

**Université de Fribourg Suisse
Institut d'études œcuméniques**

**LOCAL CHURCH AND CHURCH UNIVERSAL:
TOWARDS A CONVERGENCE BETWEEN
EAST AND WEST**

**A Study on the Theology of the Local Church according to
N. Afanasiev and J. M.-R. Tillard
with Special Reference to
Some of the Contemporary Catholic and Orthodox Theologians**

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis, Commentarium officiale, Roma (1909→)
ACan	Année canonique, Paris (1952→)
ACO	Acta conciliorum œcumenicorum
ACO.I	Acta conciliorum œcumenicorum, Index
AEcR	American Ecclesiastical Review, Washington D.C. (1889→)
CDF	Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith
AEcR	The American Ecclesiastical Review, Washington, D.C. (1889-32, 1905→)
AG	<i>Ad Gentes</i> , Decree on the Mission activity of the Church.
AHC	Annuario historiae conciliorum
AHDLMA	Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen age, Paris, (1926/27→)
AKathKR	Archiv für katholisches Kirchenrecht, Mainz [etc.] (1897→)
Ang.	Angelicum, Periodicum internationale de re philosophica et theologica, Roma, (1925→)
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovanientium
CathR	The Catholic Register
CatI	Catholic Insight
CCEO	<i>Codex canonum ecclesiarum orientalium</i> , The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (1991)
CD	<i>Christus Dominus</i> , Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church.
CeM	Chrétiens en marche
ChiSt	Chicago Studies, An Archdiocesan Review, Chicago (1962→)
CIC	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici</i> , The Code of the Canon Law (1983)
CiTo	Ciencia Tomista, Salamanca [etc.] (1910→)
CivCatt	Civiltà cattolica, Roma (1850→)
CiŽ	Crkva i Život
CLSA Proc	Canon Law Society of America Proceedings
Com(F)	Communio. Revue catholique internationale, Paris (1975→)

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Com(US)	Communio. International Catholic Review, Spokane, Washington DC (1974→)
Conc(F)	Concilium. Revue internationale de théologie, Paris (1965→)
Conc(GB)	Concilium. An International Review of Theology, London (1965→)
Cont	Contacts, Revue Orthodoxe de Spiritualité et de Théologie, Paris, (1949→)
COri	Christian Orient, Kottayam (1980→)
CQR	Church Quarterly Review, London (1875→)
CrSt	Cristianesimo nella storia:ricerche storiche, esegetiche, teologiche, Bologna: Universita degli Studi di Bologna(1980→)
CTI	Commission théologique internationale
CTSA Proc	Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings
CVZERE	Cerkovnyj Vēstnik Zapadno – Evropejskago Russkago Ekzarchata/ Le Messenger de l'Eglise Russe en Europe occidentale, Paris, 1947→)
DC	Documentation catholique, Paris (1919→)
Devoir	Le Devoir
Diak(US)	Diakonia. A Quarterly Devoted to Advancing Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue, Bronx, N.Y. (1966→)
DS	Denzinger H. – Hünermann P. (eds.), Enchiridion Symbolorum. Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum (1995)
DTC	Dictionnaire de théologie catholique
ECR	Eastern Churches Review, London (Incorporated into Sobornost, London) (1966→1978)
EeT	Eglise et théologie, Paris (1958→)
EeV	Esprit et Vie, Langres (1969→)
EglCan	L'Eglise canadienne, Montréal (1968→)
EJCan	Ephemerides Iuris Canonici, Rome (1945→)
ELit	Ephemerides Litugicae, Città del Vaticano, (1887→)
EN	Evangelii nuntiandi
ER	The Ecumenical Review, Geneva (1948→)
ET	English translation/version
EThL	Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses, Louvain [etc] (1924→)
Etudes	Etudes. Revue mensuelle, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer (1856→)
EvTh	Evangelische Theologie, München (1934→)
Foun.	Foundations. A Baptist Journal of History and Theology, Rochester, N.Y. (1958→)

Abbreviations and Acronyms

FT	French translation/version
FZPhTh	Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie, Feiburg, Schweiz (1931→)
GOTR	The Greek Orthodox Theological Review, Brookline, Mass. (1954→)
Gr.	Gregorianum: Comentarri de re theologica et philosophica, Roma (1920→)
GT	German translation/version
HeyJ	Heythrop Journal. A Quarterly Review of Religion, Theology, Oxford [etc] (1960→)
ICan	Ius Canonicum, Pamplona (1971→)
IKZ	Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift, Bern (1911(1960→)
InVat	Inside The Vatican
Irén.	Irénikon, Chevetogne (1926(1960→)
Ist.	Istina, Boulogne-sur-Seine [etc] (1954→)
ITC	International Theological Commission
JDhara	Jeevadhara, Kottayam
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History, London (1950→)
JES	Journal of Ecumenical Studies, Philadelphia, Pa. (1964→)
JFStA	The Journal of the fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, London (1928→34) → Sobornost'
JThS	Journal of Theological Studies, Oxford (1899→)
Jurist	The Jurist, Catholic University of America, School of Canon Law, Washington DC (1941→)
Kanon	Kanon. Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für das Recht der Ostkirchen, Wien (1971→)
Kl.	Kleronomia. Patriarchal Institute for Patriastic Studies. Thesalonikē (1969→)
KO	Kirche im Osten, Stuttgart (1958→)
Kyrios	Kyrios. Vierteljahresschrift für Kirchen-und Geistesgeschichte Osteuropas, Berlin (1947→)
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> , Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.
LTP	Laval théologique et philosophique, Québec (1944→)
LV(L)	Lumière et vie. Revue de formation et réflexion théologique, Lyon (1951→)
MD	La Maison-Dieu. Revue de la pastorale liturgique, Paris (1945→)
MesOrth	Le Messager orthodoxe, Paris (1958→)

Abbreviations and Acronyms

MStr	Mid-Stream
n.	Note
ND	NEUNER, Josef - DUPUIS, Jacques, <i>The Christian Faith</i>
Nicol	Nicolaus: Rivista di teologia ecumenico-patristica, Bari, Italy (1973→)
no./No.	Number
nos./Nos.	Numbers
NOR	New Oxford Review
NRT	Nouvelle revue théologique, Tournai (1879→)
NT	Novum Testamentum. An International Quarterly for New Testament and Related Studies, Leiden (1956→)
Nuntia	Nuntia. Commentarium cura et studio Pontificae Commissionis Codici Juris Canonici Orientalis Recognoscendo, Città del Vaticano (1975→)
NV	Nova et Vetera, Revue catholique pour la Suisse romande, Genève [etc] (1926→)
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica,
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica, Roma (1935→)
OE	<i>Orientalium Ecclesiarum</i> , Decree on the Catholic Churches of the Eastern Rite.
OiC	One in Christ. A Catholic Ecumenical Review, London (1965→)
OIRS	Oriental Institute of Religious Studies
OR	L'Osservatore Romano, Città del Vaticano (1849→)
Org	Origins
OS	Ostkirchliche Studien, Würzburg (1952→)
ParOr	Parole de l'Orient, Kaslik (1970→)
PenOrth	La Pensée orthodoxe, Paris (1966→)
PeP	Parole et Pain
Periodica	Periodica de re morali, canonica, liturgica, Roma (1907→)
PIOS	Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum
PO	<i>Presbyterorum Ordinis</i> , Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests
POC	Proche-Orient chrétien, Jerusalem (1951→)
PravMysl	Pravoslavnaja Mysl' / La pensée orthodoxe, Paris (1928→)
PrePast	Presenza pastorale
Putj	Put'. Organ russkoj religioznoj mysli

Abbreviations and Acronyms

RAn	Revue Sainte-Anne
RB	Revue biblique, Paris (1892→)
RCatT	Revista catalana de teologia, Barcelona (1976→)
RDC	Revue de droit canonique, Strasbourg (1951→)
RevSR	Revue des Sciences Religieuses, Strasbourg (1921→)
RfR	Review for Religious, St Louis, Mo (1942→)
RHDFE	Revue historique de droit français et étranger, Paris (1855→)
RHE	Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique, Louvain (1900→)
RLR	Religious Life Review, Dublin (1980→)
RSPhTh	Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques, Paris (1907→)
RSR	Recherche de science religieuse, Paris (1910→)
RThom	Revue Thomiste, Bruges [etc], (1893→)
RTL	Revue théologique de Louvain, Louvain (1970→)
ScEs	Science et Esprit, Bruges (1960→)
Schol.	Scholastik. Vierteljahresschrift für Theologie und Philosophie, Freiburg, Br. (1926→)
Sob.	Sobornost. Fellowship of St. Alban and St Sergius, London (1979→)
Sobornost'	Sobornost'. Fellowship of St. Alban and St Sergius, London (1935→1978)
SOP	Service orthodoxe de presse
Spiritus	Spiritus, Paris
StCan	Studia Canonica, Ottawa (1967→)
StZ	Stimmen der Zeit, (Katholische) Monatsschrift für das Geistesleben der Gegenwart und Kultur, Darmstadt (1949→)
SVTQ	St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, New York (1969→)
Tablet	The Tablet
ThD	Theology Digest, St Mary's College, St. Mary's, Kan. (1953→)
Theol(A)	Theologia. Epistēmonikon periodikon, Athēnai (1923→)
Theol.	Theology. A Journal of Historic Christianity. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London (1920→)
ThPh	Theologie und Philosophie. Vierteljahreschrift, Freiburg, Br. (1966→)
ThPQ	Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift, Linz, Donau (1848→)
ThQ	Theologische Quartalschrift, Tübingen (1819→)
TS	Theological Studies, Theological Faculties of the Society of Jesus in the United States, Woodstock, Md. (1940→)

Abbreviations and Acronyms

TZ(W)	Theologische Zeitschrift, Wien (1813→)
UdC	Unité des chrétiens
UnChr	Unité chrétienne, Lyon (1970→)
Unitas(NY)	Unitas. International Review. Unitas Association, New York (1949→)
UnSa	Unam Sanctam
UR	<i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i> , Decree on Ecumenism
US	Una Sancta : Zeitschrift für interkonfessionelle Begegnung, Meitingen (1951→)
VitaPen	Vita e pensiero
VJTR	Vidyajyoti, Journal of Theological Reflection, New Delhi, India (1972→)
VRSchD	Vestnik Russkago Studenceskago Christianskago Dviženija
VS	La Vie Spirituelle, Paris (1946→)
Wor	Worship. A Review Concerned with the Problems of Liturgical Renewal, Collegeville, Minn. (1951→)
ZKT	Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie, Innsbruck (1877→)

INTRODUCTION

This study is an attempt to discover areas of convergence in the Eastern and Western theological discourse on the relationship between the local Church¹ and the Church universal. Two factors particularly inspired me to take up this project. The remote inspiration goes back to 1994, when, preparing a licentiate dissertation in ecclesiology at the University of Fribourg,² I discovered the fruitfulness of a dialogal encounter between the East and the West.³ The proximate inspiration is, of course, the recent theological debate between two German Cardinals of the Roman curia—Joseph Ratzinger and Walter Kasper—on the question of the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church, which awakened me to the actuality of this question, debated by pastors and theologians from the early years of Christian history. The relevance of this study has to be judged in conjunction with three backgrounds: (1) the occulted status of the local Churches during the most part of the 2nd millennium and their eventual rediscovery during the 20th century, (2) development of the Catholic theology of the local Church after the Second Vatican Council and (3) the status of Catholic Oriental Churches within the Catholic Church. Hence, before detailing the scope, purpose, method and structure of this study, we consider it useful to give a brief sketch of the development of the theology of the local Church in Catholic ecclesiology.

1. A Note on the Development of the Theology of the Local Church

The manner in which we understand the reality of the Church and its organization determines the place we give to the local Church. The reality of the Church has been differently understood in different periods of history, and all these views can be summed up into two orientations. The first of these, existent at least from the 2nd century, developed a

¹ Given the incoherent use of this term in the recent magisterial documents and theological canonical literature, we have chosen to use it in a generic sense to designate not only an episcopal Church (diocese or eparchy) but also their groupings. For details on this question, *see infra* our discussion on “Lack of Coherent Terminology” in chapter six.

² J. G. ARYANKALAYIL, *Pneumatic Orientations in the Ecclesiology of Yves M. -J. CONGAR and Christian Unity*, Mémoire de licence. Fribourg, 1994.

³ It is a well-known fact the East as discovered and interpreted by Congar contributed greatly to the renewal of contemporary Catholic Ecclesiology.

structure of ecclesial life and canonical existence based on a vision which saw the Church as a communion of local Churches. More lately, another manner of understanding the Church got developed according to which the Church is conceived as a unique, virtually universal entity with its centre and normative instance in the See of Rome. These two orientations—despite having been mixed up or even synthesised on rare occasions—often times vied with each other for dominance or were even mutually isolated. In their mutual isolation, while one regulated the communion of Churches under the auspices of the episcopate and the synod, the other did it through the ecumenical power of the pope. This latter tendency was particularly pronounced in the West, where often—if not the entire Church—at least the entire Latin Church was seen as a mere extension of the local Church of Rome.⁴

The above tendency to see “the Church as an absolute monarchy,”⁵ in which the theology of the local Church could hardly find its proper place, became more pronounced in the Catholic Church in the wake of the Gregorian Reform of 11th century⁶ and the appearance of mendicant orders. If “[w]ith the Gregorian Reform of the 11th century the Papal authority⁷ was formulated and implemented and it was given legal basis with the codification of the Canon Law in the 12th century,”⁸ with the mendicants there appeared in the local Churches clerics who were directly accountable to the Roman pontiff and totally dissociated from the local presbyterium. During this period juridical concepts such as *societas inaequalis*, *hierarchica* and *societas perfecta*⁹ were used by the Scholastic theologians to define the Church. According to the *Papal-Monarchical-Pyramidal Ecclesiology* they developed, the local Church was not considered a *real* Church because, although enjoying the fullness of

⁴ “...the growing authority enjoyed by the Roman see in the West tended to identify the whole Western Europe with the Catholic Church,” E. R. HAMBYE, “Second Vatican Council and the Local Churches,” *JDhara*, 4 (1971), p. 303; “Du XII^e au XIV^e siècle ils [les conciles] avaient été instrument de la papauté pour établir son autorité universelle sur l’ensemble de la chrétienté latine,” E. LANNE, “La conception post-tridentine de la primauté et l’origine des Eglise unies,” in: *Tradition et communion des Églises. Recueil d’études*, «BETL – 129» (Leuven: Leuven University Press; Peeters, 1997) p. 574, *hereafter cited as* E. LANNE, “LA conception post-tridentine de la primauté....”

⁵ E. LANNE, “The Local Church: Its Catholicity and its Apostolicity,” *OiC*, 6 (1970), p. 290, *hereafter cited as* E. LANNE, “The Local Church: Its Catholicity and its Apostolicity.”

⁶ “La plupart des auteurs s’accordent à dire que Grégoire VII a voulu consciemment affaiblir l’ordre hiérarchique de l’Eglise en faveur d’un pouvoir rigoureux et centralisé du pape,” L. MEULENBERG, “Grégoire VII et les évêques: centralisation du pouvoir?” *Conc(F)*, (1972) no. 71, p. 60.

⁷ “Quant à la hiérarchie, Grégoire VII ramena au minimum l’importance des primaties régionales; les archevêques virent leurs compétences réduites à l’ordination de leurs suffragants et à la présidence des synodes; quant aux évêques diocésains, ils se trouvaient sous la supervision immédiate de Rome,” *Ibid*.

⁸ K. PATHIL, “Theology of the Local Church,” *JDhara*, 28 (1998), p. 261.

⁹ That is, a complete society equipped with all the necessary means—*potestas legislativa, judiciaria* and *coactive*—to realise its ends. Cf. Y. M.-J. CONGAR, “Autonomie et pouvoir central dans l’église vus par la théologie catholique,” *Kanon*, 4 (1980), p. 134, *hereafter cited as* Y. CONGAR, “Autonomie et pouvoir central.”

sacramental and mystical life, it was not taken as a *societas perfecta* as it lacked the fullness of the jurisdictional power.

This does not, however, mean that the defenders of the local Church were totally absent during this period. Thus already at the end of the first millennium we have a Hinkmar of Rheims, who insisted on the proper rights of the bishops, and a Gerbert of Aurillac, who maintained an idea of ecclesial communion according to which the Universal Church is made up of local Churches under the direction of the *prima sedes*.¹⁰ On the eve of the Gregorian Reform, we can see a Peter Damian developing a synthesis between the primatial power of the pope and the power of the local bishop. He highlighted the biblical and patristic idea that the Church realizes itself basically in the hearts of every believer.¹¹ The spiritualist movements of the 12th and the 13th centuries also combated for the local Church although they were inspired more by congregationalist ideas than by a theology of communion. The anti-papal forces of the 14th century went even further. According to them, the actual bearer of power in the Church is the people. Later, people like Johannes Gerson, Pierre Bohier and Wilhelm Durandus tried in their own way to strike a balance between the episcopal power and the overarching universal monarchical power of the pope. Nevertheless these attempts were unsuccessful in launching an effective revival of the ecclesiology of local Churches. The reason is that the discussions of these men were held not primarily in theological but in power political terms.¹²

The Council of Trent was an event of far-reaching consequences as far as the Catholic ecclesiology is concerned. With this a new phase of reform starts in the Catholic world. At the time of the convocation of this council, one could still observe the co-existence of the two ecclesiological orientations mentioned above, viz. a vision of the Church in which local ecclesial realities had their rightful place and another vision according to which the Church is a *universitas (congregatio) fidelium*—leaning heavily on universalism and hierarchical

¹⁰ *De inform. episc.* (PL 139, 169.171); Cf. W. BEINERT, “Dogmenhistorische Anmerkungen zum Begriff «Partikularkirche»,” *ThPh*, 50 (1975), p. 51.

¹¹ *Opusc.* 11,6 (PL 145, 235); Cf. O. J. BLUM, *St. Peter Damian. His Teaching on the Spiritual Life*; J. LECLERQ, *S. Pierre Damien, ermite et homme de l'Eglise*.

