

NOTES

ECCLESIOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF THE ONE AND THE MANY

Gathering in Cincinnati, June 10-13, 1981, the members of the Catholic Theological Society of America listened to talks and participated in seminars on a single major theme: the local church. One of the four plenary-session addresses was given by Joseph Komonchak of the Catholic University of America. Under the heading "Ministry and the Local Church," Komonchak offered first an overview of Vatican II statements on the local church, then a theology of the local church, and finally a preliminary statement on the purpose and function of ministries in the local church.¹ Without entirely neglecting his remarks in the first and third parts of the address, I intend to focus on the second part, the theology of the local church, in order to draw out what in my judgment is the underlying philosophical paradigm for Komonchak's theological reflections. For, in setting forth the relationship of the local churches to one another and their collective relationship to the universal Church, he was likewise working out, perhaps unconsciously, a solution to the traditional philosophical problem of the one and the many.

It would seem worth while, therefore, to draw attention explicitly to this philosophical paradigm in order to evaluate it too, along with Komonchak's stated remarks on the theology of the local church. Otherwise one might give general assent to his theory of the local church and yet feel no compulsion to revise one's traditional thinking about the universal Church, which may well be grounded in a quite different philosophical paradigm for the relationship between the one and the many. Komonchak's address, in other words, is provocative, but its full provocativeness is not grasped unless one adverts to the philosophical as well as the explicitly theological issues at stake. In this article, accordingly, I will first summarize Komonchak's theology of the local church. Then I will present what I believe is his underlying philosophical paradigm for the relationship between the local church and the universal Church, contrasting it with the paradigm for the same relationship which seems to be operative in Vatican I's Constitution on the Church. Finally I will offer a few remarks on what this study of different paradigms for the relationship of the one and the many might entail for the future of Roman Catholic ecclesiology.

¹ Joseph A. Komonchak, "Ministry and the Local Church," *Proceedings of the Thirty-sixth Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 36 (1981) 56-82.

KOMONCHAK'S THEOLOGY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

In the first part of his paper Komonchak reviewed the various statements made by the bishops at the Second Vatican Council on the subject of the local church. In particular, he noted their insistence that the universal Church comes to be in and out of the various local churches, and that these same local churches, while "preserving the unity of faith and the unique divine constitution of the universal Church, enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage."² In this way, concludes Komonchak, "like humanity itself, the Church is to be a concrete universal, *una Ecclesia circumdata varietate*, not one in spite of the variety, but precisely *in* the variety of the local churches."³

In the second part of his paper Komonchak sets forth a theology of the local church based on these conciliar statements. Drawing on the writings of Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, he speaks of the Church as the historical subject of its own self-realization (Rahner) or as a process of self-constitution (Lonergan). He carefully notes, of course, that the Church exists in virtue of divine grace, God's self-communication in Christ and the Spirit. Yet "the historical effect of God's self-communication is precisely a community that is the subject of its own self-realization."⁴ In other words, by God's grace the members of the Church relate to one another and to all other human beings in faith, hope, and love and thus constitute the historical reality of the Church at any given moment. Without God's grace, accordingly, human beings would not be able to perform these acts and thus would not persevere as the People of God, the Body of Christ, etc. But it is equally true that, without human beings thus acting in collaboration, the grace of God would be powerless to effect the redemption of the world.

Turning then to his own theme of the local church, Komonchak proposes that the historical self-realization of the Church always takes place in terms of local church communities and individual actions of men and women who constitute these communities.

It is not the word of God in general that gathers the Church in faith, but the Word as preached in specific interpretative contexts and as a response to concrete threats to authentic human and Christian meaning. The Church does not celebrate the Eucharist in general; it celebrates it in quite concrete human groups, and the communion effected in and through such a Eucharist overcomes quite concrete experiences of alienation. . . . The universal Church arises insofar as the

² *Lumen gentium*, no. 23 (*The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. [New York: America, 1966] 46); Komonchak, "Ministry" 57-59.

³ Komonchak, "Ministry" 60.

