of such matters; but given our present state of knowledge, a sketch of the early development of the papacy cannot hope to be definitive.

One factor that may seem to make a discussion of the *development* of the primacy a hazardous undertaking is the fact—or what I take to be the fact—that the New Testament speaks rather clearly of the primacy of Peter. Vatican I, moreover, insists that Jesus gave to Peter “*primatum iurisdictionis in universam Dei ecclesiam*”;⁵⁴ and the decree of the Holy Office condemning Modernism underlines the explicit nature of this commissioning by condemning the proposition, “Simon

⁵³ There is a convenient bibliography in Karl Rahner, “The Development of Dogma,” in *Theological Investigations* 1 (Baltimore, 1961) 39–41. However, this bibliography is by now a decade old.

⁵⁴ *DB* (32nd ed.) 3053 (= 31st ed., 1822).

Petrus ne suspicatus quidem umquam est, sibi demandatum esse primum in ecclesia.”⁶⁵ With this as a starting point, what is left for development? The papacy is in place from the start, and any development that takes place can only be in the exercise of the office, or perhaps in the drawing out of some of the implications of this first commissioning.

To this it should be said that the Petrine primacy and the papal primacy are not in every respect the same. As Oscar Cullmann has well illustrated, one can be quite convinced that there was a Petrine primacy without simultaneously affirming a papal primacy. It will be part of my general argument that, while the early Church could be said to have recognized a Petrine primacy,⁶⁶ it did not immediately conclude from that that there was and should be a post-Petrine or papal primacy.

As already indicated, I suppose that there is a clear New Testament witness to Peter's primacy.⁶⁷ Yet I do not suppose that the New Testament provides us with a precise definition of this primacy. We see

⁶⁵ DB 3455 (= 2055).

⁶⁶ Even this may seem questionable, since there is really very little explicit evidence to this effect. As I will show subsequently, the early (second-century) Church had really very little reason to concern itself with Peter's primacy. Nevertheless, since that primacy is rather clearly set forth in the New Testament, I would suppose that *if* the question of Peter's primacy had been posed in the second century, it *would have been* recognized rather readily. I do not hereby intend to force a *definition* of that primacy on the second century.

⁶⁷ Cf. Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia, 1962) pp. 25–33; T. Jalland, *op. cit.*, pp. 47–64. The references are to works that argue for the position taken here. I do not pretend to be furnishing a complete bibliography or one in which all possible positions are defended. The works cited provide more comprehensive bibliographies.—It may seem arbitrary to take from Cullmann's *Peter* what is useful for my purposes and to pass over in silence what runs counter to the general run of my argument. My reason for this is as follows. Cullmann, after arguing tellingly for the dominical foundation of Peter's primacy, and after showing that the New Testament in its most important parts witnesses to this primacy, argues that the primacy in question is the leadership of the Jerusalem community. This seems a bit like Horace's mountain giving birth to a mouse. Since in Cullmann's view (and mine) Peter's main function is as *vinculum unitatis*, his limitation of Peter's role to the period when the Church existed only in Jerusalem leads one to suppose that to Jesus the unity of the community at Jerusalem was of central importance, and that the unity of the churches was not, or that only the former was a problem and not the latter too. This I find implausible.—It will be noted, in addition, that I do take account of the apparent fading of Peter after the first few years, and that in this way I indirectly take account of Cullmann's interpretation of Peter's role after his departure from Jerusalem.

Peter exercising leadership within the circle of the Twelve during Jesus' lifetime⁵⁸ and in the Church after Pentecost. Moreover, Peter is entrusted with a special responsibility vis-à-vis the other apostles⁵⁹ and the entire community.⁶⁰ Yet I think that it must be clear to anyone who would read the New Testament in its entirety that the position of Peter is not a major New Testament theme. This is not to deny that there is abundant evidence for Peter's special role throughout the New Testament. My point is rather that reference to Peter's special role is made casually and without insistence. The fact that Mt 16:18 is without close parallel in the other Synoptics is no argument against the authenticity of the passage. However, it does suggest that the Christian communities of the first century did not emphasize this logion to quite the same degree as did later centuries. The fact that the manuscript tradition reveals no tendency to insert the passage found in Matthew into what is obviously the same pericope in Mark reinforces one's impression to this effect.