¹² They were concerned with *plenitudo Potestatis*. “The further history of the Medieval Church in the West saw repeated attempts at reviving the awareness of the particular Churches. Unfortunately these were inspired by the conciliar movement, which was built up more on legal principles than on theological ones. They also became mixed up with royal nationalism rather than a genuine desire to restore the spiritual content of the local Church. [...] Even the originally genuine desire of many Jansenists to see the local Church restored as a living community foundered on the rocks of quasi-heretical views or of exaggerated primitivism,” E. R. HAMBYE, “Second Vatican Council and the Local Churches,” p. 304.

organisation and independent of any localism.¹³ This parallel existence of the local and universal levels of Christian life did not last long. Soon the aspects characteristic to each local Church were progressively levelled to introduce a uniform tradition under the direction of the Church of Peter and Paul. The reforms launched by the Trent have contributed much to this evolution. The Roman tendency to centralize every aspect of ecclesial life under it was accompanied by its policy of uniformisation. A whole series of Roman Books (catechism, breviary, missal, Vulgate, etc.) were produced during this period in order to achieve universalisation of practical ecclesiology. This Roman attitude stands in contrast to the attitude of the regional political authorities of the time, who in unison accentuated the territorial character of the local Churches by conceding more and more social and civil functions to the parishes. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that, in doing so, they were motivated not so much by a concern for accelerating the spiritual dynamism of the Churches in their territory as by their concern to protect the area under their control from external interventions and influences. Roman authorities made use of the occasion to present the pope “as the shield and the guarantee of the liberty of local Churches in the face of political pressures.”¹⁴ Thus, we can say that the Council of Trent marks a turning point as far as the crystallization of the universalistic vision of the Church is concerned.

Another focal point, as far the development of the theology of local Church is concerned, is the First Vatican Council (1869-1870). Decades before this council, a new current called *Ultramontanism* was gaining ground in the Western Church. It was characterized by an exaltation of the authority of the pope and an insistence on all the Churches to adopt the liturgy and disciplinary traditions of the Church of Rome. The First Vatican Council marks the crowning moment of this current.¹⁵ Catholic Church now increasingly appeared as a vast diocese, that of the pope, in which the bishops—none of them was nominated without his consent—cut the figure of just executive officers of a central power. In this vast diocese, the pope enjoyed an episcopal, ordinary and immediate authority over each Church and faithful.

In this context, it is important to point out a remarkable document of the magisterium issued immediately after the conclusion of Vatican I, viz. the *Joint Declaration of the German*

¹³ Within this universalist perspective, terms *Ecclesia* and *Ecclesia universalis* were employed synonymously. Cf. G. ALBERIGO, “Du seizième siècle à Vatican II,” *MD*, 165 (1986), 49-71.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁵ “The democratic, secular, liberal and revolutionary movements of the 19th century were encountered by the First Vatican Council’s dogmatic definition of Papal Primacy and Infallibility, which was the culmination of a historical process of centralization of the Church,” K. PATHIL, “Theology of the Local Church,” p. 261.

Bishops.¹⁶ Its importance comes from its assertions on *episcopatus* and the episcopate. Alerted to political consequences of the Council's definition of infallibility, Bismarck's chancery issued a circular letter,¹⁷ alleging that—following the definitions of Vatican I—the bishops would no longer have their own standing. Reacting to this letter, the German bishops made a doctrinal *exposé*¹⁸ of the Catholic notion of bishop, an interpretation which obtained the approbation of Pius IX.¹⁹ It declared in no unclear terms that although the pope has jurisdiction over all the pastors and the faithful, it is an undeniable fact that the bishops are, by divine institution, the rightful pastors of their dioceses and the pope is bishop uniquely of Rome and no other diocese. This declaration—although dealing directly with the pope's jurisdiction—is not unconnected with the theology of the local Church. It presupposes that by divine institution catholicity and apostolicity are transmitted to every local Church (diocese) by the episcopal institution.

Exactly a decade after the German Episcopate signed the above document, a French religious priest named Dom Adrien Gréa (1820-1927) came up with his *L'Eglise et sa divine constitution*, which has had three editions so far²⁰ and is considered as a pioneering work as far as the Catholic theology of the local Church is concerned. Gréa gives an important place to local Churches in his theology of the Church. In fact, they are treated before the universal Church governed by the supreme pontiff and the episcopal college united to him. The bishop is here presented in full relief as the head of the local Church. Despite being at once innovative and traditional, and capable of launching revival of the local Church in Catholic thinking, Dom Gréa's work—quite like many other pioneering works²¹—was unable to leave a lasting imprint during his time, which was dominated by the universalist ecclesiology.²²

¹⁶ *Joint Declaration of the German Bishops* (1875) FT: in *Revue générale*, 1 (1875), 354-356 (= *Irén.*, (mai-juin 1928), p. 231ff / also found in: D. L. Beauduin, "L'unité de l'Eglise et le concile du Vatican," in: *Eglise et Unité* (Lille, 1948) p. 23ff), Cf. F. D. LOGAN, "The 1875 Statement of the German Bishops on Episcopal Power," *Jurist*, 21 (1961), 285-295; O. ROUSSEAU, "La vraie valeur de l'épiscopat dans l'Eglise d'après d'importants documents de 1875," *Irén.*, 39 (1956), 121-142, hereafter cited as O. ROUSSEAU, "La vraie valeur de l'épiscopat...."

¹⁷ It was written on May 14, 1872 and published on December 29, 1879.

¹⁸ It was signed in January and February, 1875.

¹⁹ Cf. Brief of Pius XI in *Revue générale*, 1 (1875), pp. 477-478

²⁰ *L'Eglise et sa divine constitution. Préface de Louis Bouyer* (Tournai: Casterman, ³1965) [originally published by Société générale de librairie catholique, Paris, ¹1885, ²1907].

²¹ The best examples in this regard are J. A. Möhler's *Die Einheit in der Kirche*, published at Tübingen in 1825, and Antonio Rosmini's *Delle cinque Piaghe della Santa Chiesa*, published at Lugano in 1848. Both these works were largely ignored in their times, at least in what they said about local Church.

²² Cf. O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, "Development of a Theology of the Local Church from the First to the Second Vatican Council," *Jurist*, 52 (1992), pp. 14-15, hereafter cited as O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, "Dev. of a Theol. of the Local Church." "Le livre de Dom Gréa sur *L'Eglise et sa divine constitution* est de ces livres qui échappent à leur époque et qui sont susceptibles d'être bien mieux compris à quelques générations de distances," L. BOUYER, "Préface," in: A. GREÁ, *L'Eglise et sa divine constitution*, p. 7.

However, fortunately enough, others came to the scene to take up the torch left by Dom Gréa. Of special mention, in this regard, is the contribution of dogmaticians who were interested in the primitive Christianity, and the exegetes, who brought in new clarifications regarding the beginnings of Christianity.

The renewed interest in the local Church by Western theologians, especially during the first decades of the 20th century, was influenced also by another factor, viz. the presence of the Russian émigrés in Europe in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Among these émigrés, there were also university professors and learned monks, who by their works showed “the discordant elements between the modern Western culture and Christian faith, between Westernized Roman Church and Orthodox Church, showing the latter to be in greater fidelity to the apostolic and patristic periods.”²³ Notably, the eucharistic ecclesiology²⁴ exposed by them tended to identify the Church, Eucharist, and the local Church. Accordingly, it is in the local Church that the Church of Christ exists concretely, because Christ is present there through the eucharistic celebration presided over by the bishop. These theologians squarely reject any opinion which considers the local Church as a fragment of the Church catholic, which would be anterior, exterior or superior to it. According to them the Eucharist and the Church are co-extensive: where the Eucharist is legitimately celebrated, i.e. under a bishop, there the whole Church is present.

Understandably, the above Orthodox position was not wholly received by the Catholic thinkers as such a radical affirmation of the connection between the Eucharist and the local Church would have made it almost impossible to think of an ecclesial authority above the local bishop, leaving the question of Roman primacy out of the horizon. However, it inspired them to go back to the sources, by which they wanted to know the ‘Catholic Church’ of which Ignatius of Antioch, Cyprian of Carthage and Augustine of Hippo spoke. Their research brought to the fore many of the traditional notions long forgotten in the West. They found in the primitive writings of Christianity a vision of the Church in which the bishop is rooted in the Eucharist and the local Church and in which unity of the Church “is not deduced from a head which is Rome and which then extends to the Churches. Unity is simultaneous with catholicity, just as the universal Church and particular Church are simultaneous.”²⁵ This way of looking at the Church—ecclesiology of communion—was in sharp contrast to the then existing ecclesiology which tended to make everything in ecclesial life dependent on Rome

²³ O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, “Dev. of a Theol. of the Local Church,” p. 18.

²⁴ We find it in an embryonic state in A. S. Khomiakov and in a more developed form in N. Afanasiev and his disciples, A. Schmemmann and J. Meyendorff.

²⁵ O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, “Dev. of a Theol. of the Local Church,” p. 24.

and wanted to transform the pope into *the* ‘bishop of the Catholic Church’ (*Episcopus Ecclesiae Catholicae*). According to the ecclesiology of communion, each bishop can be called the *bishop of the Catholic Church* of such and such a place, just as the pope may be called the *bishop of the Catholic Church of Rome*.²⁶ This renewed appreciation of the local Church in Catholic ecclesiology—owing to the factors stated above—constitutes the general background of this study.

2. Scope

In this study entitled, *The Local Church and the Church Universal: Towards a Convergence between East and West. A Study on the Theology of the Local Church according to N. Afanasiev and J. M.-R. Tillard with Special Reference to Some of the Contemporary Catholic and Orthodox Theologians*, the basic matter of concern is the comprehension of the relationship between the local Church/es and the Church universal in the Orthodox and Catholic Traditions. The title itself shows the limits and scope of this study. It is a study based on two theologians—N. Afanasiev and J.-M. R. Tillard—belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church and Catholic Church respectively. Therefore, the axis of the study is the views and positions of these theologians. They were chosen owing to their importance in the contemporary theology of the local Church. As early as 1932, Afanasiev underlined the importance of the local Church in ecclesiology,²⁷ and ever since, he has made known his views on the subject through a number of scholarly articles. The pertinence of the views of Afanasiev was particularly remarked at Vatican II.²⁸ Tillard, on his part, was one of the experts of the Council. Ever since the Council, he has excelled himself as one of the most well-known Catholic ecumenists and ecclesiologists. His passion for the Church and Christian unity took him beyond the Catholic frontiers to discover the richness of Eastern tradition as enshrined in the Orthodoxy. This prompted us to take him as a dialogue partner to

²⁶ Cf. H. MAROT, “La collégialité et le vocabulaire épiscopal du Ve au VIII^e siècle,” *Irén.*, 36 (1963), 41-60; 37 (1964), 198-226; ID, “Note additionnelle sur l’expression: ‘Episcopus Ecclesiae Catholicae’;”, D. T. STROTMANN, “Primauté et céphalisation. A propos d’une étude du P. Karl Rahner,” *Irén.*, 37 (1964), 187-197.

²⁷ N. AFANASIEV, “Dve idei Vselenskoj Cerkvi,” [Russian = Two conceptions of the Universal Church] *Putj*, 45 (1934), 16-29 [hereafter cited as N. AFANASIEV, “Dve idei.”] The article was written between 1931 and 1932.

²⁸ “A Vatican II, son nom fut cité dans les débats. Le fascicule de documentation privée réservé aux Pères conciliaires, distribué en 1964 en vue de la discussion renvoyait comme à une référence digne d’attention à l’œuvre du P. Afanassieff « L’Eglise qui préside dans l’Amour », et l’on peut trouver, au chap. III du *De Ecclesia* définitif de Vatican II (n° 26) une doctrine apparentée à la sienne qui laisse soupçonner son influence,” O. ROUSSEAU, “Préface,” in: N. AFANASIEV, *L’Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, trad. par Marianne Drobot, «Cogitatio Fidei – 83» (Paris: Cerf, 1975) [hereafter cited as N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*], p. 8.

Afanasiev.²⁹ These theologians are not loners; they belong to their respective ecclesial traditions. Hence, we have chosen to compare each of these theologians with a selected number of theologians of his respective tradition, who showed a certain degree of proximity or association to him. This we have done in order to make an appraisal of the reception or developments of the views of Afanasiev and Tillard within their own Churches, which would give us a wider horizon from which we can identify areas of convergence in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions on the question of the relationship between the local Church and the Church universal.

3. Purpose

The immediate purpose of this study is evoked by the title itself: it is to discover the convergence between Eastern and Western traditions on the question of the relationship between the local Church and the Church universal through a comparative study of a select group of Orthodox and Catholic theologians. Such a dialogal encounter is fruitful not only as a means of rapprochement in an ecumenical context but also as an incentive to the development of a sane and balanced ecclesiology of the local Church on both sides.

There is also a corollary goal to this study, a goal which is bound up with my belongingness to the *Syro-Malabar Church* and my identity as a missionary priest. The Church I belong to has had to overcome several challenges and difficulties in its quest for identity and relative autonomy, denied to it ever since its contact with the Western Church.³⁰ A correct understanding of the relationship between the local Church and the Church universal appeared to me, therefore, as crucial for the proper understanding of the identity and autonomy of my mother Church—and hence, of any Catholic Oriental Church—within the *communio ecclesiarum*, that is the Catholic Church. Only in the background of a sane ecclesiology of local Churches can we properly understand the necessity for the protection of the identity and the rights of these ancient Churches and the promotion of their organic

²⁹ Initially I had planned to compare Tillard with J. Zizioulas or E. Lanne. But it was Fr. Tillard himself who—in an interview given to me on 27 January, 1999—suggested to me to take someone different from him to make this comparative study.

³⁰ For more on the Syro Malabar Church see, P. PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians* (London/Bombay: Darton Longman & Todd/ St Paul Publications, 1970); ID, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of Thomas Christians* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, 1979); T. PALLIPURATHUKUNNEL, *The Thomas Christians in the Divided Churches* (Alwaye, 1982); M. A. MUNDADAN, *Indian Christians: Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, «Placid Lectures series» 4 (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1984); A. THAZHATH, *The Quest for Identity: The Syro-Malabar Church and Its Identity* (Thrissur: Thrissur Institute of Theology, 1992).

growth. As a member of a Missionary Institute,³¹ which was qualified by the Syro-Malabar hierarchy as “the common concern of the Syro-Malabar Church of apostolic tradition”³² and by Simon Cardinal Lourdusamy, former Prefect of the Oriental Congregation, as “an expression of the apostolic vocation of the Syro-Malabar Church,”³³ I am deeply conscious of the duty and the right of the Syro-Malabar Church to be a missionary,³⁴ to make the emergence of new sister Churches in India and outside possible, truly incarnated in the *place* where they take birth and grow. Here again, a correct understanding of the relationship between the local Churches and the Church universal can be of great help in the development of local Churches with their proper identity, physiognomy and relative autonomy within the Catholic communion. All these are presupposed in our exploration which will take us from the ecclesiology of Afanasiev and other Orthodox theologians to that of Tillard and other Catholic theologians.

4. Method-Structure

The structure of this study coincides with its method. It is a comparative study in three levels. In the first level, the comparison is between Afanasiev and Tillard. Then each of them is compared or related to a selected group of theologians from his respective tradition. In the third level, the study moves towards a comparison between the Orthodox and Catholic traditions. Care has been taken throughout to present the views of the theologians under discussion without interrupting them with intervening personal commentaries. Such commentaries and critical remarks are limited to and enclosed within the “concluding remarks,” added at the end of a section or article. It is there that we will be giving allusions to the proximity or distance between the views of various theologians. As for the sources of research, we have depended mainly on the writings of Afanasiev and Tillard, as well as on the relevant works of some Catholic and Orthodox theologians who maintain a dialogal relation with our protagonists. We have also made use of some of the conciliar and magisterial documents.

Consistent with the above method, we have divided this work into two parts, dealing with the Orthodox and Catholic perspectives on the question of the relationship between the local

³¹ I belong to the *Missionary Society of St Thomas, the Apostle*.

³² Cf. Joint Pastoral Letter of Syro-Malabar Bishops, dated 2.2.1992. Cf. *The Constitutions and Directives of the Missionary Society of St Thomas the Apostle*, D2, b.

³³ Message from Simon Cardinal Lourdusamy, the Prefect of the Congregation for Oriental Churches, Prot. n. 173/84, dated 10.5.1988. Cf. *The Constitutions and Directives of the Missionary Society of St Thomas the Apostle*, D2, b.

³⁴ Cf. *AG 2*.

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Church and the Church universal respectively. Within each part we have three chapters. The first chapter in each part, i.e. chapters one and four, is devoted to the presentation of the main theologians under study, viz. N. Afanasiev (chapter one) and J.-M. R. Tillard (chapter four). The second chapter in each part, i.e. chapters two and five, is devoted to the exploration of the views of Afanasiev (chapter two) and Tillard (chapter five) on the question of the relationship between the local Church and the Church universal. Finally, the third chapter in each part, i.e. chapters three and six, deals with the views of other Orthodox (chapter three) and Catholic (chapter six) theologians on the subject. Based on the findings of this exploration in different levels, we will identify areas of convergence, if any, between Eastern and Western traditions on the question of relationship between the local Church and the Church universal and formulate perspectives in view of the life and practice of the Churches in communion.

PART ONE:

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LOCAL
CHURCH AND THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL
ACCORDING TO
THE ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE**

CHAPTER ONE:

NICHOLAS AFANASIEV: LIFE AND WORKS

1. Biography

Nicholas Nicolaevitch Afanasiev,¹ the eldest of the two children of Nikolai Grigor'evic Afanasiev, an advocate, and Praskov'ja Jakovlevna, was born on the 4th September, 1893² at Odessa in Russia. Having lost his father at an early age, the young Nicholas spent his childhood among three women: his maternal grand mother (Babuška Afanasieva), his mother, and his sickly younger sister (Zinaida)³. His earliest childhood ambition was to become a bishop, perhaps attracted by the beauty of the episcopal ornaments.⁴ Later, still a boy, he wanted to choose a career befitting his intellectual capabilities. He had in mind three services: that of a medical doctor, a teacher and a priest.⁵ His first interest was for medicine. But his

¹ The transcription of this Russian name varies from language to language and from writer to writer. Thus, this name, generally transcribed as *Nikolaj Nikolaevič Afanas'ev*, is rendered in French as *Nicolas Afanassieff* (cf. various works of the author in French as well as the studies on him, given in the *Selected Bibliography*), in German as *Nikolaj Afanas'ev* (cf. B. SCHULTZE, "Ekklesiologischer Dialog mit Erzpriester Nikolaj Afanas'ev," *OCP*, 33 (1967), 380-403, *hereafter cited as* B. SCHULTZE, "Ekklesiologischer Dialog"), in Italian as *Nicolas Afanassiev* (cf. A. JOOS, "Communione universale o cattolicità dell'assemblea. Elementi di Ecclesiologia negli scritti del P. N. N. Afanassiev," *Nicol*, 1 (1973), 7-47; 223-260, *hereafter cited as* A. JOOS, "Communione universale"). In English, we find a couple of transcriptions such as *Nicolas Afanassief* (cf. J. J. HOLTZMAN, "Eucharistic Ecclesiology of the Orthodox Theologians," *Diak(US)* 8 (1973), p. 5, *hereafter cited as* J. J. HOLTZMAN, "Eucharistic Ecclesiology"), *Nicholas Afanassiev* (cf. M. E. HUSSEY, "Nicholas Afanassiev's Eucharistic ecclesiology: A Roman Catholic viewpoint," *JES* 12 (1975), 235-252, *hereafter cited as* M. HUSSEY, "Afanassiev's eucharistic ecclesiology,"), *Nicholas Afanasiev* (cf. A. SCHMEMANN, "In Memoriam: Father Nicholas Afanasiev," *SVTQ*, 10 (1966), 209, *hereafter cited as* A. SCHMEMANN, "In Memoriam"), *Nicholas Nicolaevitch Afanasiev* (cf. H. SYMEON, "Archpriest Nicholas Afanasiev (1893-1966)," *ECR*, 3 (1967), p. 304, *hereafter cited as* H. SYMEON, "Nicholas Afanasiev") and *Nikolai Afanas'ev* (cf. A. NICHOLS, "The Appeal to the Fathers in the Ecclesiology of Nikolai Afanas'ev: I – From Didache to Origen. II – From Cyprian to Denys," *HeyJ*, 33 (1992), 125-145; 247-266, *hereafter cited as* A. NICHOLS, "Appeal to the Fathers"). As to us, we have chosen to use in our text, with the exception of citations, the transcription followed by A. Schmemann, namely *Nicholas Afanasiev* or in the shortened form, *N. Afanasiev*.