⁴ *Ibid.* 66.

several communities of faith, hope, and love recognize and receive one another as redeemed for God by a common Savior and in a common Spirit.⁵

This is, of course, not to deny that there are objective principles constituting the unity of the Church. Everywhere the same Scriptures are read, the same creeds professed, the same sacraments administered. But these "commonly acknowledged objective representations of Christian meaning and value" are effective principles of Christian unity "only when and insofar as they mediate the gathering of individuals into local communities and of the local communities into a catholic unity."⁶ In other words, all these objective representations of the Christian faith first have to be incarnated in the actual faith-life of individual men and women living in various cultural contexts around the world; only then can they serve as principles of unity for the universal Church. Komonchak concludes: "It is only an abstract Church, joining together abstract individuals, that could be considered to have been adequately described without reference to the social and cultural conditions in which individuals and communities ask about the meaning and value of their lives."⁷ The universal Church, on the contrary, as already noted, is a concrete universal, whose unity arises out of the diversity to be found in the various local communities.

Komonchak brings his remarks on the theology of the local church to a conclusion with brief references to the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (*Ad gentes*) from the Second Vatican Council and to two encyclicals of Pope Paul VI, *Octagesima adveniens* and *Evangelii nuntiandi*. In all these documents stress is laid on the adaptation of the gospel message to the concrete cultural situation of the people to whom it is preached; for unless the gospel is seen as the answer to the questions which human beings are asking about their own lives in quite specific cultural settings, it will lose much of its attractiveness for those same people and therefore its power to motivate them to reform their lives. Furthermore, as Paul VI makes clear in *Octagesima adveniens*, it is virtually impossible for himself as pope to specify in detail the relevance of the gospel for all the different cultural contexts in which the various local churches find themselves. "Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. It is up to the Christian communities objectively to analyze the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the gospel's unalterable words, and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment, and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church."⁸ From still another perspective, then, a rationale is provided

⁵ Ibid. 69-70.

⁶ Ibid. 70.

⁷ Ibid. 71.

⁸ *Octagesima adveniens*, no. 4 (AAS 63 [1971] 403); Komonchak, "Ministry" 72.

for the existence and continued growth of local churches with their own discipline, liturgical practices, and theological traditions.

THE UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHICAL PARADIGM

If, then, the universal Church is a concrete universal, "not one in spite of the variety, but precisely *in* the variety of the local churches," what is the underlying philosophical paradigm at work here? How is the unity of the Church to be understood in terms of the relationship between the one and the many? In advance of a response by Komonchak himself to this question, I would propose the following hypothesis in two parts. First, the underlying philosophical paradigm for the theology of the local church, as found in recent Church documents and as elaborated by Komonchak in his address, is rooted in a dynamic understanding of reality, whereby unity emerges out of the ongoing interaction of constituent parts or members within a society. As I shall explain below, Whitehead's notion of a "society" in *Process and Reality* seems to correspond quite well (though not without some qualification) to this paradigm for the relationship of the one and the many. Secondly, such a dynamic understanding of the relationship between the one and the many is opposed to another paradigm for this same relationship, namely, that derived rightly or wrongly from a traditional Aristotelian conception of matter and form, whereby the form, though only a part of the composite reality, nevertheless acts as the principle of unity and intelligibility for the whole (matter and form together). Roman Catholic ecclesiology, above all since Vatican I, would seem to be grounded in this second philosophical understanding of the relationship between the one and the many. In the following paragraphs I will elaborate on these two statements.

In his monumental work *Process and Reality*, Alfred North Whitehead notes, first of all, that "'actual entities'—also termed 'actual occasions'—are the final real things of which this world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real."⁹ And yet actual entities, i.e., momentary subjects of experience which achieve a unification of their respective "worlds" before being objectified in the subjective worlds of future actual entities, are seldom found in isolation from one another. On the contrary, they are most often found in clusters or "societies" which constitute the macroscopic substances of common-sense experience (e.g., tables, chairs, plants, animals, human beings, etc.). These societies, moreover, are not only spatially extended but perdure in time, so that their member actual entities are ordered to one another

⁹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (corrected ed. by David Griffin and Donald Sherburne; New York: Free Press, 1978) 18 (27-28). The numbers in parentheses indicates the page numbers in the 1929 edition, also published by Macmillan.

both spatially and temporally. It is, however, to the generic definition of a society that I now turn as a help in understanding the first paradigm for the relationship of the one and the many.