Though it is difficult to establish a comparison on this point, it would seem that the New Testament is more concerned with the special role of the Twelve than with the unique role of Peter.⁶¹ Jesus prepares and commissions Peter, but He even more prominently prepares and commissions the Twelve. Peter exerts leadership, but so do the others, and there is no reason to think that these others were to act only in virtue of Peter's authority. They too were sent directly by the Lord. In the one case in which we witness serious disagreement within the early Church, on the question of the relationship between Judaism

⁵⁸ Whether the passages which present Peter in this way are historical in a stenographic sense, or have been shaped by Peter's later role in the Church, is not of major importance to us here. The fact that in a number of places one Evangelist ascribes to Peter what another ascribes to the Twelve suggests that some shaping has taken place; Cullmann, *Peter*, pp. 26-28, organizes and analyzes this material.

⁵⁹ Lk 22:31 f. The *hymas* of v. 31 would seem to be identical with *adelphous son* of v. 32, and would thus seem to refer to the apostles.

⁶⁰ Mt 16:18.

⁶¹ On the role of the Twelve see K. Rengstorff, "*Apostolos*," in G. Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* 1 (Stuttgart, 1933) 413-44. The English translation, *Apostleship*, tr. and ed. J. R. Coates (London, 1952), is often unsatisfactory. It should be noted that an important part of Rengstorff's argument, his identification of the Hebrew "Shaliach" with the Greek (and New Testament) *apostolos* on the basis of Septuagint usage, has been successfully challenged by A. A. T. Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Succession in the First Two Centuries of the Church* (London, 1953).

and Christianity, Peter is not cast as the obvious final arbiter. In Acts 15 we see the apostles come to a common decision, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Peter plays an important role, but one can hardly claim that the author of Acts was concerned that this role should appear as significantly different from that of at least some of the other participants. This does not imply that the author of Acts would deny the interpretation of Lk 22:31 f., which we have adopted here.⁶² However, it strongly suggests that for Luke and/or his sources the apostolic group rather than its center and support was the foremost source of leadership and authority in the early Christian community. The dominant New Testament ecclesiology is therefore that of the community of believers gathered around the apostles as around commissioned and inspired heralds of the good news of salvation.⁶³

If we suppose that Peter's special responsibility was to his fellow apostles, that he was first of all to strengthen them and keep them in that unity that was Christ's will for them, and that through the apostles he was to secure the unity of the entire Church, then an important consequence follows. The exercise and importance of the primacy will vary inversely with the ability of the apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit, to maintain unity and harmony in carrying out the mission entrusted to them. Peter is to strengthen his brethren, not to make them superfluous; and it is legitimate to suppose that such strengthening would take place to the degree necessary for the proper discharge of the apostolic office. Since the New Testament says so very little about centrifugal tendencies within the circle of apostles, it is not surprising that so little is expressly said about Peter's leadership. We see Peter in the role of leader while the Church is the single community of Jerusalem. As new Christian communities form throughout the Mediterranean world, we see little or nothing of the exercise of this special ministry. The unity of these communities is established through

⁶² Cf. *supra* n. 59.

⁶³ Lest this last sentence prove misleading, it should be noted that this is the common New Testament view of the structure and the locus of authority within the early community. However, structure and authority are not the only, perhaps not even the dominant, ecclesiological concerns in the New Testament. Thus I would not wish to be construed to deny that New Testament ecclesiology is above all concerned with the presence of the Holy Spirit in the baptized and only on a secondary level with problems of authority. This is a matter that can here quite legitimately be left in abeyance.

the preaching of the one gospel by the apostolic witnesses; because the maintenance of this unity seems not to have been a problem, it is not surprising that little is said of the problem's solution.

In considering the postapostolic primacy, I shall be obliged to make a number of assumptions, some of which are not beyond dispute. Within the limits of a single paper it is not possible to justify each of these assumptions, but where there is dispute I refer the reader to the literature that provides the basis for the position taken.

It is first necessary to assume that the problems concerning the development of the monarchical episcopate do not radically complicate the problem of apostolic succession. There is some reason to think that Rome did not have an Ignatian-type bishop until possibly the early second century. I am assuming that even if this is the case, it is still possible for there to be an apostolic succession as described, for example, by Irenaeus.⁶⁴

Secondly, the bishops are successors to the apostles insofar as they are primarily responsible for the coherence of the Christian community and the authenticity of the gospel that is preached within the community. They are not other apostles. They do, however, receive that which is repeatable in the apostolic ministry.⁶⁵

Thirdly, the bishops are responsible severally for their respective communities and as a group for the entire Church. The conception of the episcopacy as a group or a totality is not often articulated in the early Church, but it is presupposed by the synodal and conciliar practice that begins to emerge quite early.