² Cf. "Protopresviter Nikolaj Nikolaevič Afanas'ev (4.9.1893–4.12.1966)," *VRSchD* 82 (1966), p. 56. The dates given here are calculated according to the Julian calendar. O. Rousseau, however, puts Afanasiev's date of birth as 04.10.1893 (cf. "In memoriam: Le R. P. Nicolas Afanassieff," *Irén* 40 (1967), p. 291, *hereafter cited as* O. ROUSSEAU, "In memoriam"). Even if Rousseau had followed the Gregorian calendar, instead of the Julian, the date should have been 16.09.1893 in place of 04.10.1893.

³ Cf. M. AFANASSIEFF, "Nicolas Afanassieff (1893-1966). Essai de biographie," *Cont.*, 21 (1969), p. 99, *hereafter cited as* M. AFANASSIEFF, "Essai de biographie."

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ M. AFANASSIEFF "La genèse de l'Eglise du Saint-Esprit," in: N. AFANASSIEFF, *L'Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 15, *hereafter cited as* M. AFANASSIEFF "La genèse"; cf. M. AFANASSIEFF, "Essai de biographie," p. 99.

poor health did not permit him to continue the medical studies which he had begun in the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Novorossiisk. Abandoning medicine, he then turned to mathematics,⁶ and it would seem for a time that his second dream—that of becoming a teacher—was on the point of realisation. But it was not to be so. For the break up of the World War I forced him to interrupt his mathematical studies and to sign himself up for the military service. On 15 November 1915, he joined the *Sergievskoye* Military School of Odessa and remained there until 15 May 1916. His military career began as a sub-lieutenant in the *Tomsk'schen* Artillery. The military service, which lasted for almost five years, ended on a tragic note: the army he served in was defeated and he and his comrades, evacuated from Sebastopol with the White Army, found themselves in exile.

In facing the turmoils and the hardships of the war and its aftermath, he was not alone; he had always with him the ‘eternal *sputniks*’⁷—books. He read and re-read the books of great writers, thinkers and poets.⁸ But none of those great men and their ideas could comfort the young man who was deeply pained by the Russian Revolution and the fratricide that followed it. Groping in the dark in search of something to hold on to, he ceaselessly sought for the Way and the Truth, which he finally⁹ found in Christ and his Church.¹⁰ “Thus, at the age of 27, when he found himself absolutely alone in the land of exile... he was called by the Lord to the ‘services’ he had thought of during his adolescence: those of priest and teacher.”¹¹ Responding to this call, he started attending courses at the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade¹² in the Spring of 1921 and graduated from the faculty in October, 1925.

On November 6 of the same year, he married in Prague Mariamna Nikolaevna Andrusova, daughter of the well-known geologist Nikolai Andrusov and the grand daughter of the legendary archaeologist and businessman Heinrich Schliemann. After the marriage, the couple settled down at Skoplje in Macedonia where Afanasiev succeeded in obtaining the post

⁶ He entered the Faculty of Science of the same university in 1913.

⁷ Companions of the route, cf. M. AFANASSIEFF, “La genèse,” p. 15.

⁸ “N.A. cherche « l'évasion » et nos chers amis des « années terribles »—les livres—l’emmènent loin de la grisaille sanglante de la vie. Il relit, sans doute, nos grands classiques, il lit tout, poètes, écrivains, penseurs, philosophes.... Il lit ou relit les « maîtres à penser » de l'époque, parmi lesquels nous trouvons les figures si différentes de Nietzsche, Rozanov, Mérejkovsky et du grand Vladimir Soloviev, philosophe autant que poète,” M. AFANASSIEFF, “Essai de biographie,” pp. 100-101. He was also attracted by Kantian philosophy.

⁹ He had in the meantime a brief fascination for Theosophy.

¹⁰ Cf. M. AFANASSIEFF, “Essai de biographie,” p. 101.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Belgrade was at this time, quite like Prague, Sofia and Berlin, a meeting point of the Russian emigrants. In the Serbian capital “il n'est plus seul : le célèbre « kroujok » (cercle) orthodoxe de Belgrade lui remplace (un peu) la famille,” M. AFANASSIEFF, “Essai de biographie,” p. 102. It was in this ‘circle’ that Afanasiev met some of his best friends and colleagues, viz. Konstantin Kern (the future Archimandrite Cyprian), Princess Assia Oblensky, Sergej S. Bezobrazov (the future bishop Cassian), L. G. Ivanov, V. V. Zenkovskij (who considered Afanasiev as his ‘student-friend’), N. Zernov. Cf. M. AFANASSIEFF, “La genèse,” p. 16 and O. ROUSSEAU, “In memoriam,” p. 292.

of a teacher of religion in a High School, a post he would hold for four years.¹³ During that period our theologian spared no efforts to continue his studies. Guided and directed by Prof. A. P. Dobroklonsky—a famous Russian Church historian—he wrote a dissertation on “The State-authority and the Ecumenical Councils,”¹⁴ which he would present as a thesis to the Faculty of Belgrade in 1927. However, neither this work—though much appreciated by his guide, Prof. Dobroklonsky¹⁵—nor its complement which he would later write,¹⁶ supported by a grant for scientific research—obtained in 1929—from the Russian Scientific Institute of Belgrade, could obtain for him the doctoral title.¹⁷

In the autumn of 1930, he was invited to Paris by the Orthodox Theological Institute of St Sergius¹⁸ to give lectures on the ‘Source of Canon Law’.¹⁹ Meanwhile, he was also assistant to Professor Zenkovsky, who headed the department of Religious Pedagogy at the Institute.²⁰ From 1932 onwards he was entrusted with the entire course on Canon Law—a duty which he would faithfully discharge until November 1966, hardly a month before his death—as well as a part of the New Testament Greek.

During the late 1930s, the prospect of another World War was in the air. Afanasiev, who was a first-hand witness of the bloodshed and ravages of the previous one, ardently hoped—despite the rumours of an impending war making rounds—that this tragedy would not again befall humanity. But when it finally broke out, he was totally shattered. Moved by an ardent desire to be close to God, the only source of comfort in such trying times, he spent several days in prayer and recollection. At the end of it he felt deep within himself the call to “the third and the most beautiful of the *diaconia*”²¹: that of priest,²² a desire he had always put off

¹³ In accepting this job, he had two aims in mind: to continue his studies and to take care of his family (his mother and little sister) in Odessa. However, this latter aim remained unrealised because his mother passed away before he could do anything to bring her to Macedonia and because when his sister—who initially hesitated to leave Odessa—was ready to join her brother, it was too late: the ‘Iron Curtain’ had fallen.

¹⁴ *Državna vlast na vasseljenskim saborima* [Serbian = The State-authority and the Ecumenical Councils, Doctoral thesis presented to Theological Faculty of Belgrade] (Skoplje, 1927), *hereafter cited as* N. AFANASIEV, *Državna vlast*.

¹⁵ Cf. M. AFANASSIEFF, “La genèse,” p. 16.

¹⁶ “Provincial'nyja sobranija Rimskoj imperii i vselenskie sobory. K voprosu ob ucstii gosudarstvennoj vlasti na vselenskich soborach” [The Provincial Assemblies of the Roman Empire and Ecumenical Councils], *Zapiski Russakago naucnago instituta v Belgrade* 5 (1931), 25-46, *hereafter cited as* N. AFANASIEV, “Provincial'nyja sobranija.”

¹⁷ Cf. P. PLANK, *Die Eucharistieversammlung als Kirche. Zur Entstehung und Entfaltung der eucharistischen Ekklesiologie Nikolaj Afanasievs [1893-1966]* (Würzburg: Augustinus Verlag, 1980), pp. 27-28, *hereafter cited as* P. PLANK, *Eucharistieversammlung als Kirche*.

¹⁸ The institute, founded by Metropolitan Eulogius in 1925, was at that time directed by Father S. Bulgakov.

¹⁹ Cf. M. AFANASSIEFF, “Essai de biographie,” p. 105.

²⁰ During this period too he continued his research under the direction of Prof. Dobroklonsky, this time on Ibas of Edessa. Cf. *Iva Edesskij i ego vremja. K voprosu o «trech glavach»* [Russian], (1930-1932), Typed Manuscript, 166p, *hereafter cited as* N. AFANASIEV, *Iva Edesskij*.

²¹ M. AFANASSIEFF, “La genèse,” p. 18.

ever since 1925, partly because of his poor health and partly because of his vague hope that one day it would be possible for him to serve his mother Church in his native country.²³ The outbreak of the World War II now totally shattered such a hope.

On 7 January 1940,²⁴ he received diaconate and on the next day²⁵ he was led around the altar by Fathers S. Bulgakov and Cyprian before he was ordained priest by the Metropolitan Eulogius. Less than a year later, during the winter of 1940-'41, he had to quit Paris along with his family to St Raphaël in southern France. In July 1941, eighteen months and a few days after his ordination, a new charge was entrusted to him: Bishop Vladimir, Metropolitan Eulogius's suffragan at Nice, sent him to Tunisia, where he was put in charge of a large parish of about 2000 Russian families, spread out in a large area. As a pastor he was not content with the mere celebration of the holy mass but was also involved in the charitable activities among the large population of the area regardless of their religion. This pastoral mission in Tunisia lasted till 1947.

Back in Paris during the same year, he put on again the mantle of lecturer at St Sergius. Soon he would present his 'opus magnum'—*The Church of the Holy Spirit*—as a doctoral thesis at the Institute. Having successfully defended the thesis, he was awarded the title of Doctor of Theology on 2 July 1950. In the Autumn of the same year, he was promoted to the grade of ordinary professor of Canon Law.²⁶ With the departure of Father Alexander Schmemmann, who taught Church history at St Sergius, for New York in 1951 and the death of Professor A. V. Kartachov in 1960, Afanasiev found himself entrusted with the additional charge of teaching Church history.²⁷ The financial administration of the institute would also soon fall on his shoulders. Besides these, he served his Church in various other capacities: as the administrative consultant of his diocese, as president of its ecclesiastical tribunal and as president of the Canon Law Commission. And, at the invitation of Patriarch Athanagoras, he participated from 1965 onwards in the preparatory work of the codification of the Orthodox Canon Law. He was also an active player in the 'Rencontres du Saulchoir' and 'Semaine liturgique de Saint Serge' and most of his theological contributions in the 1950s were occasioned by these colloquia.

²² "Ebranlé jusqu'au fond de son être par le déclenchement de la guerre, N.A. s'accroche, pour ainsi dire, à l'autel: « je veux être plus près de Dieu » -dit-il, et il se décide enfin à être ordonné prêtre," M. AFANASSIEFF, "Essai de biographie," p. 107. Cf. also ID, "La genèse," p. 18.

²³ In the Orthodox Church, one is ordained a priest not for the Church in general but for a precise Church (relative ordination).

²⁴ It was the feast of the nativity of the Lord according to the Orthodox calendar.

²⁵ According to the Orthodox calendar, it was day of the Synaxis of Most Holy Mother of God.

²⁶ Cf. "Protopresviter Nikolaj Nikolaevič Afanas'ev (4.9.1893–4.12.1966)," p. 58.

²⁷ Cf. M. AFANASSIEFF, "Essai de biographie," p. 109.

During the last year of his life, he lived two moments of great joy. The first of these moments came at the close of the 4th session of the Second Vatican Council where he was invited as a guest of Secretariat for Unity. To his great joy, he saw some of his seminal ideas influence the conciliar deliberations and the resulting constitution on the Church. An ‘ardent Apostle of unity,’²⁸ he had then the privilege of witnessing the lifting of excommunication between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches on the 7th December 1965. As his wife would later recall, it was for him a moment of both joy and hope: “On the 8th December 1965, seated to the left of the pope at the St Peter’s Square, he heard the Church bells of Rome ring at exactly 14.00 hours announcing a great hope.”²⁹ The second moment of gladness arrived when Nicholas Afanasiev junior, his grandson, was born on the 22nd October 1966.

Exactly a month after this event, Father Nicholas Afanasiev fell ill and passed away, after fourteen days of hospitalisation, on Sunday the 4th December 1966, when the Russian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple. With his passing away, “one of the last members of the old St. Sergius leaves [*sic* left] the theological battlefield.”³⁰

2. Writings

Nicholas Afanasiev was not a prolific writer. He left no heavy volumes. His *opus magnum*, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, remained unpublished until his dying day.³¹ As his disciple and later his colleague, Father Schmemmann, has commented, “he was at his best in short and scholarly essays.”³²

At the debut of his theological career, after an initial hesitation between religious pedagogy and Church history, Afanasiev decided to make scientific research in the latter domain under the direction of Prof. Dobroklonsky.³³ This research bore fruit in the form of three short works: (1) *The State-authority and the Ecumenical Councils*,³⁴ (2) *The Provincial Assemblies of the Roman Empire and Ecumenical Councils*,³⁵ and (3) *Ibas of Edessa and his time*.³⁶

²⁸ O. ROUSSEAU, “In memoriam,” p. 295.

²⁹ M. AFANASSIEFF, “Essai de biographie,” p. 110.

³⁰ A. SCHMEMMANN, “In Memoriam,” p. 209.

³¹ It was thanks to the efforts of his wife, M. Afanasiev and Father André Fyrillas that the work was eventually published in Russian [*Cerkov' Ducha Svjatogo* (Paris, 1971)] and in French [N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*].

³² A. SCHMEMMANN, “In Memoriam,” p. 209.

³³ M. AFANASSIEFF, “Essai de biographie,” p. 104

³⁴ N. AFANASIEV, *Državna vlast*.

³⁵ ID, “Provincial'nyja sobranija.”

³⁶ ID, *Iva Edesskij*.

These early works already announced the *modus operandi* of our theologian, viz. working directly from the sources.³⁷

Formed as a historian and canonist, the young lay theologian began taking interest in dogmatics: an interest awakened in part by his study of Ibas of Edessa and in part by his contact with Father Bulgakov.³⁸ It seems that his studies in philosophy, history, canon law, New Testament, dogmatics, etc. transformed him from a canonist into an ecclesiologist and his lessons in canon law—that dry subject that he was asked to teach—into lessons of ecclesiology. This transformation is visible in the two articles he wrote between 1931 and 1932: “The Two conceptions of the universal Church,”³⁹ “The Canons and Canonical Conscience.”⁴⁰ The publication of the first of these articles marked a landmark in the theological career of Afanasiev. In this article, originally prepared as an exposition for Father Bulgakov’s ‘Seminar,’⁴¹ we find the first sketches of his *Eucharistic Ecclesiology*. Distinguishing between the two conceptions of the universal Church in vigour—that of Rome (a juridical universality around the successor of Peter) and that of Constantinople (ecumenical universality)—the author states that in both these concepts the catholicity of the Church is understood in quantitative terms, whereas in reality it is a qualitative reality which has its foundation in the Eucharist. As he saw it, the unity of the Church is the unity of the local Churches, which are united to one another through their communion to the one and unique Table of the Lord. Contrary to the expectations of the author, the article was accorded only a cold reception by his mentor, S. Bulgakov, because the latter did not find any relationship between the Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the doctrine of *Sobornost’*. Rather discouraged, Afanasiev decided to return to his earlier preoccupations, viz. canonical and historical questions. Thus, during the years preceding the World War II, he launched an ambitious project of writing a work on *Ecclesial Councils and Their Origin*. But the outbreak of the war interrupted the work.

It was during the war years that he began to write his major work, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*. It took him almost 15 years to complete it in the form in which it is known to us. The debut of the work goes back to the winter of 1940-’41, a time when the Afanasiev family took refuge in the southern French town of St-Rapaël. During his stay in Tunisia (1941-’47), the

³⁷ M. AFANASSIEFF, “La genèse,” p. 16.

³⁸ “Dès son arrivée à Paris N.A. prend une part active au « Séminaire de père Serge » et devient membre de la « Confraternité de Sainte-Sophie ». La dogmatique commence à l’intéresser beaucoup,” M. AFANASSIEFF, “Essai de biographie,” p. 105.

³⁹ “Dve idei,” published in 1934.

⁴⁰ Written in 1932 and published as “Les Canons et la conscience canonique,” *Cont*, 66 (1969), 112-127, hereafter cited as N. AFANASIEV, “Conscience canonique.”

⁴¹ M. AFANASSIEFF, “La genèse...,” p. 17.

author continued his work, whenever his hectic activities allowed it. He had to work throughout without the aid of any library. Hence, the first thing he did after his arrival in Paris⁴² was to consult as many books as possible to give a scientific look to his *opus magnum*. According to the original plan, the work consisted of two parts, the first dealing with royal priesthood of the faithful, particular ministries and the origin of the episcopate, and the second with the limits of the Church. As he saw the voluminous proportions his work was taking, he decided to concentrate on the first part alone.⁴³ Between 1950 and 1955, he thoroughly revised and completed this first part⁴⁴ and added an appendix⁴⁵ to it. The second part of his life's work—*The Limits of the Church*—remains uncompleted. Of its seven projected chapters⁴⁶ (1: Admission of heretics and schismatics into the Church⁴⁷, 2: «Extra ecclesiam nulla salus»,⁴⁸ 3: The Church of God in Christ,⁴⁹ 4: The Catholic Church,⁵⁰ 5: *Catholica*,⁵¹ 6: Limits of the Church,⁵² 7: The Actual Problem of the Unity of the Church and the Reunion of Churches⁵³) the author was able to complete only four.