Whitehead's definition of a society runs as follows. A "nexus" or a group of actual entities

enjoys 'social order' where (i) there is a common element of form illustrated in the definiteness of each of its included actual entities, and (ii) this common element of form arises in each member of the nexus by reason of the conditions imposed upon it by its prehensions of some other members of the nexus, and (iii) these prehensions impose that condition of reproduction by reason of their inclusion of positive feelings of that common form. Such a nexus is called a 'society,' and the common form is the 'defining characteristic' of the society.¹⁰

From the perspective of this paper, i.e., the relationship between the one and the many, what is interesting about Whitehead's definition of a society is that it exists only in virtue of the interrelationship of its constituent actual entities. The actual entities, accordingly, remain ontologically themselves and yet by their interrelationship they constitute the new reality of a society with a "defining characteristic" to distinguish it from other societies composed of still other actual entities. The actual entities, in other words, are both the many and the one at the same time.

Let us examine more closely this process whereby individual actual entities by their interrelationship constitute a new reality, i.e., a society. As Whitehead proposes, there is a common element of form illustrated in the definiteness of each of the individual actual entities. That is, each actual entity or momentary subject of experience includes within its subjective world an objective formality common to them all; it "prehends," i.e., internalizes, the complex "eternal object" which is the principle of their objective unity as a society a moment ago. I say "a moment ago" because actual entities literally last only for a moment and during that moment they cannot simultaneously be aware of what they are becoming here and now. They can only apprehend, internalize, something objective, namely, what they were as a society a moment ago. Yet by their individual prehension of that objective unity from a moment ago, they spontaneously coconstitute a new complex eternal object or "common element of form" which is their *de facto* bond of unity for the present moment. Hence each actual entity is at one and the same time becoming itself and helping to constitute the larger reality of the society. In a sense, it is the society in miniature, since it has as part of its own internal constitution the common element of form or defining characteristic for the society as a whole.

From this generic conception of a society, one might conclude that for

¹⁰ Ibid. 34 (50-51).

Whitehead all societies are, so to speak, democratically organized. That is, all the member actual entities of a given society have the same structure and internal organization, so that no actual entity exercises any more influence on its successors than any other entity within the same society. Such, however, is not the case. Elsewhere in *Process and Reality* Whitehead stipulates that while there do exist such democratically organized societies, the more complex societies, what Whitehead calls "structured societies," are often hierarchically organized. That is, some of their constituent subsocieties are made up of actual entities with a much more intricate and complex internal organization than the actual entities composing still other subsocieties within the total organism. As a result, there are "subservient" and "regnant" subsocieties within the same structured society.¹¹ Yet it is important to note that even here all the actual entities within the structured society, quite irrespective of the complexity of their internal organization, both contribute to and participate in the common element of form which is their bond of unity as a (structured) society for that particular moment. Every actual entity, therefore, is the whole society from its own perspective, even though some member entities play a greater role in the specification of what the society as a whole is at that particular moment.

At this point I should make clear how Whitehead's understanding of a society illuminates the theology of the local church elaborated by Komonchak. His main point was that the universal Church is a concrete universal which achieves its unity or oneness in and through the variety of the local churches. The term "concrete universal" presumably has reference to the role of the Concept (*Begriff*) in the philosophy of Hegel: the Concept is a dynamic principle of being and cognition whereby a given entity is grasped as an organic reality existing both in itself and in each of its parts or members taken singly.¹² Basically the same "Concept" or organismic understanding of reality governs the philosophy of Whitehead and is exemplified in his category of "society."¹³ That is, each of the actual entities in a Whiteheadian society is both itself and the greater reality of the society at the same time, since its own internal constitution includes the common element of form constitutive of the entire society. It is, as noted above, the society as a whole from its own perspective. Applied to the theology of the local church, this would mean that each of

¹¹ *Ibid.* 103 (157).

¹² G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, nos. 159-60 (ed. F. Nicolin and O. Pöggeler [Hamburg: Meiner, 1959] 149-51). Cf. also W. T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel* (London: Macmillan, 1924) 221-25.

¹³ For a detailed study of how Hegel and Whitehead represent "two schools or variations of one tradition of process philosophy," cf. George R. Lucas Jr., *Two Views of Freedom in Process Thought* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1979); quotation at 136.

the local churches is the universal Church in a given area. The universal Church has no other concrete reality in this particular place except in and through an individual congregation of believers. And yet the individual congregation is affected in its own internal constitution by the simultaneous coexistence of other local churches in other places. The members of the local congregation, in other words, know that they participate in and contribute to a reality greater than themselves, even as they seek to realize the fulness of the Church among themselves.