Fourthly, a bishop does not ordinarily appoint or ordain his own successor. The manner of appointment or designation varies considerably. Ordination, however, follows a fairly regular pattern. The bishop is ordained in the presence of the people by other bishops present for the occasion.⁶⁶ Thus a particular bishop is a successor to a particular

⁶⁴ On this entire matter see Jean Colson, *Les fonctions ecclésiastiques aux deux premiers siècles* (Paris, 1956) pp. 317-26.

⁶⁵ A. M. Javierre, "La thèse de la succession des apôtres dans la littérature chrétienne primitive," in *L'Épiscopat et l'église universelle*, ed. Y. Congar and B. D. Dupuy (Paris, 1962) pp. 171-221; Gregory Dix, "The Ministry in the Early Church," in K. E. Kirk, *The Apostolic Ministry* (London, 1946) pp. 183-303.

⁶⁶ See, for example, the ordination liturgy of Hippolytus in G. Dix, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome* (London, 1937) pp. 2-6.

apostle not because he has been ordained (or appointed) by that apostle or by someone ordained (or appointed) by that apostle, but because he has been ordained by members of the episcopacy to head a church previously headed by that apostle.

Fifthly, Peter is generally looked upon as the apostle of Rome, and the bishop of Rome is regarded as the successor to Peter. This is the case, as in Irenaeus, independent of the question of the primacy of the bishop of Rome.

From these assumptions a number of consequences follow. First, it is quite possible that Peter did not appoint his own successor. The Pastoral Epistles, in which we see Paul directly entrusting supervisory responsibility to Timothy and Titus, are often taken as paradigm instances of the transition from apostle to successor.⁶⁷ However, there seems to be no good reason to suppose that authority must have been handed on by each individual apostle in just this way. Individual apostles could have died without making such provisions, and the remaining apostles or bishops could have ordained the successor. There seem to be no adequate grounds for excluding Peter from this general possibility.⁶⁸

There is, therefore, no reason to suppose a priori that the bishop of Rome in the period immediately following the age of the apostles had ideas about the Roman primacy either more or less precise than did his fellow bishops, as might conceivably have been the case had Peter taken someone aside and prepared him for the position in a special way. It is quite possible to suppose that the bishop of Rome was thought to be, and thought himself to be, (1) the bishop of a major church and (2) the successor to Peter, without supposing that anyone concluded from this that the bishop of Rome was to exercise a special primacy in the Church. It is quite possible that the first two points were recognized without the question of the primacy ever being posed, though these two points would provide the necessary basis for an answer to the question at such time as it should arise. Just as the New Testament had been concerned more with apostleship than with pri-

⁶⁷ It should be clear that the question of the authorship and dating of these letters is not relevant here.

⁶⁸ The fact that at present the pope neither appoints nor ordains his successor would seem to remove the grounds for any theoretical objection to this.

macy, so the ecclesiology of the second century was concerned mainly with the role of the bishop in the Church and hence with what was common to all bishops. If we suppose that the primatial function of Peter was, above all, to secure the coherence of the apostolic college, then it is quite possible that the entire problem of the primacy in the postapostolic Church remained in abeyance until such time as the coherence of the episcopacy actually became a problem.

By this I do not mean that the exercise of the primacy grew as the need for it grew, that though all the bishops recognized the primacy right from the start it only gradually came to have great practical importance. I mean rather that there was a period during which the question of the primacy was simply not posed because it seemed that a decentralized episcopacy was sufficient. The question of the postapostolic primacy was posed only when it was seen that the Holy Spirit did not guide the Church in quite as simple a fashion as Irenaeus and later Cyprian had thought. When the Church—more specifically, when the episcopacy—experienced a need for a center, the question of the primacy was opened; perhaps it would be better to say that it was reopened. Since it was essential to the conception of the bishops as successors to the apostles that certain elements of the apostolic ministry be continued permanently in the postapostolic Church, it was legitimate and necessary to ask whether the primatial structuring of the apostolic college was one of these elements.⁶⁹ When this question was reopened, it was never a question of anything other than the Roman primacy, owing to the fact that the bishop of Rome had long since been recognized as Peter's successor. It is true that other sees could have claimed a Petrine origin, and so other bishops could have claimed to be successors to Peter. Antioch and Jerusalem would be the most obvious examples. From the position developed here I cannot deduce an answer to the question why one of these did not become the primatial see. The exact reasons why the Church of the second and third century focused on Rome as the Petrine see are difficult to determine. It was generally thought that Peter ended his career there, and this may well have been the decisive reason.