⁴² His second arrival in Paris marks also the beginning of the most fruitful period of Afanasiev's theological career, which lasts for a decade (1947-'57).

⁴³ It is this part which would be presented as a doctoral thesis.

⁴⁴ Most of the chapters of *The Church of the Holy Spirit* were known to readers through small but scholarly essays. Cf. "Narod svjatoj," [Russian = The People of God: Chapter 1 of *Cerkov' Ducha Svjatogo*] *PravMysl*, 6 (1948), 5-17 (*hereafter cited as* "Narod svjatoj"), "Le Pouvoir de l'Amour," *MesOrth*, 39 (1967), 3-25 [Originally a lecture given at St Sergius on 27.3.1949 and published as "Vlast' Ljubv," in *CVZERE*, 22 (1950), 3-5] (*hereafter cited as* "Pouvoir de l'Amour"), *Trapeza Gospodnja* [Russian] (Paris: Ed. du Bureau de Pédagogie Religieuse auprès de l'Institut de Théologie Orthodoxe de Paris, 1952) (*hereafter cited as* *Trapeza Gospodnja*), "The ministry of the laity in the Church," *ER*, 10 (1958), 255-263 [A shorter version of *Služ enie mirjan v Cerkvi* (Paris, 1955)] (*hereafter cited as* "Ministry of the laity").

⁴⁵ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, "L'Assemblée eucharistique unique dans l'Eglise ancienne," *Kl.*, Jan. (1974), 1-36, *hereafter cited as* N. AFANASIEV, "Assemblée eucharistique."

⁴⁶ Cf. ID, "L'Eglise de Dieu dans le Christ," *PenOrth*, 2 (1968), p. 2, *hereafter cited as* "L'Eglise de Dieu."

⁴⁷ The beginning of this chapter was published in Russian as early as 1949. See ID, "Granicy Cerkvi," [Russian = The Limits of the Church] *PravMysl*, 7 (1949), 17-36, *hereafter cited as* "Granicy Cerkvi."

⁴⁸ It is an exposition of the argument of St Cyprian that 'the Church is one' and 'the sacraments are accomplished in the Church.'

⁴⁹ According to the author's own admission, it is the central chapter of the work which exposes the doctrine of Church in Paul and the evangelists. The conclusion reached is that the Pauline doctrine of the Church is essentially Eucharistic and that in his thought the doctrine of universal Church does not exist independently of the doctrine of the local Church. This chapter is published as "L'Eglise de Dieu." The doctrine of St Paul is central in the ecclesiological system built by Afanasiev and it has inspired some of his major contributions such as "Le Sacrement de l'Assemblée," exposé à la 1^{er} Conférence liturgique de Saint-Serge, 1953, *IKZ*, 46 (1956), 200-213 (*hereafter cited as* "Sacrement de l'Assemblée"), *Trapeza Gospodnja*, "L'Eglise qui préside dans l'amour," in: ID et al. (eds), *La Primauté de Pierre dans l'Eglise orthodoxe*, (Neuchâtel/Paris: Ed. Delchoux et Niestlé, 1960), pp. 57-110 (*hereafter cited as* N. AFANASIEV, "L'Eglise qui préside") and "Una Sancta. En mémoire de Jean XXIII, le pape de l'Amour," *Irén.*, 4 (1963), 436-475 (*hereafter cited as* "Una Sancta").

⁵⁰ This chapter, consecrated to the study of what is meant by catholic Church, was published as "Kafoličeskaja Cerkov'" [Russian = Catholic Church], *PravMyl* 11 (1957), 11-44, *hereafter cited as* "Kafoličeskaja Cerkov'."

⁵¹ This chapter was supposed to study the doctrine of St Cyprian on the universal Church.

⁵² Here the author wanted to explain how the two systems of ecclesiology – Eucharistic and universal – define differently the limits of the Church.

⁵³ The main conclusion the author wishes to draw is that the reunion is possible only if we return to the Eucharistic conception of the Church and its unity.

Afanasiev's active participation in the 'Rencontres du Saulchoir' and the 'Semaine Liturgiques de Saint Serge,' founded by himself and Father Cyprian Kern, turns his attention also to ecumenical matters. Many of his essays published between 1950 and 1960 deal with the question of the unity of Churches.⁵⁴ His reaction to the Second Vatican Council's doctrine of collegiality was expressed in a discourse delivered at the annual session of St Sergius on the 28th March 1965.⁵⁵

In a retrospective look at the theological legacy of Nicholas Afanasiev, we will be definitely impressed by the rigour and discipline with which he treated subjects he had to deal with. It is often observed⁵⁶ that his early mathematical formation must have sharpened his logical and analytical mind. However, as he himself has pointed out, he wrote more with "the blood and the tears of my [*sic* his] heart."⁵⁷ On every page he has written one can detect a vision which guided him throughout—"the vision of the *Una Sancta*, the Church-Body of Christ, where each member is similar to others in nature, while being at the same time totally different because he has a different gift of the Holy Spirit, a different diaconia (service, ministry) and a different place in the one and unique Body of Christ."⁵⁸ A. Schmemmann, who personally knew Afanasiev and worked with him, brilliantly pictured his colleague when he said,

In some ways Fr. Nicholas was a man of one idea, or, it may be better to say, one vision. It is this vision that he described and communicated in what appeared sometimes as "dry" and technical discussions. A careful reader, however, never failed to detect behind this appearance a hidden fire, a truly consuming love for the Church. For it was the Church that stood at the center of that vision, and Fr. Afanasiev, when his message is understood and deciphered, will remain for future generations a genuine renovator of ecclesiology.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ These essays are the following: "La doctrine de la Primauté à la lumière de l'ecclésiologie," [*Ist.*, 4 (1957), 401-420, originally an exposé made at the conference of Saulchoir in May 1953; *hereafter cited as* "Doctrine de la Primauté"], "L'Apôtre Pierre et l'évêque de Rome (A propos du livre d'Oscar Cullmann «Saint Pierre, disciple-apôtre-martyr»)," [*Theol.*, 26 (1955), 465-475; 620-641, originally published in Russian as "Apostol' Petr i Rimskij episkop. Po povodu knigi O. Kull'mann 'Sv. Petr'," *PravMysl*, 10 (1955) 7-32, *hereafter cited as* "Apôtre Pierre et évêque de Rome"], "L'Eglise qui préside," "L'infailibilité de l'Eglise du point de vue d'un théologien orthodoxe," [in: O. ROUSSEAU et al. (eds), *L'infailibilité de l'Eglise. Journées œcuménique de Chevetogne 25-29 septembre 1961*, «Collection Irénikon» (Chevetogne: Ed. de Chevetogne, 1963) pp. 183-201, *hereafter cited as* "Infailibilité de l'Eglise"], "Sacrement de l'Assemblée," "Le concile dans la théologie orthodoxe russe," [*Irén.*, 35 (1962) 316-339, *hereafter cited as* "Concile dans la théologie orth."], "Una Sancta," and "L'Eucharistie, principal lien entre les catholiques et les orthodoxes," [*Irén.*, 38 (1965), 337-339, Discours prononcé lors de la Séance solennelle annuelle de Institut Orthodoxe St-Serge de Paris le 28 mars 1965; *hereafter cited as* "L'Eucharistie"].

⁵⁵ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, "Réflexion d'un orthodoxe sur la collégialité des évêques," *MesOrth*, 29-30 (1965) 7-15, *hereafter cited as* "Collégialité des évêques."

⁵⁶ O. ROUSSEAU, "In memoriam," p. 296.

⁵⁷ "Le père Nicolas me disait souvent: 'On pense généralement que j'écris grâce à mon esprit logique et abstrait, et grâce à mon érudition. Certes, ce sont là des choses utiles. Mais je commence à écrire par le sang et les larmes de mon cœur,'" M. AFANASSIEFF, "La genèse," p. 13.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ A. SCHMEMMANN, "In Memoriam," p. 209.

3. Influences

Afanasiev is credited for his original ecclesiological vision which he baptised as *Eucharistic Ecclesiology* in which the local Church plays a central role. However, he did not develop his system from a *tabula rasa*. He had his sources too. Besides the biblical and patristic sources—which we will examine later in this study—on which he built up his ecclesiology, he was also influenced by the Russian eucharistic spirituality of the preceding centuries, the theologians who preceded him and those who were contemporaneous with him and the situation of the Russian *émigrés* in Western Europe.⁶⁰

3.1. Russian Eucharistic Spirituality

Commenting on the Eucharistic Ecclesiology of Afanasiev, Paul Evdokimov remarked that his ecclesiology represents a point of saturation and precision of the wider theologico-spiritual heritage of Russia.⁶¹ It is often pointed out that the *Hesychast*⁶² tradition and the *Philokalia*⁶³ exerted enormous influence in Russia and the Balkan countries. The spiritual influence of *Philokalia* was singular. This book became the preferred spiritual nourishment of the Orthodox monastic tradition, which was centred on sacraments, especially the Eucharist.⁶⁴ This paved the way for the development of an experiential ecclesiology faithful to the patristic principles. In this respect, the tremendous spiritual influence of St Serafim of Sarov (†1833), who “renewed on the Russian soil the experience of St Gregory Palamas and the ancient tradition of the Fathers,”⁶⁵ is worth mentioning. Towards the close of the 19th century, we see another luminous figure in the person of Fr John of Kronstadt (†1908)—a simple priest in a

⁶⁰ To discover these sources with precision is no easy task as our author seldom gives footnotes in his essays. Hence we depend on information given by other authors.

⁶¹ P. EVDOKIMOV, “L’ecclésiologie eucharistique,” in: *Le Christ dans la pensée russe* (Paris, 1970), pp. 206-208 (hereafter cited as P. EVDOKIMOV, “Ecclésiologie eucharistique”); ID., “The Principal Currents of Orthodox Ecclesiology in the Nineteenth Century,” *ECR*, 10 (1978), 26-42 (hereafter cited as P. EVDOKIMOV, “Principal Currents”).

⁶² “Le terme ‘hésychaste’ dérive du grec *hēsychia*, qui signifie à la fois la solitude et le silence extérieurs qui favorisent la paix de l’âme, et cette ‘quiétude’ intérieure elle-même, fruit de la sobriété (*nēpsis*) spirituelle et de la garde du cœur,” P. DESEILLE, “Un réveil spirituel au siècle des lumières: Saint Païssij Velitchkovskij et la Philocalie,” in: *Regards sur l’Orthodoxie. Mélanges offerts à Jacques Goudet*. Textes réunis par G. IVANOFF-TRINADTZATY (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1997), p. 14, fn. 1 (hereafter cited as P. DESEILLE, “Un réveil spirituel”). The Hesychast tradition was very influential in the religious, cultural, social and political life of the 18th century Russia, cf. *ibid.* p. 14.

⁶³ It is an anthology of ancient oriental Fathers, which was first published by Nicodemus the Hagiorite in Venice in 1782. It became very popular with Paisii Velichkovskii’s (1722-’94) translation into Slavonic (Saint-Petersbourg, 1793). And almost a century later, when Bishop Feofan the Recluse († 1894) translated it into Russian, it became accessible to the Russian readers.

⁶⁴ It may be, however, noted that most of the monks and spiritual writers of the period considered the Eucharist principally as an individual means of grace. They hardly touched on the ecclesial dimension of the Eucharist.

⁶⁵ P. EVDOKIMOV, “Principal Currents,” p. 42.

modest parish—who understood his priesthood as a eucharistic ministry, and used to say: ‘I die whenever I do not celebrate the Liturgy.’ His book, *My Life in Christ*—according to which it is in the Eucharist that the mystery of the Church comes to fulfilment—is considered a pioneering work as far as the 20th century Eucharistic Ecclesiology is concerned.

This spiritual tradition, centred on the Eucharist, would be later carried forward by some of the emigrant Russian theologians in the 1930s. They presented the Eucharist as the centre of the Christian life, as the sacrifice truly collective and universal (*sobornyj*), as the sacrament making each individual live the very life of Christ⁶⁶ and as food, ‘eucharistic banquet.’⁶⁷ The participation in this banquet realises the union—which is not simply moral, but physical⁶⁸—of the mystical Body of Christ.⁶⁹ It is only natural that Afanasiev, who grew as a theologian in this eucharistic climate, received an orientation in his theological research from the eucharistic spirituality of the Russian *émigrés*.

3.2. Russian Theologians

3.2.1. S. Četverikov

In September 1929, Father Cetverikov (1867-1947), a member of the movement of the Russian Christian Students of Emigration, gave a conference on the Eucharist during the Congress held at the monastery of Pecory in Estonia. This was later published in *Putj*.⁷⁰ According to this study, the Church is the central mystery, which binds us with Christ, and Eucharist is the centre of Church’s life, both individually and as a community, because it is the commemoration of the sacrifice of the cross—the peak of God’s love for men.⁷¹ Hence the Eucharist is treated as the centre of the Christian life, as the sacrifice truly collective and universal (*sobornyj*) and as the sacrament making each individual live the very life of Christ. It is interesting to note, in this context, that Afanasiev would also develop a similar theme from the very outset of his theological career.

⁶⁶ *Vide infra* the discussion on S. CETVERIKOV.

⁶⁷ S. N. BULGAKOV, “Evcharisticseskiji dogmat” [=The Eucharistic Dogma], *Putj* 20-21 (1930), 3-46; 3-33. Cf. *Irén* 4 (1930), p. 461 (*hereafter cited as* S. N. BULGAKOV, “Evcharisticseskiji dogmat”).

⁶⁸ *Vide infra* the discussion on G. Florovsky.

⁶⁹ Given the exilic condition of these theologians, their Eucharistic interest is only understandable. Away from their country and spiritual source, they saw in the sacrament of the Eucharist a link—at least spiritual—with their motherland and mother Church.

⁷⁰ “Evcharistija kak sredotocie Christianskoj žizni” [= The Eucharist as the Centre of Christian Life], *Putj*, 22 (1930), 3-23; Cf. *Irén*, 5 (1930), p. 599.

⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.* p. 18.

3.2.2. Georges V. Florovsky

During the same period (1929), quite like Četverikov, Florovsky (1893-1979) was also interested in the Eucharist especially in its relationship to the Church.⁷² According to him the Eucharist, the Body of Christ and the Church are connected notions. “The faithful become the Body of Christ in the holy Eucharist. And, therefore, the Eucharist is the sacrament of Church, ‘Sacrament of assembly,’ ‘Sacrament of communion,’ μυστήριον συνάξεως, μυστήριον κοινωνίας.”⁷³ He then compared the Church, especially the eucharistic assembly with the Trinitarian unity: “One can say: The Church is the image of the Holy Trinity in the creation; hence the revelation of the Trinity is linked with the founding of the Church. And the eucharistic community is the fulfilment and peak of ecclesial unity.”⁷⁴ In his view, it is on the basis of this perception that one should understand the ecclesial being of the local Church:

The fullness of the Church is invisibly but really unveiled in the Eucharist. Each Liturgy is accomplished in communion with the whole Church and in its name, not just in the name of the present people. [...] Then each [...] ‘small Church’ is not just part, but also a summary image of the whole Church inseparable from its unity and fullness. And hence, in each Liturgy, the whole Church is mysteriously but really present and takes part.⁷⁵

What is stated above contains hints to the points of convergence and divergence between Florovsky and Afanasiev. Both are united in their eucharistic reflection of the Church. The one eucharistic body of Christ enables the participants at the eucharistic celebration to become the Church, the Body of Christ. This Body of Christ is a real ontological living unity. But their views differ when they speak about the local Church. According to Afanasiev, the local Church that celebrates the Eucharist, is the *katholike ekklesia*, and as such it does not need a higher organisation, whose part it should form. For Florovsky the local community that celebrates the Eucharist is a part (*cast*) and also an image (*obraz*) of the whole Church. It is, so to say, a whole in part. Just as Christ, the head of the Church, is fully present in the community that celebrates Eucharist, so also the Church must be present with him in its qualitative fullness and its quantitative extension. Thus we do not see in Florovsky the irreconcilable antithesis between universalist and Eucharistic Ecclesiology, as we will see in Afanasiev.

⁷² G. FLOROVSKY, “Eucharistija i sobornost” [=Eucharist and Sobornost], *Putj* 19 (1929), 3-22 (*hereafter cited as* G. FLOROVSKY, “Eucharistija”). Relevant passages of this article are translated in: B. SCHULTZE, “Eucharistie und Kirche in der russischen Theologie der Gegenwart,” *ZKT* 77 (1955), p. 260. Cf. also *Irén* 2 (1930), p. 197.

⁷³ G. FLOROVSKY, “Eucharistija,” p. 7, cited in B. SCHULTZE, “Eucharistie und Kirche in der russischen Theologie der Gegenwart,” p. 260.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

3.2.3. Alexis Stepanovitch Khomiakov

The Russian religious thought of the 19th and 20th century is dominated by the influence of Alexis Stepanovitch Khomiakov (1804-1860). His remarkable contribution consists in having brought the problem of the Church and its nature to the fore of theological discussion.⁷⁶ As to how Afanasiev could have been influenced by the ideas of Khomiakov, two diverging opinions exist. As early as 1934, S. Bulgakov ruled out any relationship between the Khomiakov's doctrine of *sobornost'* and Afanasiev's Eucharistic Ecclesiology.⁷⁷ Afanasiev himself would later confess—in a letter to the Jesuit theologian B. Schultze—that he did not understand the notion of *sobornost'*.⁷⁸ But, according to E. Behr-Sigel, although Khomiakov's name is hardly cited in Afanasiev's works, his idea of Eucharistic Ecclesiology is quite close to the concept of *sobornost'* popularised by Khomiakov.⁷⁹ A. Schmemmann also joined her when he said that Afanasiev truly inherited the theological legacy of Khomiakov.⁸⁰ Hence, our attempt in what follows would be to summarily present the main axes of Khomiakov's ecclesiology in order to see how it compares with that of Afanasiev.

It is to Khomiakov that the later Slavophile theologians owe their key notion, *sobornost'*,⁸¹ although the term itself is found only once in his writings.⁸² He tried to depict Church as a living organism, whereby he preferred the biblico-theological categories to the purely canonical. To speak of the Church merely as a society organised under the hierarchy was, to his mind, to speak only of its exterior shell. He refused to conceptualise Church in terms of any *quantitative* notions. According to him the adjective *katholikōs*,⁸³ used in reference to the Church, is derived not from *kath'hola*,⁸⁴ which might have permitted its translation as *universal*, but from *kath'holon*,⁸⁵ in which case it would signify 'in conformity with that which constitutes the unity of believers.' He based his argument on the Slavonic version of

⁷⁶ Cf. N. BERDIAEFF, *Alexei Stepanovitch Khomiakoff* (Moscow, 1912), p. 83, cited in N. KOULOMIZINE, "L'ecclésiologie eucharistique du Père Nicolas Afanasieff," in: *La Liturgie: son sens, son esprit, sa méthode (Liturgie et théologie)*. Conférences S. Serge XXVIII^e semaine d'études liturgique, Paris 1981 (Rome: C.L.V. – Edizioni Liturgiche, 1982), pp. 113-127 (*hereafter cited as* N. KOULOMIZINE, "L'ecclésiologie eucharistique...").