To be more precise, one should say that the universal Church is, in Whiteheadian language, a structured society, a society of subsocieties (yet with a common element of form for the entire structured society); for each of the local churches is itself a society composed of individual human beings who are equivalently its member actual entities. I say "equivalently" because every human being as a complex physical organism is himself or herself a structured society on the level of individual existence. But in terms of their corporate existence as a church community, Christians relate to one another like actual entities. That is, by their interrelationship with one another within the church community they sustain a common element of form which is determinative of their membership both in the local community and in the universal Church.¹⁴ This would seem to be what Komonchak has in mind with the following statement from his address: "The Church comes to be because the members of the Church, by God's grace, believe, hope, and love. If there were to cease to be a group of men and women who believe, hope, and love in and because of Jesus Christ, the Church would cease to be."¹⁵ As Whitehead says in *Process and Reality*, actual entities "are the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real."¹⁶ Transposed to the context of our present discussion, this would mean that individual human beings are the final real "things" of which the Church is made up. Whether one thinks of the Church in terms of the local community or in terms of the universal Church, in the final analysis it is still the interaction of people with one another, people who, as Komonchak says, believe, hope, and love in and because of Jesus Christ.

This last point is important because otherwise one falls into what Whitehead calls the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness."¹⁷ That is, one

¹⁴ Cf. here Bernard Lee, S.M., *The Becoming of the Church* (New York: Paulist, 1974) 160-207, esp. 174-79.

¹⁵ Komonchak, "Ministry" 68.

¹⁶ Whitehead, *Process and Reality* 18 (27-28).

¹⁷ Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967) 51-55.

mistakes an abstraction for a concrete reality. For example, one talks about the Church both on the local scene and, even more so, scattered throughout the world as if it were a concrete individual entity. In point of fact, however, it is not an individual entity but a society. Human beings are the individual entities who make up the society of the local church community and the even more complex structured society of the universal Church. These church societies, of course, are not simply random aggregates of individual human beings with no internal principle of unity or sense of direction. On the contrary, both the universal Church and local church communities are distinct ontological realities endowed with corporate agency, i.e., able to act as a group or unified whole.¹⁸ But, on close inspection, the corporate agency of the Church (in both senses) arises out of the complex interaction of the human beings who make it up. Once again, the basic philosophical issue at stake here is the relationship between the one and the many. People, i.e., individual men and women, are simultaneously both themselves as individual human beings and the Church as a corporate reality. Any other representations of the Church (e.g., the Church as the historical subject of its own self-realization, the Church as a worldwide hierarchically organized ecclesiastical institution, etc.) are simply abstractions from the concrete reality of human beings in interaction with one another. Such hypostatizing of abstractions may indeed be quite useful, perhaps even necessary, on certain levels of thought; but it is also risky unless one simultaneously adverts to what Whitehead calls the fallacy of misplaced concreteness.

I turn now to my second proposition: "Such a dynamic understanding of the relationship between the one and the many [i.e., the Whiteheadian notion of society] is opposed to another paradigm for this same relationship, namely, that derived rightly or wrongly from a traditional Aristotelian conception of matter and form, whereby the form, though only a part of the composite reality, nevertheless acts as the principle of unity and intelligibility for the whole (matter and form together)." In Book Z of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle argues that a compound entity which is more than just a heap of material "elements" but a new reality in its own right is such by reason of its immaterial cause or substantial form. That is, while an element "is that into which a thing is divided and which is

¹⁸ Cf. on this point Charles Hartshorne, "The Compound Individual," *Philosophical Essays for Alfred North Whitehead* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967) 193-220, esp. 211-17. Hartshorne, to be sure, is thinking of compound individuals in terms of physical organisms, e.g., a human being. But, it seems to me, his basic hypothesis of the compound individual may be extended to include groupings of human beings or "societies" in the macroscopic sense, albeit with certain qualifications, as I make clear in my article "Process Philosophy and Trinitarian Theology," *Process Studies* 8 (1978) 213-30.

present in it as matter," the cause or substantial form is not just another element but rather an immaterial "principle."¹⁹ Thus, while it does not exist in its own right apart from these same elements, the substantial form is clearly their organizing principle so as to constitute a new ontological reality, namely, the substance or compound entity itself.