The first evidence we have of a primatial interpretation of Mt 16:18

⁶⁹ See O. Karrer, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–77.

is from early in the third century.⁷⁰ The precise date is here of only secondary importance. During the period of silence, the second century, we may suppose that the Roman bishops did not appeal to the Petrine primacy as the apostolic foundation of a postapostolic primacy.

The Church did not suddenly and all at once come to recognize that in the bishop of Rome the unifying and leading function of Peter was to be continued in the Church for all ages. Cyprian vigorously opposed the claims of the Roman bishop after 250. The question of the Eastern attitude is complicated by the fact that, since the nature of Peter's primacy was not sharply defined in the New Testament, it was possible for "primacy" to have more than a single meaning.

The ambiguity of the meaning of "primacy" is compounded by several factors. First, there was no generally accepted way of defining the scope and limits of this primatial ministry. Second, an unwarranted expansion of the primatial ministry would have as its consequence the suppression or limitation of what was both legitimate and valuable in the episcopal ministry. Third, the Roman bishops were not always sensitive to this problem. And fourth, there seemed no way for a bishop to protect the integrity of his apostolic office and the autonomy of the local church from illegitimate papal encroachments without simply rejecting the entire Roman claim.⁷¹

Despite this considerable ambiguity, and pending more detailed investigation, I would say that in the conciliar era there developed a general recognition of a Roman primacy. Where such a primacy was challenged, this was usually done in defense of real or alleged values really or allegedly threatened by Rome.

At this point it is necessary to consider several of the main difficulties which the thesis here advanced must meet if it is to prove acceptable to Roman Catholics.

⁷⁰ Some have seen a Roman claim to primacy presupposed in the retort of Tertullian in *De pudicitia* 21 (ca. 220 A.D.). This seems unlikely. Nevertheless, the first such claims would seem to date from about this time. On *De pudicitia*, see Quasten, *Patrology* 2, 312-13.

⁷¹ Thus the remark of M. J. LeGuillou seems to miss the acute dilemma posed to the Orthodox by the papacy: "The Easterners were right to cling to the fellowship of the Churches, but they were wrong, in rejecting a particular way of exercising the Roman primacy, to reject that primacy itself" (*The Spirit of Eastern Orthodoxy* [New York, 1962] p. 104). Has there, in fact, been any way of "rejecting a particular way of exercising the Roman primacy" without at the same time rejecting "that primacy itself"?

First, it would seem that this view would derive the papacy from the Church. This, however, cannot be done within Roman Catholic orthodoxy. Vatican I referred to "*pravae eorum sententiae . . . qui affirmant, eundem primatum non immediate directeque ipsi beato Petro, sed ecclesiae et per hanc illi ut ipsius ecclesiae ministro delatum fuisse.*"⁷² Even more pointed is the condemnation of one of the views expressed at the Synod of Pistoia: "*Insuper, quae statuit, 'Romanum Pontificem esse caput ministeriale' sic explicata, ut Romanus Pontifex non a Christo in persona beati Petri, sed ab Ecclesia potestatem ministerii accipiat, qua velut Petri successor, verus Christi vicarius ac totius ecclesiae caput pollet in universa ecclesia:—haeretica.*"⁷³

It would, however, be a mistake to set these statements in opposition to the thesis developed here. It has *not* been my contention that at a particular stage in its career the Church simply decided to select someone to function henceforward as its head. My argument has been rather that at a particular stage in its career the Church recognized that in the Petrine primacy Christ had laid the foundation for the unity of the postapostolic Church, and that it was the bishop of Rome who had a role in the later Church analogous to that of Peter in the Church of the apostles. What I have argued is that the Church only gradually came to see the significance of Peter's primacy for its own life, and that it was only when this realization began to develop that we find either claim to or recognition of a Roman primacy.

A second difficulty may seem to be more serious. According to the more generally current Roman Catholic view of the early history of the Church, the bishop of Rome is from the beginning the at least implicitly recognized ultimate criterion of authentic Christianity. If during this early period the criterion was not often invoked, it was nevertheless there and known to be there. The papacy was in place from the day of the Ascension, and everything else—the doctrine of the episcopacy, the New Testament canon, the conciliar dogmas—fell into place under its constant and steady influence, if perhaps at times remote. Since the ultimate criterion was present and functioning (if only as a court of final appeal) from the start, the definition of other criteria was in principle quite simple. On the view advanced

⁷² DB 3054 (= 1822). ⁷³ DB 2603 (= 1503).

here, however, matters are more complicated and difficult. Should this position be adopted, it would require a serious reconsideration of the ways in which the Holy Spirit leads the people of God. This, however, would not necessarily be a bad thing, and hardly constitutes grounds for rejecting the position.