⁷⁷ M. AFANASSIEFF, "La genès," p. 17.

⁷⁸ He wrote: "Sie kennen den tiefen Unterschied zwischen Chomiakov und mir in der Frage nach der Sobornost', die ich nicht annehme und nicht verstehe, obschon ich die positive Bedeutung dieser Lehre nicht leugne," B. SCHULTZE, "Ecclesiologischer Dialogue," p. 395.

⁷⁹ "A propos de «L'Eglise du Saint-Esprit»," *Ist.*, 21 (1976), p. 430.

⁸⁰ "Pamjati Otca Nikolaja Afanas'eva," *VRSchD*, 82 (1966), p. 67

⁸¹ *Sobornost'*, derived from *so-* ('con-'), *br-* ('legere' = pick, take) and *-nost* ('-ness'), literally means *together-ness* or *collectiveness*. Cf. R. R. BARR, "The Changing Face of Sobornost," *Diak(US)* 2 (1967), pp. 219-220, (*hereafter cited as* R. BARR, "Changing Face...").

⁸² Cf. S. JAKI, "Recent Orthodox Ecclesiology," *Diak(US)* 2 (1967), p. 257, (*hereafter cited as* S. JAKI, "Recent Orth. Eccl.").

⁸³ καθολικός

⁸⁴ κατὰ + ὅλα

⁸⁵ κατὰ + ὅλον

the Nicene Creed, where *katholikēn* (modifying *ekklesian*) is translated as *sobornaja* (collegiate). Thus he preferred the expression *sobornaja cerkov*⁸⁶ to *vselenskaja* or *kafoličeskaja*—often used by other Russian theologians—to speak of the catholic nature of the Church. His choice of the adjective, *sobornyj*, to translate the Greek, *katholikōs*, was inspired by his desire to communicate its intensive-qualitative rather than the extensive-quantitative sense—expressed by *vsemirnoj*, or *vselenskoj*. *Sobor* evokes the idea of an assembly, one that is not necessarily gathered at a particular place, but one that virtually exists without any formal gathering. As Khomiakov has formulated it, “[t]he Catholic Church is the Church, which is according to all or according to the unity of all, the Church of free unanimity, of perfect unanimity.”⁸⁷ According to him, the Church is catholic,

...because it belongs to the whole world, not to a particular place, because it sanctifies the entire humanity and the whole world, not a particular people and country, because its nature consists in the concord and unity of spirit and life of all its members [...] from all over the world....⁸⁸

In this description of the Church’s catholicity, both its quantitative-extensive as well as qualitative-intensive aspects come to the fore.⁸⁹ For Khomiakov, the qualitative catholicity is ‘the very essence of Christianity.’⁹⁰

It must be, however, noted that Khomiakov’s notion of catholicity is nowhere linked to the notion of the local Church. We see him often contrast between *commune générale* (Church as a whole) and *commune partielle* (particular Church),⁹¹ which suggests his leaning towards a Universalist Ecclesiology in which the local Churches have very little role to play. For him the local Church—generally understood in the perspective of national autocephaly⁹²—is not, in the strict sense, Church possessing properties and powers proper to the Church of God.

During his student days Afanasiev had occasion to encounter the ideas of Khomiakov especially through Sergius Bulgakov (1871-1944) and Basil Zenkovsky (1881-1962), both influenced by the Russian lay theologian. Thus, quite early on, Afanasiev was attracted to Khomiakov’s idea that Church is a living organism. Khomiakov had treated the notion of the Body of Christ as a *theologoumenon*. Afanasiev would later take up this notion and give it, in

⁸⁶ Literally, it can be translated as ‘the Church in which we assemble’ or also ‘the assembled community.’

⁸⁷ A. S. KHOMIAKOV, *L’Eglise latine et le protestantisme au point de vue de l’Eglise d’Orient* (Lausanne; Vevey, 1872), p. 398, hereafter cited as A. S. KHOMIAKOV, *L’Eglise latine....*

⁸⁸ A. S. KHOMIAKOV, “L’Eglise est une,” in: A. Gratieux, *Le mouvement slavophile à la veille de la Révolution «UnSa – 25»* (Paris: Cerf, 1953), p. 218, hereafter cited as A. S. KHOMIAKOV, “L’Eglise est une.”

⁸⁹ See the first part of the above citation for the quantitative-extensive aspect and the second part for the qualitative.

⁹⁰ A. S. KHOMIAKOV, *L’Eglise latine....*, p. 396.

⁹¹ “...l’évêque et le prêtre ne sont pas les fonctionnaires de la commune partielle; mais ils sont les fonctionnaires du Christ dans la commune générale....” *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁹² He considers them only as “la réunion des membres de l’Eglise qui vivent dans cette région,” *Id.*, “L’Eglise est une,” p. 219.

conjunction with the Eucharist, a new meaning: from the one Eucharistic Body of Christ develops—through participation in this one Bread—an ecclesial Body of Christ, the Church.⁹³ Similarly, taking up the qualitative-intensive meaning given to catholicity by Khomiakov, Afanasiev would apply it to a concrete community that celebrates the Eucharist. In doing so, our theologian would give a patristic content to the qualitative sense of catholicity.

Khomiakov's eucharistic doctrine links Church and the Eucharist.⁹⁴ But the Church in question is the Church in general, and not the celebrating local community. Eucharist is for him that which "unites all its [Church's] members with their Saviour in a corporeal communion...."⁹⁵ That is to say, the concrete place of the celebration of the Eucharist is not much of theological import for him. He refuses any spiritual autonomy to local Church. To his mind, it is the source of schism and disunity. As against this, Afanasiev would acknowledge the theological significance of the co-relation between local Church and the Eucharist.⁹⁶ It is because of this close relationship between the two that he would go on to identify the local Church with the Church of God.

The principal point of Khomiakov's doctrine of *sobornost'* is the reception of revealed truths by the whole Church, i.e. by all the members of the Church taken as a whole. Also, the role played by the representatives of the Church (bishops assembled in a council, for instance) is very important in his ecclesiology. They make doctrinal decisions, which will be later received or rejected by the Church as a whole. Afanasiev does not accept this idea of representation. However, he accepts the idea of reception. But in his opinion, the subject of the reception is not the Church taken as a universal organism, but as single local Churches, in which the Church of God dwells.

Thus, what emerges from the above discussion is that Khomiakov's influence on Afanasiev is more indirect than direct. True, he inherited the theological legacy left by Khomiakov and continued it. But this continuation must be understood as a development and correction. He distinguished himself more by a departure from Khomiakov than by an attachment to him.

⁹³ See our discussion *infra* under the title, "Pauline Roots of Eucharistic Ecclesiology."

⁹⁴ "Mais ce sacrement s'opère dans l'Eglise, il n'est ni pour le monde extérieur [...] ni pour la corruption, ni pour l'homme qui n'a pas entendu la loi du Christ," A. S. KHOMIAKOV, "L'Eglise est une," p. 228.

⁹⁵ A. S. KHOMIAKOV, *L'Eglise latine...*, p. 139.

⁹⁶ See our discussion in the next chapter on "Eucharist Makes the Church."

3.2.4. Sergius Nikolaevitch Bulgakov

Writing to B. Schultze on 19 May 1965, Afanasiev acknowledged that S. Bulgakov's influence on him was considerable.⁹⁷ In order to discover the extent of this influence, we must be first familiar with the basic statements of Bulgakov's ecclesiology.

It is within the framework of the so-called doctrine of *Sophia*, that he developed his ecclesiology. The doctrine of *Sophia* was for him a hermeneutical tool to explain the doctrine of the Church. *Sophia*, according to him, is "an objective principle or being, god like, but differing from the personality of God"⁹⁸ and he identifies it with the Church.⁹⁹ As *Sophia*, the Church is the "uncreated principle of the created world."¹⁰⁰ It is the foundation and goal of the universe.¹⁰¹ The Church-Sophia and the creation are mutually orientated, because the pre-existing Church realises its development in and through the creation, whose meaning and essence it constitutes.¹⁰² In this sense, the whole of creation can be considered as a sort of 'incarnation' of the Church-Sophia. This incarnation is not a static state, but is always in a process of becoming and development.¹⁰³ Bulgakov calls this process the *ecclesialisation*¹⁰⁴ of the cosmos—a process in which man is called upon to associate himself through the exercise of his free will. Although, through the Fall, man turned away from the task of ecclesialisation, God's plan continued. "God's plan of salvation consisted naturally in the restitution of man [...]. The life of the Church in the world after the Fall becomes a preparation for this restitution of mankind."¹⁰⁵ Thus Bulgakov characterises the pre-incarnational phase of human history as a *preparatory ecclesialisation*.¹⁰⁶ And through the

⁹⁷ "Ich leugne nicht, daß Chomjakov und insbesondere Bulgakov, dem ich sehr nahe stand, einen gewissen Einfluß auf mich ausgeübt haben..." cited in B. SCHULTZE, "Ecclesiologischer Dialogue," p. 395. Cf. M. AFANASSIEFF, "La genèse," p. 16 and N. KOULOMIZINE, "L'ecclésiologie eucharistique..." p. 118.

⁹⁸ S. N. BULGAKOV, "The problem of the Church in the modern Russian Theology," *Theol.*, 23 (1931), p. 12, *hereafter* cited as S. BULGAKOV, "Problem of the Church."

⁹⁹ "The Church is God's Sophia..." *Ibid.* p. 65.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 12. It may be asked whether Khomiakov's idea of 'Church as whole' or rather 'the invisible Church' which manifests itself in the as 'visible Church' in the world had served as a source for Bulgakov's concept of a 'pre-existing Sophia-Church.

¹⁰¹ "Die Welt ist durch Gott geschaffen, wie Kirche in ihrer Grundlegung und in ihrer Vollendung," S. N. BULGAKOV, "Die Lehre von der Kirche in orthodoxer Sicht," *IKZ*, 47 (1957), p. 173, *hereafter* cited as S. BULGAKOV, "Lehre von der Kirche."

¹⁰² "The Church is an *eternal humanity* revealed in created humanity [...]. The divine original of created humanity is the eternal Church [...]. Though eternal in God, the Church exists in creation as founded on the earth in time..." S. BULGAKOV, "Problem of the Church," pp. 13-14.

¹⁰³ "It [the Church] is the divine ground of the world and the real meaning of the human history, through which the Church takes possession of the creation, till God will be all in all," *ibid.* p. 69.

¹⁰⁴ *Ocerkovlenie / Verkirklichung*, cf. S. BULGAKOV, "Lehre von der Kirche," p. 174. Here one may compare this idea of the dynamic ecclesialisation of the world with Khomiakov's idea of the progressive inhabitation of the invisible Church in the world.

¹⁰⁵ S. BULGAKOV, "Problem of the Church," p. 63.

¹⁰⁶ "...eine vorbereitende Verkirklichung, eine Vorbereitung zur Kirche," S. BULGAKOV, "Lehre von der Kirche," p. 175.

incarnation, human nature reached the climax of its divinisation:¹⁰⁷ something it has hoped for from the beginning of history. Through the Pentecost the incarnational mystery touched its peak: then on the life with Christ became life in Christ in the Church, which is His body.

The Church as the Body of Christ has both visible and invisible aspects. The community of graced life is given to men not as isolated individuals, but in a communitarian (*soborno*) way in relation to the Church as a divinely structured organisation.¹⁰⁸ Besides this visible structured Church, there is also an invisible Church, which does not coincide with the former. The reason why it does not coincide is because the process of ecclesialisation has not reached its accomplishment—a point where both the invisible and the visible Church, the Sophia and creation will coincide, when God will be all in all.

In the context of our study, Bulgakov's view on catholicity in relationship to local Church is of considerable importance. He understood catholicity both in its quantitative-extensive and qualitative-intensive aspects. Thus, when he writes that “[t]he frontiers of this community [the Church] are not fixed; on the contrary, the Church is called to gather in her all peoples,”¹⁰⁹ he was referring to the former aspect. When he says that “[t]his unity is to be understood above all as the *self-identity* of the life of grace,”¹¹⁰ he alludes to the qualitative aspect of catholicity. He considers it also as *wholeness* (from the Greek καθολου). “Wholeness is no quantitative but a qualitative notion...”¹¹¹ It is from this qualitative point of view of catholicity that Bulgakov looks at the local community. He says that Church's inner unity, as graced life, is realised in many particular and local communities.¹¹² Elsewhere he says: “The catholicity of the Church contains the identity of ecclesial life in each part.”¹¹³ Only in the context of this identity (or the inner unity of the Church) does the Pauline expression ‘the Church of God at Corinth’ become comprehensible.¹¹⁴ Only when each local Church possesses the life in God,

¹⁰⁷ “Die Einigung der göttlichen und menschlichen Natur, die Menschenwerdung Gottes und die Vergottung des Menschen gaben dem Menschen die Möglichkeit einer so vollkommenen, tiefen und geheimnisvollen Einigung mit Christus...” *ibid.* p. 179

¹⁰⁸ “Die Gemeinschaft begnadeten Lebens wird den Menschen nicht individuellen gegeben, in der Vereinzelung, sondern konziliarischgemeinschaftlich in Verbindung mit der Kirche als der gottverordneten Organisation,” *Ibid.* pp. 184-185.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 186.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 187.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* Bulgakov's idea of catholicity reminds us of Khomiakov. Quite like this 19th century Russian theologian, Bulgakov also thinks that the catholicity is above all an inner quality of the Church, namely the integrality of their Tradition, of truth, of life in truth. According to both, the quantitative-extensive aspect of catholicity stretches out from the qualitative catholicity as inner fullness.

¹¹² Cf. S. BULGAKOV, “Lehre von der Kirche,” p. 188.

¹¹³ S. N. BULGAKOV, “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church,” *JFStA*, 12 (1931), p. 25, *hereafter cited as S. BULGAKOV*, “One, Holy, Catholic...”

¹¹⁴ For Afanasiev's view on this question, *see infra* our discussion under the head, “The Local Church and the Church of God” in the section dealing with the roots of Eucharistic Ecclesiology in St Paul.

can it be catholic.¹¹⁵ The local Church is really and truly Church, but only in so far it remains in communion with the whole Church can it contain in it the plenitude.¹¹⁶ In this context Bulgakov does not deem it contradictory to speak of an identification between the local Church and the Church as a whole (*vselenskaja*). For every local Church shares in the same catholicity. But this does not rule out the possibility of various degrees of its realisation. The degree of catholicity of the Church does not depend on its largeness but on its fidelity to the truth.¹¹⁷ On this difference in the measure of the realisation of catholicity is based the hierarchy of the authority among local Churches, at whose summit is found a particular local Church which has a primacy of authority. This authority, although seen as a power, is a spiritual one and not canonical.

As we can notice from our above discussion, Bulgakov developed his ecclesiology following a rigorous metaphysical approach. And that is where Afanasiev is most distant from his mentor. Adopting a historical approach, Afanasiev fixed his attention more on the visible Church—a community existing in time and place—than on the invisible Church.¹¹⁸ Without relying on any philosophical system, he based his ecclesiology on the Scripture and the Fathers. This difference of methodology and approach did influence the way Afanasiev made use of Bulgakov's ideas.

Thus, while inheriting the christological rootedness of the ecclesiological reflection of Bulgakov—who focussed his attention on the individual-centred Christological mysticism of St Paul as enshrined in Gal 2: 20—Afanasiev's attention is turned to the concrete assembly as suggested by Mt 18: 20. Bulgakov spoke of a twofold presence of Christ in the Church: a bodily-sacramental and purely spiritual presence. Afanasiev, however, pays attention only to the bodily-sacramental presence of Christ in the Church—a choice inspired by his interest in the concrete community. This choice determines also his understanding of the *locus* of catholicity. Whereas for Bulgakov, as for Khomiakov, the possession of the fullness of truth is the criterion to determine the *locus* of catholicity, for Afanasiev, this criterion is not of much importance. He does not at all pose the question whether or not the local Church does possess the fullness of truth or not. Moreover, he challenges all supra-local notions of catholicity. It

¹¹⁵ Cf. S. BULGAKOV, "One, Holy, Catholic....," p. 25.

¹¹⁶ Here the distinction between Khomiakov and Bulgakov is evident: While Khomiakov acknowledges catholicity only to the whole Church, Bulgakov predicates it to various parts of the Church in so far as they retain inner identity with the whole. Thus he raises the local Church from a mere part of the whole and recognises to it an integrity and independence as Church.

¹¹⁷ Cf. S. BULGAKOV, "One, Holy, Catholic....," p. 25.

¹¹⁸ It may be remarked in anticipation that the same difference of approach is observable in Cardinals J. Ratzinger and W. Kasper. For details see our discussion of their recent theological debate in the last chapter under the title, "Ratzinger-Kasper Debate..."

may be also noted that the notion of the local Church—vague and imprecise as it was in Bulgakov—gets a clear definition in Afanasiev. He equates the local Church with the eucharistic community.

We can also observe a difference between Bulgakov and Afanasiev in their treatment of the multiplicity of local Churches and their mutual relationship. Both of them admit the mutual communion among the local communities. But they use different expressions to refer to it. Afanasiev calls this communion a *sojuz ljubve*, i.e. a loose federation of catholic Churches which are qualitatively full and equal in value. Bulgakov calls the communion a *duhovnaja svjaz*, i.e. an inner communion of Churches in the absence of which the local Churches will lose their catholicity. The Churches, which form part of this communion, do not all possess the same degree of catholicity. The degree of catholicity of a Church is dependent on the measure of its life in truth. Afanasiev also speaks about a hierarchy among the Churches. But this hierarchisation is not based on the varying degrees of realisation of catholicity, but on the basis of the difference in the authority of witness of faith, which is ultimately the result of God's election. For both theologians, the communion of Churches—*sojuz ljubve* for Afanasiev and *duhovnaja svjaz* for Bulgakov—is the *locus* of the reception of what is orthodox and rejection of what is heterodox in a particular community. However, it is not a juridical instance. Bulgakov considered Ignatius of Antioch as the Father of the qualitative catholicity. Cyprian and Augustine were, according to him, exponents of quantitative catholicity. This distinction becomes sharper in Afanasiev.