Thus far Aristotle's doctrine of matter and form is roughly comparable to Hegel's key category of the Concept and Whitehead's notion of a society. That is, a number of particular entities or "elements" are organized into a greater whole in virtue of an immaterial principle which exists simultaneously in each of the parts or members and in the totality as such. Yet, insofar as Aristotle in his overall metaphysical scheme tended to set the categories of matter and form in opposition to one another and thus to treat them as mutually exclusive components of physical entities, he reified the form. That is, he equivalently reduced it to a part, albeit the superior part, within the physical entity. But the form is not a "part," since as an immaterial principle of being and activity it is operative within the entity as a whole and in each of its constituent parts. Similarly, the "matter" of the entity is not simply to be identified with the "elements" or component parts but likewise with the total entity as a material reality. Hegel, it might be added, saw this quite clearly in his discussion of the concepts of matter and form both in the *Larger Logic* and in the *Encyclopedia*.²⁰ But only Whitehead, in my judgment, translated this insight on a conceptual level into a new metaphysical category for the analysis of physical reality. That is, only within a Whiteheadian society is it quite clear that the "material elements," i.e., the actual entities constituting a given society, by their intrinsic interrelatedness determine the "form" from moment to moment, even as the form gives them their unity as this particular society.

The same tendency to reify the form, i.e., to reduce it to a part, albeit the superior part, within a totality made up of component parts, is even more pronounced in Aristotle's reflections on the forms of government in the *Politics*. Admittedly, the *Politics* is not a metaphysical treatise as such, but, as W. D. Ross comments, a judicious blend of inductive and deductive reasoning on Aristotle's part.²¹ Yet I would contend that Aristotle's preference for monarchy as the *ideal* form of government (even if, in actual practice, some form of aristocracy might be preferable) is still another instance of his felt need to give concrete embodiment to

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1041b (*The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon [New York: Random House, 1941] 811).

²⁰ Hegel, *Encyclopädie*, no. 129 (Meiner 133); *Wissenschaft der Logik* 2 (ed. G. Lasson; Hamburg: Meiner, 1963) 70-75.

²¹ Cf. W. D. Ross, *Aristotle* (3rd ed.; London: Methuen, 1937) 236.

the form as the immaterial principle of being and intelligibility for a given totality—in this case, the state. The king, in other words, though in his own person only one individual among many, nevertheless embodies the form, the principle of unity and intelligibility, for the body politic. He is the transcendent “one” who stands over against his fellow citizens as the collective “many.” I quote now from two related passages in the *Politics*:

If, however, there be some one person, or more than one, . . . whose virtue is so pre-eminent that the virtues or political capacity of all the rest admit of no comparison with his or theirs, he or they can be no longer regarded as part of a state; for justice will not be done to the superior, if he is reckoned only as the equal of those who are so far inferior to him in virtue and in political capacity. Such an one may be truly deemed a God among men.²²

A few pages later Aristotle adds: “The whole is naturally superior to the part, and he who has this pre-eminence is in the relation of a whole to a part. But if so, the only alternative is that he should have the supreme power, and that mankind should obey him, not in turn, but always.”²³

As noted above, what seems to be operative here is a modified form of the doctrine of hylomorphism, whereby the form, the principle of unity and intelligibility for the whole, is concretely represented by the king; the other members of the commonwealth are thus implicitly reduced to the status of “matter,” i.e., the “material elements” of the body politic. Because of his intrinsic superiority in intelligence and virtue to all the others, the king is equivalently their organizing principle within the state, even though he himself like them is just one member of the total political body.

Indirect confirmation of my hypothesis seems to come from perhaps the most influential Aristotle commentator of all time, Thomas Aquinas. In his book *On Kingship*, which gives clear signs of Thomas’ prior acquaintance with the *Politics*,²⁴ Thomas has these words on monarchy as the ideal form of government:

Every natural governance is governance by one. In the multitude of bodily members there is one which is the principal mover, namely, the heart; and among the powers of the soul one power presides as chief, namely, the reason. Among bees there is one king bee and in the whole universe there is One God, Maker and Ruler of all things. And there is a reason for this. Every multitude is derived from unity. Wherefore, if artificial things are an imitation of natural things and a work of art is better according as it attains a closer likeness to what is in nature, it

²² Aristotle, *Politics* 1284a (McKeon, *Basic Works* 1195).

²³ *Ibid.* 1288a (McKeon, *Basic Works* 1204).

²⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship* (originally *On the Governance of Rulers*; ed. I. Th. Eschmann, O.P.; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1949) xxix.

follows that it is best for a human multitude to be ruled by one person.²⁵

Like Aristotle, therefore, Aquinas seems to find it necessary to give concrete expression to the form, the principle of unity and intelligibility for the composite, whether it be a physical body or a corporate body such as the state, by singling out the principal part or member and exalting it above all the others. In point of fact, the form of the body is not simply identical with the heart, nor is reason alone the seat of the intellectual soul within a human being. Similarly, within the body politic the king may be the principal member by reason of his exalted office, but he is not *ipso facto* thereby identical with the principle of unity and intelligibility for the state as a corporate entity; for, as Aristotle himself points out in the *Metaphysics*, the form or essence is an immaterial principle which for that very reason is simultaneously present both in the material entity as a whole and in each of its parts taken singly. Only the felt need to give concrete expression to that immaterial principle operative in corporate entities, then, would seem to have led both Aristotle and Aquinas to favor monarchy over all other forms of government, both in human societies and, by analogy, in the world of nature.

At the beginning of this article I hypothesized that traditional Roman Catholic ecclesiology, above all since Vatican I, seems to be philosophically grounded in a more or less traditional understanding of Aristotle's doctrine of matter and form. That traditional understanding of the doctrine of hylomorphism, at least in its application to political philosophy, I have just explained through reference to texts in Aristotle's *Politics* and in Aquinas' *On Kingship*. It now remains to examine a few key texts out of *Pastor aeternus*, the Constitution on the Church at Vatican I, in order to see whether my hypothesis is correct. For example, after referring to the constant teaching of the Church on the primacy of the pope, the fathers continue:

Hence we teach and declare that by the appointment of our Lord the Roman church possesses a *superiority of ordinary power* over all other churches, which is truly episcopal, is immediate: to which all, of whatever rite and dignity, both pastors and faithful, both individually and collectively, are bound by their duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience to submit, not only in matters which pertain to faith and morals, but also in those that pertain to the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world, so that the Church of Christ may be one flock under one supreme pastor through the preservation of

²⁵ Ibid. 12–13. For Aquinas' direct commentary on the pertinent text of Aristotle's *Politics*, cf. *Politicorum seu De rebus civilibus liber tertius*, lectio 12 (*Thomae Aquinatis opera omnia* 27 [Paris: Vivès, 1889] 255). As is evident, the paradigm for Aquinas' thinking here is likewise that of matter and form.

unity both of communion and of profession of the same faith with the Roman pontiff.²⁶

It would seem likely that the philosophical paradigm for the relationship of the pope and the Roman church to all the other Christian churches throughout the world is consciously or unconsciously based on the same modified understanding of the doctrine of hylomorphism which was operative in the political philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas. For in this text the pope is officially declared to be not the equal of his brother bishops but their *superior*. Hence the unity of the episcopal college is grounded in the person of the pope and the relationship of all the other bishops to him. It is not grounded in their direct and immediate relationship to one another. Very much, then, as the king is regarded as the organizing principle and source of unity for the state in the political philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas, the pope as the visible head of the Church exercises immediate jurisdiction over all the other members, including his brother bishops.

The Council fathers, to be sure, in a subsequent paragraph indicate that this immediate jurisdiction of the Roman pontiff over all Christians everywhere is set forth without prejudice to the "ordinary and immediate power of episcopal jurisdiction, by which bishops . . . feed and govern, each his own flock, as true pastors."²⁷ But, in point of fact, the pope decides how he will "strengthen" and "protect" his fellow bishops in the exercise of their regional jurisdiction over the Church in various parts of the world. They do not determine how he is to exercise his universal jurisdiction over all Christians, themselves included. Moreover, in the final paragraph of the chapter, the bishops make clear that no other paradigm for the relationship between the pope and the bishops is acceptable beyond the one already approved by themselves:

If, then, anyone shall say that the Roman pontiff has the office merely of inspection or direction, but not full and supreme power and jurisdiction over the universal Church, . . . or that he possesses merely the principal part and not all the fulness of this supreme power; or that this power which he enjoys is not ordinary and immediate, both over each and all the churches and all the pastors and the faithful—*anathema sit*.²⁸

What the bishops seem to be rejecting, accordingly, is any more democratically conceived relationship of the pope to the bishops within the

²⁶ DS 3060 (1828). Translation of this text is provided in *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, ed. Karl Rahner, S.J. (Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba, 1969) 224–25.

²⁷ DS 3061 (1828): *The Teaching of the Catholic Church* 225.

²⁸ DS 3064 (1831): *The Teaching of the Catholic Church* 226.