A further difficulty may seem to arise from the emphasis which the view developed here places upon the intraepiscopal nature of the Roman primacy. The direction taken by Vatican II should lessen the force of objections on this score, but the matter still merits attention. In the straightforward wording of Vatican I: "Si quis itaque dixit . . . hanc eius potestatem non esse ordinariam et immediatam sive in omnes ac singulas ecclesias sive in omnes et singulos pastores et fideles: anathema sit."⁷⁴ This, of course, insists that the bishop of Rome has direct episcopal authority over all the faithful. However, this can and I think should be seen as a consequence of his position vis-à-vis the other bishops. As *vinculum unitatis* for the entire episcopacy and thus for the whole Church, it may be necessary on occasion to intervene in the affairs of a particular diocese, and for this he will not depend upon the consent of the bishop of that diocese. In this sense his authority is episcopal (*ordinariam*) and not delegated (*immediatam*). *Ordinariam* here should not be taken in the ordinary sense of *ordinary*. That is, Vatican I is not to be interpreted as saying that under ordinary circumstances it is the bishop of Rome who directs the affairs of each church.⁷⁵

It may seem that the view of the papacy developed here is a minimizing one. If one could exclude the heretical connotations of "minimizing," it would not be inappropriate. The often-referred-to principle of subsidiarity is, by the same token, a minimizing principle. The slogan *in necessariis unitas, in aliis libertas, in omnibus caritas* is in the same manner a minimizing slogan. My argument has been that

⁷⁴ DB 3064 (= 1831).

⁷⁵ The papal brief of 1786 condemning Eybel's *Was ist der Papst* would seem to favor the stronger sense of *ordinariam*: "Quo magis deploranda est praeceptum ac caeca hominis temeritas, qui . . . instaurare studuerit . . . pontifices nil posse in aliena dioecesi praeterquam extraordinario casu" (DB 2593, 2595 [= 1500]). If we substitute *debere* for *posse*, the position would be quite defensible. Perhaps part of the general difficulty is that we have concentrated too much on the *posse* and too little on the *debere*.

the primacy is a divinely instituted solution to a problem that constantly besets the Church, the problem of unity and coherence. Peter and his successors are to strengthen their brethren in the episcopacy for the work that is primarily theirs to do.

To return to the question of development: the doctrine of the Roman primacy is seen here as a development within the doctrine of the episcopacy. The function of the primacy is, above all, to enable the episcopacy to perform its function.⁷⁶ In the second century it was the primary work of the bishops to make the apostolic tradition present in their several communities. However, the episcopal doctrine of Irenaeus and Cyprian proved unstable, and the episcopacy as they envisaged it was unable to achieve what it was supposed to achieve. The episcopacy could be considered as normative for Christian life and belief only on one of two suppositions: either (1) one supposed that, through God's guidance, serious division within the episcopacy would not occur (Irenaeus); or (2) one supposed that there was given within the episcopacy a way of overcoming such divisions. The only other alternative—and is this not the position in which Cyprian ultimately found himself?—was, "My bishop, may he always be right, but my bishop right or wrong." The way of overcoming the divisions was the primacy of the bishop of Rome.

Before conversations between Roman Catholicism and other "episcopal" Churches can advance very far, it will have to become evident that Roman Catholicism takes seriously the idea that the papacy is a ministry of service to the episcopacy and to the entire Church. Unfortunately, this can become evident *only* in the life of the Church; mere statements, theologizing, to this effect cannot possibly be enough. The fact that all subscribe to the formula *in necessariis unitas, in aliis*

⁷⁶ There is a parallel between the papal-episcopal and episcopal-lay relationship that should be noted here, even if only in passing. In both cases the relationship is between free, mature individuals having a direct responsibility before the Lord, and a divinely sanctioned living center of God's people. In both relationships delicacy and understanding are required on both sides; for fidelity to God is not to be achieved by the "subject" either by unquestioning acquiescence in the dictates of those "above" or in the affirmation of one's own views, come what may. Irresponsibility can wear the disguise of docility, and pride can parade as integrity. Unfortunately, no easily applicable formulas can be provided for the best possible interaction of "superior" and "subject," but even an appreciation of the problem can be of considerable help toward a proper harmonization of the two.

libertas, in omnibus caritas will not counterbalance the fact of *Veterum sapientia*, the Roman suppression of the worker-priests, and the new code of canon law for the Uniate Churches. If some of our fellow Christians are less impressed by what we say than by what we do, this really should not be too difficult to understand; perhaps it will help to develop among Roman Catholic theologians a deeper awareness of their responsibility to the actual life of the Church.