On Afanasiev's own admission, Bulgakov—whom he knew by reading and personal contacts—exerted a considerable influence in his growth as an ecclesiologist. But that does not mean that our theologian just repeated what was taught by Bulgakov. Just as Bulgakov himself, under the influence of Khomiakov's tradition, transformed the ideas of his predecessor for his proper ends, so too did Afanasiev vis-à-vis Bulgakov. Thus, Khomiakov knew only the universal Church with its quantitative-qualitative catholicity. Bulgakov, on his part, spoke of both the universal and the local Church and the latter's limited quantitative and qualitative catholicity. When it comes to Afanasiev, he speaks only about the catholicity of the local Church. Hence, we may safely conclude that Afanasiev situates himself within the Russian theological tradition. His ecclesiology is unthinkable without that of Khomiakov and Bulgakov.

3.2.5. Nicholas Zernov

Basic sketches of Afanasiev's ecclesiology is discernible from his article, "Two Conceptions of the Universal Church,"¹¹⁹ whereby he held Cyprian of Carthage responsible for the ecclesiological mutation that happened during the course of history: from the eucharistic to the institutional ecclesiology. He was not the first to see things in this way. A few months before the publication of Afanasiev's article, Nicholas Zernov published an important study on the subject entitled, "Saint Cyprian of Carthage and the Unity of the Church."¹²⁰ He too pointed out that Cyprianic ecclesiology was a turning point in the history of the doctrine of the Church. According to him, the pre-Cyprianic Church was not a centrally organised supra-community organisation. During this period, the community and the episcopate, he said, were the two fundamental institutions, which ensured the unity of the Church. Every community was in a love-alliance with one another through its bishop who, by his belongingness to the episcopate, guaranteed the belongingness of his community to the universal Church.

He formulated the basic Cyprianic doctrine on Church as follows: the Church is God's chosen people, the new Israel. Hence outside the Church, there is no sacrament, no blessing, and no forgiveness of sins. Thus Cyprian's main contribution, to his mind, consists in having determined the frontiers of the Church. According to the Carthaginian bishop, the reliable criterion for determining the true Church is the episcopate, which is entrusted with the charge of preserving the unity of the Church. As far as the faithful are concerned, they are sure of belonging to the true Church only when they are with a bishop who is in communion with the whole episcopate. What is novel in Cyprian's idea is that for him episcopate is not just one of the expressions of the unity of the Church, but the very foundation of its unity.¹²¹ His doctrine on episcopate is closely linked to his "doctrine on Peter as the foundation of the Catholic Church."¹²² He considers Peter as the first bishop whom the Lord called and entrusted with the keys of heaven. Later other Apostles also, because of their communion with Peter, participate in the power of Peter. The successors of Apostles are a 'repetition' (*povtorenie*) of the Apostle Peter and occupy the throne of Peter.

We can find several points of convergence between Zernov and Afanasiev in the interpretation of Cyprian. Both agree that Cyprian's doctrine on the Church triggered a

¹¹⁹ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, "Dve idei."

¹²⁰ "Svjatoj Kiprian Karfagenskij i edinstvo Vselenskoj Cerkvi," *Putj*, 39 (1934), 18-40. Cf. *Irén*, 1934, p. 602, *hereafter cited as* N. ZERNOV, "Svjatoj Kiprian...."

¹²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 28

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 28ff.

change in ecclesiology.¹²³ Both judge that, in Cyprianic ecclesiology, the unity of the Church is based on the episcopate and each bishop is taken as the successor of Peter, who was the first one to receive episcopal charge. But when it comes to their evaluation of the pre-Cyprianic period, we notice divergence between them. If, in Zernov's opinion, the concept of 'Catholic Church' during the pre-Cyprianic period referred to a quantitative totality of particular communities, Afanasiev deemed that 'Catholic Church' during the same period referred uniquely to the local Church. Similarly, while for Zernov, the pre-Cyprianic local community was a part (*cast'*) of the universal Church (*vselenskaja cerkov'*), for Afanasiev the local Church of the period was a dogmatically understood reality, an object of faith. Whereas Zernov interpreted the relationship between the local community and the whole Church in terms of dependence, Afanasiev holds that the love-alliance between the various local Churches, as it existed during the pre-Cyprianic period, did not in any way destroy the autonomy of a local community. Both the theologians disagree also in their appraisal of Cyprian's own contribution. Thus, while in Zernov's judgement the novelty in Cyprian's doctrine consists in that he clearly defined the frontiers of the Church, Afanasiev considers the idea of the universal Church—which cuts across the local communities and is held together by the body of bishops—as the novelty brought in by the Carthaginian bishop-theologian. While Zernov attributes to Cyprian the organisation of the faithful under one bishop, Afanasiev holds that the existence of such an organisation is attested in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch.

It is needless to say that Zernov's article was not without influence on our theologian, as it is clear from the points of convergence between them stated above.¹²⁴ Their main disagreement is in the area of their appraisal of the primitive ecclesiology. The pre-Cyprianic ecclesiology, according to Afanasiev, was one that was centred on the local Church. In Zernov's view, universalist perspective was not totally absent in the primitive ecclesiology.

3.3. Jurisdictional Conflict of the Emigrant Russian Orthodox Church

The pan-Russian council of Moscow,¹²⁵ which assembled just five months after the Russian Revolution (1917), could not have foreseen the massive flow of Russians into foreign

¹²³ See *infra* our discussion on "Cyprianic Ecclesiology as Universal Ecclesiology."

¹²⁴ Cf. O. ROUSSEAU, "Préface," in: *L'Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 10.

¹²⁵ The council, which got started in August 1917 and concluded in August of the following year, was instrumental in the re-establishment of the Russian patriarchate. This august assembly, in which 265 members of the clergy and 299 elected laymen took part, was "l'expression des tendances ecclésiologiques qui prédominaient dans l'Eglise russe au XIXe siècle et suivant lesquelles les laïcs devaient partager avec l'épiscopat et le clergé la responsabilité des affaires de l'Eglise à tous les degrés de l'appareil administratif," J. MEYENDORFF, *L'Eglise*

lands. Hence, it did not provide any clear legislation regarding the governance of the emigrant Church. It is in this circumstance that Metropolitan Antony Krapovitsky, former bishop of Kiev—gathering around him in 1920 at Karlovtsy (Serbia) some of the Russian bishops who fled the Revolution—constituted the *Administration Ecclésiastique Suprême des Russes Emigrés* and assumed the pastoral charge of the Russian emigrants.¹²⁶ Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow, who did not appreciate this move, nominated, on his part, two exarches for the Russian emigrants: one for Europe (Metropolitan Eulogius, Paris) and the other for America (Metropolitan Plato, New York). This led to a jurisdictional conflict between the bishops of Karlovtsy and the prelates appointed by Moscow. Meanwhile, the relationship between Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris and Metropolitan Sergius of Moscow—the second successor to Patriarch Tikhon—got worsened and in 1931 the latter deposed the former and placed the faithful of emigration under the jurisdiction of the orthodox Metropolitan of Lithuania, Eleutherius.¹²⁷ However, the majority of the faithful chose to remain obedient to Eulogius, who then placed himself under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople.

After the World War II, the new patriarch of Moscow, Alexis sent Metropolitan Nicolas Kroutitsky to Paris in order to negotiate an agreement. The emissary succeeded in his mission and an agreement was reached not only with Eulogius but also with the bishop of the Karlovtsy jurisdiction, Metropolitan Seraphin. But the agreement was only short-lived as the faithful refused to accept this decision of their prelates to renew links with Moscow. Thus, for the faithful who refused to follow Seraphin, the Synod of Karlovtsy, now based in Geneva, appointed a new prelate, Metropolitan Nathaniel. The appointment of the successor of Eulogius, who passed away on 8 August 1946, occasioned yet another division. While Moscow designated Metropolitan Seraphin as the successor, the followers of Eulogius—respecting the testament of the late prelate—designated Metropolitan Vladimir of Nice. Thus by the late 1940s, emigrant Russians of Western Europe were under three opposing jurisdictions.

Like many of his contemporaries, Afanasiev was deeply affected by this painful situation of the emigrant Russian Orthodox community, plagued with disunity and canonical

orthodoxe hier et aujourd'hui, nouvelle éd., revue et augm. (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1995), p. 100, cited hereafter as J. MEYENDORFF, *L'Eglise orthodoxe*.

¹²⁶ Cf. P. MAILLEUX, "Chrétiens d'Orient en Occident," *NRT* 72 (1950), p. 978.

¹²⁷ What provoked Sergius was Eulogius' joining the pope and the archbishop of Canterbury in protesting against the religious persecution in the Soviet Russia, which was not without immediate consequence for the Church in Russia.

division.¹²⁸ His tenure as the pastor of the Russian community of Tunisia gave him a tangible experience of the gravity of the situation. The pastoral care of this community was till then ensured by priests sent from Karlovtsy. It was when the two serving priests—taken ill—were unable to continue their ministry and the arrival of their successors from Karlovtsy was least probable in those war days that the community requested for a pastor from Metropolitan Vladimir who decided to send there the freshly ordained priest, Nicholas Afanasiev. However, the presence of a priest from the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Eulogius was not well received by the partisans of Karlovtsy jurisdiction. In order to express their displeasure they boycotted the eucharistic celebrations of Father Afanasiev. During the post-war period, this group—having become stronger—insistently demanded for a priest from Karlovtsy. Hence Afanasiev was left with no other choice than to leave for Paris. Here our theologian—well informed as he was, through his earlier historico-canonical studies, of the risks of Church-State relationship and the Orthodoxy’s difficulty in disengaging itself from the hold of the Tsardom¹²⁹—now personally experienced the dangers of Church politics in ecclesial life.¹³⁰ This experience could have prompted him to contemplate on the plenitude of the unique Church of God which realises itself in every place thanks to the eucharistic celebration and to work out “an ecclesiology in which the concepts of legal authority (whether civil or canonical) and of an organisationally unified *universal* Church would play no part.”¹³¹

¹²⁸ “Et voilà que presque dès le début de notre diaspora, les divisions, les schismes ont marqué la vie ecclésiale : ce qui faisait saigner le cœur de N. A. et ce qui concentrait ses recherches sur le thème de l’union dans l’Amour - « toujours tous et toujours ensemble » - sur la négation de tout individualisme dans le christianisme et sur la recherche d’une vraie compréhension, dans l’esprit créateur et dans l’Amour, des canons, si anciens et si éternellement nouveaux,” M. AFANASSIEFF, “Essai de biographie,” p. 106.

¹²⁹ After the death of Patriarch Adrian (1700), Tsar Peter the Great prohibited the election of a new patriarch for 20 years and in 1721 published the famous *Spiritual Rule*, which—abolishing the institution of patriarchate—put in place a collegial institution, *Holy Synod*, at the head of the Russian Church. This State-controlled new institution was composed of bishops, two or three priests and a lay procurator, who was nominated by the Tsar and—despite being not a formal member of the synod—had to be necessarily present in synodal deliberations. He headed, *de facto*, the administrative machinery of the Russian Church. This institution further accentuated the centralisation within the Russian Church—not around a unique prelate, but around collegial institution under the control of the State. The bishops became the functionaries of the central synodal administration, often transferred from one see to another. Cf. J. MEYENDORFF, *L’Eglise orthodoxe*, p. 91.

¹³⁰ J. Meyendorff has noted that the Council of Moscow (1917-18), which reinstated the institution of patriarchate, “did not however contribute to the reestablishment in Russia of the episcopal community of the primitive Church: the diocese remained too vast and the central administration of Patriarchate [...] continued to have certain rights which infringed upon certain traditional rights of the local bishops,” *Orthodoxie et Catholicité*, p. 42-43.

¹³¹ A. NICHOLS, “Appeal to the Fathers,” p. 125. It may be noted that the centralised administration of the Russian Church puts bishops in close dependence with the Patriarch. Russian Patriarch was more an administrator who had hardly any direct contact with his faithful.

CHAPTER TWO:

AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE OF LOCAL CHURCHES ACCORDING TO NICHOLAS AFANASIEV

1. Introduction

It has been remarked by A. Schmemmann that ecclesiology is one of the central preoccupations of modern Russian Theology, and this, for several reasons. Of special mention among these are:

...the 'rediscovery' of the Church in its mystico-sacramental essence by the Russian religious thought of the nineteenth century, and more especially, by A. S. Khomiakov, (...) the new and unprecedented phenomenon of an Orthodox diaspora¹ giving an 'existential' dimension to such problems as unity, jurisdiction, nationalism; and, finally, the ecumenical encounter with the non-Orthodox West with its new emphasis on the ecclesiological theme.²

Nicholas Afanasiev, who spent the most part of his theological career in the West, was definitely influenced by the above context. The Orthodox theologians of the St Sergius' Institute (Paris), where Afanasiev was professor, developed an ecclesiology by which they wanted "to go beyond the formal and often too juridical or 'institutional' definitions of the Church and to recover the deep sacramental sources of her life and structures."³ Afanasiev

¹ "At the time when Russian theological scholarship had been totally crushed in Russia itself, it continued to flourish in the West, among the Russian emigration. It was in exile that the gap between pre-revolutionary Russian and contemporary Western science was bridged by theologians of the Russian emigration [...]. Living in a foreign land, these scholars continued the traditions of Russian theology under new conditions. Their face-to-face encounter with the West proved very fruitful for them: it spurred them on to reinterpret their own spiritual tradition, which had not only to be defended from attacks, but also to be presented in a language that the West could understand. The theologians of the Russian emigration fulfilled this task brilliantly," H. HILARION, "Orthodox Theology on the Threshold of the 21st Century," *ER*, (July, 2000), we are citing from the following website: <http://www.findarticles.com>, *hierafter cited as* H. HILARION, "Orthodox Theo...21st c."

² A. SCHMEMMANN, "Russian Theology: 1920-1972: An Introductory Survey," p. 181, *hereafter cited as* A. SCHMEMMANN, "Russian Theology."

³ *Ibid.* They insisted on "...un retour aux sources dans la doctrine ecclésiologique, dont les trois notes fondamentales seraient: 1° l'élaboration d'une doctrine de l'Eglise qui relie étroitement sa structure canonique à l'aspect sacramentaire et christocentrique de mystère ecclésial; 2° la revalorisation conséquente de la communauté vécue dans l'amour et du témoignage commun que doivent rendre l'Eglise particulière vis-à-vis du monde; 3° Cette revalorisation suppose, de façon concomitante, un rétablissement de l'ordre hiérarchique des Eglises qui, dans le monde orthodoxe et suivant des données de la tradition, doivent jouir d'une priorité de témoignage; et partant une prise de conscience nouvelle du rôle nécessaire d'une Eglise locale, centre universel de ce témoignage et première entre toute autre," E. LANNE, "Le mystère de l'Eglise dans la perspective de de la

was caught up in this movement and played a major role in the making of this new ecclesiology. According to the judgement of Schmemmann, Afanasiev was “(t)he most radical, consistent, and therefore controversial exponent of such an ecclesiology.”⁴ Through several of his scholarly articles—which treated such diverse questions as ecumenical council,⁵ infallibility in the Church,⁶ ecumenism,⁷ canon law,⁸ ecclesiology,⁹ etc. and which brought out the results of his thorough reading of the Fathers of the Church, like Ignatius of Antioch,¹⁰ Tertullian and Cyprian,¹¹ and canonical and historical sources—he developed “the idea of the Church whose ‘form’ is to be found in its eschatological self-fulfilment at the eucharistic gathering.”¹²

1.1. Goals of Afanasievan Ecclesiology

During his Paris days, Afanasiev—historian and canonist by training—turned his attention to dogmatic questions, especially to ecclesiology.¹³ The factor which seems to have triggered his interest for ecclesiological questions was the growing discrepancy between the ideal image of the Church conveyed by Khomiakov and his followers—who used terms like *unity*, *freedom* and *love* to characterise the Church—and the actual state of the Orthodox Church of his time, especially of the diaspora, which found itself in a situation of mutual isolation caused partly by autocephaly and partly by schism. Hence, Afanasiev’s intention was to lay a solid foundation for the Orthodox ecclesiology. The picture of the Church, as found in the primitive Church, appeared to him as a commonly acceptable and a solid foundation for a healthy ecclesiology. According to him, we can find in the primitive vision of the Church an

théologie orthodoxe,” in: ID, *Tradition et communion des Eglises. Recueil d'études*, BETL – 109 (Leuven: University Press, 1997), p. 438, *hereafter cited as* E. LANNE, “Mystère de l’Eglise... orthodoxe.”

⁴ A. SCHMEMMANN, “Russian Theology,” p. 181.

⁵ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, “Concile dans la théologie orth.,” “Čto takoe vselenskij sobor,” [= Russian] *Sergievski Listki* 7 (1932), 4-7 [FT: “Qu’est-ce qu’un concile œcuménique?” *MesOrth*, 6 (1959), 13-17], *hereafter cited as* N. AFANASIEV, “Concile œcuménique,” etc.

⁶ Cf. ID, “Infaillibilité de l’Eglise.”

⁷ Cf. ID, “Una Sancta,” “Statio Orbis,” *Iren.*, 35 (1962), 65-75, “L’Eucharistie,” etc.

⁸ Cf. ID “The Canons of the Church: Changeable or unchangeable?” *SVTQ*, 11 (1967), 54-68 [*hereafter cited as* “Canons of the Church”], “Les Canons et la conscience canonique,” *Cont*, 66 (1969), 112-127 [*hereafter cited as* “Conscience canonique”], etc.

⁹ Cf. ID, “Dve idei,” “L’Eglise de Dieu,” *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, “Kafoličeskaja Cerkov,” “Pouvoir de l’Amour,” “Ministry of the laity,” *Trapeza Gospodnja*, “Quand vous vous réunissez en Eglise...,” [Russian] *MesOrth*, 24 (1950), 6p. [*hereafter cited as* “Réunissez en Eglise”], “Collégialité des évêques,” “Sacrement de l’Assemblée,” etc.

¹⁰ Cf. ID, “Kafoličeskaja Cerkov,” p. 17-44.

¹¹ Cf. ID, “L’Eglise qui préside.”

¹² A. SCHMEMMANN, “Russian Theology,” p. 182.