Church. The pope is a monarch with, at least in principle, absolute sovereign power. In the language of our problematic, as pope he is the transcendent "one" who stands over against all his fellow Christians (including his brother bishops) as the collective "many."

CONCLUDING REMARKS

No doubt, there are many historical reasons why the bishops assembled at Vatican I gave such sweeping juridical authority to the pope as part of their attempt to define the office of the papacy.²⁹ None of them is pertinent to the present discussion. The sole point I have tried to make here is that the relationship of the pope to his fellow Christians, above all his brother bishops, seems to be philosophically based on a quite traditional, though somewhat modified, understanding of the doctrine of hyломorphism which was used by Aristotle himself and later by Thomas Aquinas in their treatises on political philosophy, but which is nevertheless on internal, purely logical, grounds open to question. That is, as an immaterial principle of being and intelligibility, the metaphysical form or essence of a composite entity, according to Aristotle himself in the *Metaphysics*, is not to be identified with any one of the material elements taken separately, but only with all of them insofar as they constitute the composite entity as a whole. Hence, while one may legitimately designate one of the "material elements," e.g., the king vis-à-vis all the other citizens within the state, as the symbol for that underlying unity provided by the form or essence, one must not forget that the unity and intelligibility lies in the form itself and not in the relationship of all the other parts or members to the one part or member thus singled out to symbolize the whole. To the extent that this exercise in metonymy, i.e., the substitution of the part for the whole, is unconsciously or at least uncritically performed, then one is practically committed to perpetuating the *de facto* existing relationship of the one member to all the other members as the *sine qua non* condition for the continued existence and well-being of the total entity. In other words, a certain formalism inevitably creeps into one's thinking about the relationship of the parts to one another within a given totality when one forgets that the unity and intelligibility of the totality lies in the immaterial form and not in any pre-established relationship of all the parts save one to the principal part.

Applied to the understanding of the relationship between the pope and the bishops, these remarks would imply that the unity and well-being of the Church is not to be found in any juridical relationship of the bishops to the pope, but in their common relationship, pope and bishops alike, to

²⁹ Hermann Josef Pottmeyer, e.g., argues that the doctrine of papal primacy at Vatican I has its theoretical roots in the political philosophy of Jean Bodin (cf. Pottmeyer, *Unfehlbarkeit und Souveränität* [Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1975] 388-409).

the Holy Spirit, who, as Pius XII said in *Mystici corporis*,³⁰ is the "soul" of the Church, its underlying principle of being and intelligibility. Naturally, the Holy Spirit can use, and presumably has indeed chosen to use, the papacy as its privileged instrument for symbolizing and effecting the unity of the Mystical Body. But there are surely many other ways besides the heavily juridical way endorsed by the bishops at Vatican I for the papacy to symbolize and preserve the unity of the Church.³¹ On the other hand, experimentation with new ways for the pope to exercise a leadership role within the Church will unquestionably be regarded with suspicion as long as one is philosophically committed to the above-explained understanding of matter and form as applied to the area of political philosophy. Accordingly, the rethinking of what Aristotle presumably had in mind with his doctrine of matter and form, above all by comparing it with what Hegel meant by the Concept and what Whitehead intended by his category of society, might be a liberating experience for Roman Catholic ecclesialogists. In any case, it should make clear that in setting forth a theology of the local church vis-à-vis the universal Church (as represented by the papacy) there is an underlying philosophical problem which must be likewise worked through: the perennial problem of the one and the many and their dynamic interrelationship.

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³⁰ DS 3808 (2288): *The Teaching of the Catholic Church* 241-42.

³¹ Cf., e.g., Joseph Komonchak, "The Church Universal as the Communion of Local Churches," *Where Does the Church Stand?* (Concilium 146; ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Gustavo Gutierrez; New York: Seabury, 1981) 30-35. Komonchak speaks of a "descending" ecclesiology in which "the relationship between the universal Church and the local Churches is that of a whole to its parts. Philosophically, the whole is conceived as a *totum potestativum* in which lower realities participate in the nature possessed in full by some prior and superior reality" (30). This seems roughly to correspond to the matter-form paradigm proposed above. Komonchak opposes to this "descending" ecclesiology an "ascending" ecclesiology in which "the whole is not conceived prior to the parts; rather the one whole comes to be, is constituted by, in, and out of the realisations of its many constituents" (*ibid.*). This seems to correspond to my earlier paradigm based on the Whiteheadian notion of a society.