¹³ In this shift towards dogmatic reflection, as his wife tells us, the influence of S. Bulgakov—whom he met for the first time in 1923 at Sternberk during a meeting of the ‘Circles of the Russian Orthodox students’—played an important role, cf. M. AFANASSIEFF “La genèse,” p. 16.

identity between the eucharistic celebration and the local Church. This identity is, in fact, the foundational principle of Afanasievan ecclesiology.¹⁴

Quite early on Afanasiev noticed that the Eastern and the Western ecclesiology, developed since the medieval period, prevented the perception of the most authentic and original vision of the Church. Hence he embarked on an ambitious project of revising the history of the primitive Christianity in order to re-discover this primitive vision of the Church¹⁵ hidden behind latent ecclesial structures, often conditioned by empirical factors alien to the basic nature of the Church. According to him, re-discovering the primitive Church is important, because it allows one to perceive the true nature of the Church in all its original serenity.¹⁶ Such a perception is of crucial importance to evaluate the actual ecclesial life and to liberate the Church from the hard ‘crust’ made of the ‘ecclesialised’ empirical factors.¹⁷ As this crust somehow pulls the Church away from historical process in which new empirical factors should act in changing conditions of history, the real essence of the Church does not any more have the possibility of manifesting itself in history, thereby impeding the fulfilment of her mission toward humanity.¹⁸ As the empirical crust, which blocks the view of the Church, crumbles down, the Church of the origins will appear to us—a Church which has the Eucharist for its living source.

¹⁴ “...sa pensée se cristallisera, au plus près, autour d’un seul thème, celui de l’Eglise, qu’il vit actualisée dans l’Assemblée eucharistique d’une Eglise locale,” N. KOULOMIZINE, “Les rôles liturgiques dans l’assemblée de l’église primitive selon le Père Nicolas Afanassieff,” in: *L’assemblée liturgiques et les différentes rôles dans l’assemblée*. Conférence St-Serge. XXIII^e semaine d’études liturgique, Paris, 28 juin–1 juillet 1976 (Roma: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1977) p. 209, *hereafter cited as* N. KOULOMIZINE, “Les rôles liturgiques...”. Cf. O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, “Dev. of a Theol. of the Local Church,” p. 21.

¹⁵ As Afanasiev puts it, “une tentative de révision du christianisme primitif, du point de vue de l’ecclésiologie eucharistique,” cf. N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 32.

¹⁶ Here, Afanasiev carefully reminds his readers of an important point: the history of the Church, like any other history, is irreversible. It does not suffice to materially resurrect the historical facts concerning the primitive Church. In other words, there is no point in returning to the situation of the primitive Church. Returning to the apostolic Church to rediscover the genuine ecclesial reality doesn’t mean, for that matter, to refuse the necessary and manifold historical development of the Church. Cf. ID, “Pouvoir de l’Amour,” p. 3. Here, it is interesting to note the view expressed by Congar, presenting to the public the important book of W. DE VRIES (*Orient et Occident. Les structures ecclésiales vues dans l’histoire des sept premiers conciles œcuméniques* (Paris: Cerf, 1974), *hereafter cited as* W. DE VRIES, *Orient et Occident*): “l’histoire établie avec le maximum d’honnêteté et d’objectivité possible, (...la) prise de conscience historique réalise une véritable catharsis, une libération de notre inconscient sociologique,” p. 2.

¹⁷ As Afanasiev has pointed out, the sediments of the empirical elements, collected during the course of the bimillennial history of the Church, have formed themselves into a crust which hides the true visage of the Church from our view. We, who are quite accustomed to this external mask of the Church, do not attempt to pierce through to reach up to the true face of the Church. Hence, we take the external manifestation for the true essence of the Church. Cf. N. AFANASIEV, “Pouvoir de l’Amour,” p. 3.

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 4.

1.2. Radical Distinction between Eucharistic and Universal Ecclesiology

Afanasiev's fascination for the primitive Church and its ecclesiology led him, one must say, to set it in sharp opposition to the ecclesiological vision developed more recently. Numerous are the ecclesiological systems¹⁹ developed during the course of history. These different ecclesiologies can be grouped, according to him, under two broad heads: *Eucharistic Ecclesiology* and *Universal Ecclesiology*.²⁰ "Selon l'ecclésiologie universelle, l'Eglise est un organisme unique, dans lequel est incluse chaque unité ecclésiale, quelle qu'elle soit, et, tout d'abord, celle à la tête de laquelle se trouve l'évêque."²¹ Now, what is the relation between the various ecclesial units and the universal Church? According to Afanasiev, "[I]e plus souvent ces unités sont considérées comme des parties de l'Eglise universelle."²²

Eucharistic Ecclesiology, on the other hand, interprets *ecclesia* in the sense of people of God, called to gather in the *Body of Christ*. This ecclesiology stresses the autonomy and independence of the local Churches. According to this vision each local Church is endowed with absolute equality, because each of them is nothing less than the Church of God in its fullness. The unity, universality as well as autonomy of each local Church have their source in the Eucharist.

According to Afanasiev, of these two ecclesiological visions, that of the Universal Ecclesiology dominated during the ensuing centuries to such an extent that Eucharistic Ecclesiology almost disappeared from the scene. Even now, in his opinion, Universal Ecclesiology holds its sway not only in the Catholic West,²³ but also in the Orthodox East.²⁴ To substantiate this statement with respect to the Orthodox Church, Afanasiev cites the definition of diocese given by the Council of Moscow of 1917-1918: "We call a diocese a part

¹⁹ "Quand je parle de différentes ecclesiologies, il s'agit de différentes conceptions de l'Eglise et non de différentes Eglises," N. AFANASIEV, "Doctrines de la Primauté," p. 407.

²⁰ "In the history of Christian thinking we find many types of ecclesiologies, which do not exclude one from another in a radical way, but sufficiently differ one from another to clarify such and such a fact of Church history differently. To my point of view, there exist two fundamental ecclesiologies: the first which may be called Universal Ecclesiology and the second which I call Eucharistic Ecclesiology," ID, "Apôtre Pierre et évêque de Rome," p. 466.

²¹ ID, "L'Eglise qui préside," p. 11.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ According to Catholic version of Universal Ecclesiology, observes Schmemmann, Church as organism "ne s'incarne pleinement que dans une structure universelle, c'est-à-dire dans la totalité des Eglises qui constituent ensemble l'Eglise unique, universelle du Christ," A. SCHMEMMANN, "La notion de primauté dans l'ecclésiologie orthodoxe," in: *La Primauté de Pierre dans l'Eglise orthodoxe* (Paris-Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1960), pp. 125-126, hereafter cited as A. SCHMEMMANN, "La notion de primauté."

²⁴ "C'est l'ecclésiologie universelle qui prédomine actuellement, surtout dans la doctrine catholique. L'église orthodoxe n'a pas défini nettement ses positions, mais l'enseignement «d'école» suit la doctrine catholique et accepte l'ecclésiologie universelle comme axiome," N. AFANASIEV, "L'Eglise qui préside," p. 10.

of the orthodox Church of Russia, which is governed by the bishop according to the canons.”²⁵

2. Eucharistic Ecclesiology as the Primitive Vision of the Church

Given the axiomatic stature given to Universal Ecclesiology both in the Eastern and the Western theology, it is indispensable, says Afanasiev, to ask whether the Universal Ecclesiology is the only one to exist and especially if it is the most primitive.²⁶ For today its influence is such that one is inclined to consider it as the only possible ecclesiological category with which the Church can be thought of. If Universal Ecclesiology is the only conceivable theology of the Church, then, one argues, this type of ecclesiology must have existed from the beginning.²⁷ This argument, according to Afanasiev, is nothing less than anachronistic and amounts to falsifying the historical data. “Can there not exist and couldn’t there have existed another ecclesiology to which it should have succeeded,²⁸” asks the Russian theologian. He is categorical that “the Universal Ecclesiology is not the unique and—a fact still more important—it is not the primitive ecclesiology. On the contrary, it replaced another ecclesiology which I call eucharistic.”²⁹ According to this primitive ecclesiology, Church-Body of Christ “manifests itself in all its fullness in the eucharistic assembly of the local Church, because Christ is present in the Eucharist in the fullness of his Body.”³⁰ This ecclesial vision leaves, in his opinion, sufficient room for the autonomy and the independence of local Churches and priority of one of them, viz. the Church of Rome.

He came to this conviction following an in-depth study of the writings of St Paul and some of the patristic writers, especially Ignatius of Antioch.³¹ On our part, in order to grasp the basic arguments of Afanasievan ecclesiology, it is important to know how he interprets St Paul and the Fathers. Hence, in what follows, we will examine how Afanasiev reads the Pauline and the patristic writings in function of the Eucharistic Ecclesiology he develops.

2.1.1. Pauline Roots of Eucharistic Ecclesiology

One of Afanasiev’s basic contentions is that the biblical foundations of the so-called Universal Ecclesiology are very weak to such an extent that unless our mindset were not so

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁶ ID, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 407.

²⁷ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 25.

²⁸ ID, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 407.

²⁹ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 26.

³⁰ ID, “Una Sancta,” p. 452.

³¹ One must here point out that, in his approach to his biblical and patristic sources, Afanasiev appears to have been moved not so much by a desire to present a summary picture of Pauline and patristic ecclesiology as by his need to seek support for his basic propositions in their authority.

accustomed to its perspective, we would not have found the idea of Universal Ecclesiology in the New Testament, especially in Paul.³² According to him, “Paul knew uniquely or almost uniquely the idea of the concrete local Church.”³³ And the ecclesiology we come across in the writings of St Paul is based on a eucharistic conception of the Church.³⁴ “Centuries have passed, quite a number of dogmas have been formulated, but nothing is added to what the epistles of St Paul contained on the subject of eucharistic theology.”³⁵ In order to prove this claim, Afanasiev leans on St Paul’s doctrine of the Body of Christ.

A) Church is the Body of Christ in its Eucharistic Aspect

The New Testament designation for the Church is ἐκκλησία. In order to grasp sufficiently even this basic notion of ecclesiology, it is necessary—opines Afanasiev—to set it in the light of St Paul’s doctrine of the *Body of Christ*. This doctrine itself is best understood only when we set it in the context of the Eucharist.³⁶

Thus, according to our theologian, when St Paul spoke of the Body of Christ, he had in mind a concrete reality.³⁷ Recalling Paul’s words to the Christians of Corinth saying, ‘You are the Body of Christ (*Sōma Christou* – σῶμα Χριστοῦ),’³⁸ Afanasiev says that the *Sōma* found in these words of Paul is not unrelated to the *Sōma* found in Jesus’ own words pronounced during the Last Supper and reported in the same epistle: ‘This is my Body.’³⁹ Hence, basing on this coincidence of the word *Sōma*, it is possible to say that for Paul the Church is the ‘Body,’ of which Christ referred to when he said, “This is my Body.”⁴⁰ The Body of which Christ spoke is the Eucharistic Body; hence “Church is the Body of Christ in its eucharistic aspect.”⁴¹ In St Paul, as Afanasiev explains, “[t]he idea of the Church is inseparably

³² “Nous n’aurions jamais trouvé l’idée de l’Eglise universelle dans le Nouveau Testament, surtout dans les écrits de l’apôtre Paul, si cette idée n’avait déjà été présente à notre esprit,” N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 26; cf. ID, “Doctrines de la Primauté,” p. 407.

³³ ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 4.

³⁴ “La théologie de Saint Paul sur l’Eglise procédait de sa conception eucharistique de l’Eglise. C’était une théologie eucharistique, qui dans saint Paul a trouvé son expression la plus complète,” *ibid.*, p. 8. “The doctrine on the Church in St Paul and all the New Testament writings was eucharistic. That is, I affirm the existence, in apostolic times, of an ecclesiology, which one could call ‘eucharistic,’” ID, “Doctrines de la Primauté,” p. 407.

³⁵ ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 8.

³⁶ “C’est seulement dans l’aspect eucharistique que l’on peut comprendre la doctrine de Paul sur l’Eglise comme corps du Christ,” ID, “Doctrines de la Primauté,” p. 407.

³⁷ “Tout d’abord, pour éviter les malentendus, il est à noter que Paul n’emploie pas le terme «Corps mystique du Christ». L’un des plus grands mystiques lui-même, Paul savait qu’on ne peut pas transporter dans le domaine de la mystique ce qui doit avoir un sens tout à fait réel et concret,” ID, “Sacrement de l’Assemblée,” pp. 203-204. Afanasiev’s preference for historical approach is quite clear here.

³⁸ *I Cor* 12: 27.

³⁹ *I Cor* 11: 24.

⁴⁰ According to Afanasiev, St Paul must have received this eucharistic formula from the Jerusalem Church, where it was pronounced during the eucharistic celebrations, cf. N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 27; ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 9.

⁴¹ ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 8.

associated with the Lord's Supper and its prolongation in the eucharistic assembly."⁴² "During the celebration of the Eucharist the bread becomes the Body of Christ, and by the bread the participants become the Body of Christ."⁴³

In the mind of St Paul, there is a close relationship between the unity of the eucharistic bread and the unity of the Church. This is underlined by the following words of St Paul: "Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread."⁴⁴ The bread in question is the eucharistic bread and the expression 'we who are many' refers to the eucharistic assembly and not to isolated individual Christians.⁴⁵ And the idea of eucharistic bread presupposes the eucharistic assembly during which the bread is broken and shared. So through these words, thinks Afanasiev, Paul conveys the idea that the Church (in this case, that of Corinth) is Christ's Body in its eucharistic aspect.

According to Afanasiev, the concept of the Body of Christ is not simply an imagery denoting the empirical unity of the members of a local Church among themselves. Rather it designates their radical unity: by their communion to the eucharistic bread and wine, they become *really* the 'Body of Christ.' "The Church is the 'Body of Christ' to which are united the faithful gathered all together in eucharistic assembly. [...] It is not that we form 'a body – σῶμα' by eating the bread, but we are in the Body of Christ, to which we are united in the eucharistic assembly. The Body of Christ is a datum prior to the consumption of the bread."⁴⁶ This fact, says Afanasiev, is of capital importance as far as the doctrine of the Church is concerned. It leads to the finding that "[e]ach local Church is the Church of God in Christ, for Christ dwells in his Body in the eucharistic assembly, and it is thanks to the communion to the Body of Christ that the faithful become the members of his Body."⁴⁷

Christ's presence in the eucharistic assembly is not a partial one. That is why St Paul reminds the Corinthians (1 Cor 1: 13) that Christ cannot be divided. If Christ cannot be divided, then the Church which is Christ's Body⁴⁸ cannot be divided either; "the Church is always in all its fullness and all its unity."⁴⁹ "Where there is the Body of Christ, there is

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴³ ID, "L'Eglise qui préside," p. 27; "By eating the eucharistic bread, the disciples are the Body of Christ, and, consequently, the Church; it was in doing so that they were the Church, this Church of which the Lord said that he will build up (Mt 15: 18)," ID, "L'Eglise de Dieu," p. 9.

⁴⁴ *1 Cor* 10: 16-17.

⁴⁵ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, "L'Eglise de Dieu," p. 9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁸ "Comme dans l'Eucharistie le pain et le vin sont Son Corps, dans lequel Il est présent dans Son état terrestre et glorifié, l'Eglise est le Christ dans Son Corps," ID, "L'Eglise de Dieu," p. 11.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Christ, because we cannot detach Christ from His Body and His Body from Christ. The Body of Christ is indivisible because Christ is indivisible.”⁵⁰

B) Identity between Christ and the Church

The close relationship between Christ and the Church, as indicated above, allows Afanasiev to speak even of an identity between Christ and the Church in St Paul. Its source may be traced back to Paul’s own personal encounter with Christ who asked him: ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ This encounter revealed to him that, by persecuting the Church, he was persecuting Christ himself. This initial experience formed the basis of St Paul’s ecclesiology: the Church is Christ in His Body. According to Afanasiev, this experience is fully revealed in the eucharistic assembly.

In this context, Afanasiev takes up another oft-repeated Pauline expression—*Church of God in Christ*—to shed further light on the Apostle’s eucharistic understanding of the Church. In this expression, the first quality attributed to the *Church* is that it is *of God*—*τοῦ Θεοῦ*. It suggests that (1) the Church is the people called by God unto Himself and that (2) it is *of God*, i.e., it belongs to Him. Now what does the phrase, *in Christ* (*ἐν Χριστῷ*), signify? According to Afanasiev, it must be explained in the light of the relationship between God and the chosen people of God. This relationship, despite being close, was incapable of surpassing God’s immense transcendence from the people. This transcendence is abolished in the incarnated Son of God because, as Afanasiev formulates it, “the Church as the assembly of the people of God is Christ himself in his Body.”⁵¹ It is through Christ that God’s adoption of His people takes place in the Church. It is this special belongingness of the Church to God that is expressed by the phrase, *in Christ*. Much more than a simple imagery, it expresses the fact that

...the Church of God exists in Christ: it is gathered by God in the temple of the Body of Christ (which is the Church). This organic and integral gathering is realised in the Eucharist, during which we become the Body of Christ. Thus, the formula ‘in Christ’ is the very expression of the eucharistic doctrine of the Church.⁵²

Since Christ and his Body are inseparable, those who are in Christ’s Body are in Christ. For this reason one can reverse the first and second part of the formula: ‘Church’ means ‘in Christ’ and ‘in Christ’ means ‘Church’. This reversibility shows the intimate relationship

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵² *Ibid.*

between Christ and the Church; but it does not affirm a perfect identity between the two. Thus, when one is in the Church, one is *not Christ*, but is *in Christ*.⁵³

Entering into Christ by the sacrament of baptism, one becomes a new creation and starts living *in Christ*, because the Church (his Body) itself is *in Christ*.⁵⁴ In short, the formula, ‘Church of God in Christ,’ signifies that the Church is “the assembly of the people gathered by God in Christ.”⁵⁵ Here, the accent is laid not on the *assembly* as such, but on the *convocation* by God.⁵⁶

C) The Local Church and the Church of God

Having, thus, sketched the basic elements of St Paul’s Eucharistic Ecclesiology, Afanasiev now attempts an exegesis of the famous Pauline appellation of the Church, viz. *the Church of God which is at...*—an expression which cannot be taken as casual owing to the fact that the Apostle repeats it almost literally (1 *Cor* 1: 1-2; 2 *Cor* 1: 1) or in a slightly modified form (1 *Thes* 1: 1) in several other places.

First, it may be seen as a geographical reference, indicating the place where the Church is situated. The expressions like *Church of God at Corinth*, *Church of God at Rome*, etc. can easily be seen as conveying the idea that the Church of God exists in that particular place and the Christians in that locality are members of this Church. However, Afanasiev thinks that this geographical reference alone cannot fully exhaust the content of the formula; it must be seen also as a technical designation of the local Church. In his view, this expression constitutes a key to interpreting the Pauline ecclesiology. The very formula, ‘the Church of God which is at Corinth,’ already gives an answer to the question whether or not the local Church is identical with the Church of God. The Christians living in Corinth could be *Church*, only if the Church of God is present among them. From this, however, one cannot establish a full identity between the Church of God and the local Church.

Was then the Church of God, to Paul’s mind, akin to the Platonic idea?⁵⁷ Not at all, says Afanasiev, because according to St Paul the local Church is not at all a shadow of an idea existing elsewhere, but a real, concrete and authentic reality; the Church of God is included and embodied in the local Church. For the same reason, Paul must not have thought of the

⁵³ “The Body is inseparable from Christ, but it is not, in the strict sense of the word, Christ. Speaking of the Church we can say that it is Christ, meaning that it is Christ in his Eucharistic aspect,” *ibid*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁵⁶ “The Eucharistic assembly is the assembly of the members of the Church, and, at the same time, a ‘convocation,’ which has become the single Body of Christ, One and Unique,” *Ibid*.

⁵⁷ Interestingly, the difference of approach—between Platonic and Aristotelian—seems to be at the heart of the recent theological debate between J. Ratzinger and W. Kasper on the question of the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church. *Vide infra* our discussion, “Ratzinger-Kasper Debate...” in chapter six.

Church in terms of the ‘heavenly Jerusalem’ as depicted in the traditional rabbinical doctrine.⁵⁸ For, none of his writings, not even the *Ephesians* and the *Colossians*, provides us with anything which proves the contrary. According to Afanasiev, in the framework of Pauline Ecclesiology, the Church has a historical beginning before which it did not exist.⁵⁹ And heavenly Jerusalem was for Paul a symbol of the Church. In fact he introduced the theme of heavenly Jerusalem in the midst of his conflict with the *Judaisers* from Jerusalem. A defender of the rights of local Churches, St Paul’s reasoning—thinks Afanasiev—was the following: “If Jerusalem from above is the mother of all the local Churches, the earthly Jerusalem cannot pretend to be in an exceptional position. In each local Church exists the Church of God, which does not proceed from the terrestrial Jerusalem.”⁶⁰ According to St Paul, the supreme manifestation of the ‘dwelling’ of the Church of God is the eucharistic assembly, in which the participants become the Body of Christ by their communion to the body and blood of Christ.

D) Concluding Remarks

Pauline ecclesiology, as interpreted by Afanasiev, insists that through Eucharist the believer enters into communion with the Body of Christ. This *koinonia* constitutes the Church as the Body of Christ. Wherever the Eucharist is celebrated, the Body of Christ is present in its entirety. Hence, Afanasiev’s basic *dictum*: ‘where the Eucharist is, there is the whole Church.’ This view is corroborated by other theologians, both Catholic and Orthodox. As Boris Bobrinskoy has recently pointed out,

C’est là [célébration eucharistique] que [...] saint Paul découvre et développe ses images ecclésiologiques, en particulier celle du corps et des membres, et celle du temple. La présence eucharistique du Christ dans la communion au Pain et au Calice est une présence de plénitude au service de l’assemblée ecclésiale. Celle-ci apparaît à la fois comme le Corps, dont le Christ est la Tête et le Chef, comme les membres multiples greffes au Corps qu’est le Christ et réalisant en Lui son unité, et enfin l’Epouse glorieuse et sans tache dans le face à face d’adoption d’amour avec l’Epoux.⁶¹

Before him, Georges Florovsky had expressed a similar opinion as early as 1948:

It is highly probable that the term [Body] was suggested by the eucharistic experience (cf. 1 Cor. 10: 17), and was deliberately used to suggest its sacramental connotation. The Church of Christ is one in the Eucharist, for the Eucharist is Christ Himself, and He sacramentally abides in the Church, which is His Body. [...] Still

⁵⁸ According to this doctrine, the heavenly Jerusalem and its temple was created by God before or during the creation of the world. Another variant of the same doctrine says that in the Last Days the heavenly Jerusalem will descend and replace the earthly Jerusalem.

⁵⁹ Here, we may recall that Bulgakov had given much accent on the pre-existence of the Church. Cf. *Supra* our discussion on S. Bulgakov.

⁶⁰ N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 7.

⁶¹ B. BOBRINSKOY, “Communion trinitaire et communion ecclésiale,” *Cont*, 54 (2002), p. 176, *hereafter cited as* B. BOBRINSKOY, “Communion trinitaire....”

more, the Church is the body of Christ and His ‘fullness.’ Body and fullness (*to soma and to pleroma*) — these two terms are correlative and closely linked together in St Paul’s mind, one explaining the other. [...] The Church is the Body of Christ because it is His compliment.⁶²

In a similar tone—from the Catholic side—Jérôme Hamer also insisted on the vertical dimension of the Church understood as communion in his famous work, now become classical, viz. *L’Eglise est une communion*. A few years later, reviewing Afanasiev’s principal book, *L’Eglise du Saint Esprit*, Louis Bouyer—although critical on many a point—underlined the fact that Afanasievan vision is faithful to the Pauline ecclesial doctrine of the Body of Christ and it should always constitute the heart of all ecclesiology faithful to the teaching and work of the Apostle. He also added that we should be ever grateful to Afanasiev for having asserted it in clear terms.⁶³

Having said that, when we look at the Afanasievan analysis of Pauline ecclesiology, it is not difficult to notice the author’s tendency to be selective in the choice of the material he studies and exposes. Reading him, we get the impression that the whole of Pauline ecclesiology is exhaustively contained in the notion of the Body of Christ, that too, as it is presented in the epistles to the Corinthians. Also his view that the Church has only a historical beginning and, before it, it did not exist is questionable in a sane Catholic ecclesiology.

2.1.2. Patristic Roots of Eucharistic Ecclesiology

A) Introduction

The selective tendency in Afanasiev, pointed out above, is even more strikingly visible in his handling of the patristic material. It has been rightly observed that Afanasiev was moved more by a desire to seek support for his basic propositions in the authority of the Fathers than by the wish to present a summary picture of the patristic ecclesiology.⁶⁴ That is to say, his use of the patristic material was far from being disinterested.

He tends to separate the Fathers into two camps: those who favour the Eucharistic Ecclesiology whose roots—as shown above—has been traced by him to St Paul himself, and those who oppose it. Afanasiev’s patristic exegesis is centred around two protagonists: Ignatius of Antioch who, according to him, was the true heir to the Pauline tradition, and Cyprian of Carthage who allegedly transformed or at least was instrumental in the transformation of the traditional intensive-qualitative ecclesiology into the extensive-

⁶² G. FLOROVSKY, “The Church: Her Nature and Task,” in: Richard S. HAUGH, (Gen. Editor), *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, vol. 1: E. L. MASCALL (ed.) *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Orthodox View*, (Vaduz: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987), p. 63, *hereafter cited as* G. FLOROVSKY, “Church: Her Nature...”

⁶³ Cf. L. BOUYER, “Recension: Archiprêtre Nicolas AFANASSIEFF, «L’Eglise du Saint Esprit»,” p. 97.

⁶⁴ Cf. A. NICHOLS, “Appeal to the Fathers,” p. 125.

quantitative ecclesiology.⁶⁵ He then rallied other Fathers in the camp of one or the other of the protagonists, according to their stand—as judged by our author—*vis-à-vis* Eucharistic Ecclesiology. In what follows, we shall try to discover Afanasiev’s exegesis of the Patristic material in function of his ecclesiological standpoint.

B) Traces of Eucharistic Ecclesiology in Clement of Rome

The First Letter of Clement to the Corinthians, written during the last decade of the first century A. D. (*ca.* 97), is deemed as the last witness of the apostolic period as far as ecclesiology is concerned. Often the name of Clement of Rome is linked to the beginning of pre-Catholicism.⁶⁶ In disagreement with this view, Afanasiev says that the ecclesiology contained in this primitive text is well within the Pauline tradition.⁶⁷ In his view, an attentive reading of *Prima Clementis* can suggest three important conclusions regarding Church structure and inter-ecclesial relationship.

First, its greeting formula and content suggest that there was but one Church in Corinth. If it were not the case, the epistle would lose all its concrete character, because, as Afanasiev thinks, it is difficult to imagine how a letter dealing with a specific problem of a specific Church be addressed to several Churches in Corinth. The situation in Rome could not have been any different either.⁶⁸

Second, this ancient document leaves hints regarding the structure of the local Church of Corinth (giving thereby precious information regarding the structure of local Churches in this ancient period). We learn from the letter that Rome’s decision to write this epistle was provoked by an irregular removal from office of the Corinthian presbyters. According to Afanasiev, the urgency and seriousness with which Rome intervenes in this matter is difficult

⁶⁵ In this analysis, as we may recall, he is close in many respects to N. Zernov. *See supra* our comparative study between Zernov and Afanasiev.

⁶⁶ The expression, *Frühkatholizismus*, seems to have been coined about the turn of the 20th century. But the issues involved in it go back to the middle of the 19th century and to the *Tübingen School* of F.C Baur. Baur and later his pupil A. Schweigler argued that Catholicism first emerged in the second century as a compromise between the two rival camps: Jewish (Petrine) Christianity and the Gentile (Pauline) Christianity. This compromise, according to them, first appeared in the conciliatory documents like Acts, Philippians, 1Clement (Rome) and Hebrews (Asia Minor) and it was later consolidated in the later second century by the works like the Pastorals (Rome), the letters of Ignatius and the Gospel of John (Asia Minor). Cf. J. D. G. DUNN, *Unity and diversity in the New Testament. An Enquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1979), p. 342, *hereafter cited as* J. D. G. DUNN, *Unity and diversity in the New Testament.*”

⁶⁷ Citing the opening words of the epistle, (“Church of God which sojourns in Rome to the Church of God which sojourns in Corinth,” 1 CLEMENT, *Inscript.*) the author remarks that “Clement of Rome reproduces here almost exactly the formula of St. Paul,” N. AFANASIEV, “L’Assemblée eucharistique unique dans l’Eglise ancienne,” *Kl.*, Jan. (1974), p. 26, *hereafter cited as* N. AFANASIEV, “Assemblée eucharistique.”

⁶⁸ This is suggested by the fact that the epistle is written in the name of the Church of Rome, and not in Clement’s own personal name, which would have permitted one to think that he wrote as the head of the principal Church of Rome. Cf. J. MCCUE, “La Primauté romaine aux trois premiers siècles,” *Conc(F)*, 64 (1971), 31-38, *hereafter cited as* J. MCCUE, “Primauté romaine.”

to explain if the ministers deposed were merely ordinary presbyters.⁶⁹ His assumption is that among those who were removed from office, there must have been also the *proto-presbyter*⁷⁰ (the forerunner of the later *monarchical bishop*). Removing the proto-presbyter of a local Church is no light matter, because he is unique in his Church; he is the one who presides over the eucharistic celebration; he is the one who ‘offers gifts’ and ‘gives thanks’ in the assembly. What comes out from this discussion is that, concludes Afanasiev, “the Church of Corinth had a proto-presbyter who had the central place in his assembly.”⁷¹ He adds that the same could have also been the case in Rome, otherwise “Clement would not probably have written his epistle.”⁷²

Third, *I Clement* contains indications regarding the nature of the relationship between two local Churches of the period, viz. those of Rome and Corinth. From the fact that ‘the Church of God which sojourns in Rome’ writes to ‘the Church of God which sojourns in Corinth,’ it is clear that the Roman Church did not consider itself as superior to the Corinthian Church, for both the Churches are equally called *Church of God*.⁷³

I) Concluding Remarks

The above depiction of *I Clement* betrays Afanasiev’s concern to fit this primitive patristic text into his ecclesiological mould. Having thus shown that the early development in the Churches of Rome and Corinth was in tune with the Pauline ecclesiology, he now turns to Ignatius of Antioch to see whether the situation in Syria and the surroundings corroborates with that of Rome and Corinth.

C) Eucharistic Ecclesiology of Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius of Antioch is given a hero’s treat in Afanasiev’s works. This is because he has not only preserved the Pauline Eucharistic Ecclesiology, as did Clement, but, unlike him, has developed it as well.⁷⁴ In Afanasiev’s view, Eucharistic Ecclesiology was, for the first time, forcefully expressed by Ignatius of Antioch.⁷⁵ Closely in line with the Pauline tradition, each of the letters of Ignatius of Antioch—but for the one addressed to Polycarp—was written to a

⁶⁹ According to Afanasiev, the removal of presbyters from their office has nothing extraordinary and unusual about it, for such cases were not uncommon in the primitive times, cf. N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p.276.

⁷⁰ See *infra* our discussion on “Ministry of the Proto Presbyter.”

⁷¹ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 276.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 45. A detailed discussion follows later in this study.

⁷⁴ “The Church is for Ignatius, as for apostle Paul, the body of Christ, which is present in every local Church, gathered for the Eucharistic assembly, where Christ is present in the Eucharistic Bread,” N. AFANASIEV, “Kafoličeskaja Cerkov,” p. 22, as cited in P. PLANK, *Eucharistieversammlung als Kirche*, p. 134, n. 376.

⁷⁵ “Un seul Dieu, un seul Christ, une seule foi, un seul autel et un seul évêque, tel est le leit-motiv des épîtres d’Ignace,” N. AFANASIEV, “Assemblée eucharistique,” p. 67.

specific Church named after the place of its foundation.⁷⁶ Ignatius is the first among the early Christian writers to speak with clarity about the constitution of the Church, the unicity of the bishop in each local Church and the priority of the Church of Rome.⁷⁷ Afanasiev's attention is therefore drawn to these features of Ignatian Ecclesiology.

1) Co-inherence of the bishop and the local Church

Afanasiev begins by pointing out the co-inherence of the bishop and the local Church seen in Ignatius. "According to Ignatius, where there is the bishop, there is the Church also and inversely, where there is the Church, there is the bishop."⁷⁸ That is to say, both the Church and the bishop are inseparable; just as the Church cannot exist without the bishop, so also the bishop cannot be what he is in the absence of the Church.

St Ignatius highlights the unity and fullness of the local Church through a new theological category, viz. the doctrine that the bishop is the only *προεστώς*⁷⁹ (eucharistic president) and chief priest of the eucharistic assembly. In the wake of many challenges to Church unity, the martyr-bishop of Antioch saw in the bishop the sign and guarantor of the fullness of the unity of the Church.

According to Afanasiev, the expression *Katholikē ekklēsia*, found in Ignatian writings, stands for the eucharistic community gathered around the bishop. Ignatius compared this community to a choir in unison: "Form, therefore, a choir, you all without any exception, so that you be always in concord and have the same thinking."⁸⁰ Pointing out "this symphony of which Ignatius speaks,"⁸¹ Afanasiev explains, as would be done later even more excellently by Zizioulas,⁸² how the ministry of *προεστώς* is exercised in conjunction with the people of God, who by giving their accord to what is taking place in the Church, witness that it is God's will that is being fulfilled there. It also shows that the *προεστώς* acts within the community: neither above it nor outside it.

⁷⁶ Tralles, Magnesia, Ephesus, Rome, Philadelphia, Smyrna, and Philippi.

⁷⁷ This point will be discussed later in this study.

⁷⁸ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 70. Here the author is referring to the famous passage of Ignatius in *Smyrn* 8: 2: "Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the *Catholic Church*."

⁷⁹ For a detailed treatment of this term, see discussion which comes later in this study.

⁸⁰ IGNATIUS, *Eph*, 4, 2.

⁸¹ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 102.

⁸² "The crucial importance of the bishop lies in his being the head of the eucharistic community and not in an office that he holds as an isolated individual. Like the Eucharist itself, the episcopacy is a relational ministry," J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "The Early Christian Community," in: B. MCGINN et al. (eds.), *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, «*World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest-16*» (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 32, hereafter cited as J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "Early Christian Community."

II) Eucharist is at the heart of Ignatian Ecclesiology

In the perspective of Ignatius, eucharistic assembly and bishops are correlative notions. Where there is bishop, there is also the eucharistic assembly and *vice versa*. Also, unity with the bishop and unity with each other in the one bread is also identical. There is one body, one cup, one altar and one bishop.⁸³ Anything that pertains to the life of the Church must be done under the personal surveillance of the bishop.⁸⁴

According to Afanasiev, many of the enigmatic Ignatian passages⁸⁵ can be meaningfully understood only in the context of the eucharistic assembly, which prolongs the Lord's Supper. Thus, when Ignatius attributes to the bishop the place of God, it only signifies that he occupies the central position in the eucharistic assembly.⁸⁶ When he refers to presbyters as occupying the place of the senate of Apostles, he only means to say that their place in the eucharistic assembly is similar to the one occupied by the Apostles during the Lord's Supper.⁸⁷ Similarly, Ignatius' allusion to deacons as being entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ, must be understood in the sense that they accomplish during the eucharistic assembly the *diaconia*, which was originally carried out by Jesus Christ himself during the Last Supper; that is to say, the deacons assume the role of 'servants' during the eucharistic celebration.

III) Concluding Remarks

In presenting the Ignatian ecclesiology, as briefly sketched above, Afanasiev wants to convey the idea that for St Ignatius, too, each local Church is the manifestation of the unique Church of God in Christ. The Church of God—far from being the sum total of various local Churches—is fully present in each of them. And the distinctive sign of a local Church is its eucharistic assembly. Ignatian letters also insist on the need for the unity of the Church and

⁸³ "Take heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup unto unity of His blood, one altar, as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery, and deacons, my fellow-servants, so that whatever you do, you may do it according to God," IGNATIUS, *Phil.* 4; cf. *Eph.* 20; *Mag.* 7; *Tral.* 7.

⁸⁴ "Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a firm Eucharist which is under the bishop, or one to whom he has entrusted it," IGNATIUS, *Smyr.* 8. J. S. Romanides, has rightly observed that, "Such a claim that even the *agape* cannot be held without the bishop would be incomprehensible and extremely fantastic if it were not presupposed that in the thought and experience of St. Ignatius each liturgical centre necessitated the existence of a bishop—that the relationship of one bishop to each liturgical centre was an inseparable reality" J. S. ROMANIDES, *The Ecclesiology of saint Ignatius of Antioch*, www.romanity.org/htm/rom.11.en.the_ecclesiology_of_st_ignatius_of_antioch.01.htm, hereafter cited as J. S. ROMANIDES, "Ecclesiology of St Ignatius of Antioch."

⁸⁵ *Magn.* 6: 1; *Smyrn.* 8, 1 and *Trall.* 3: 1.

⁸⁶ "He never refers to the presbyters as icons of Christ or in the place of God as he no doubt would have had they been in communities without bishops the regular and proper administrators of the mysteries and the centre of local life in Christ *epi to auto*," J. S. ROMANIDES, "Ecclesiology of St Ignatius of Antioch."

⁸⁷ Ignatius always refers to the presbyters corporately in the plural as 'presbyters' or 'presbytery' in the place of the apostles (*Mag.* 6; *Tral.* 2, 3; *Phil.* 5; *Smyr.* 8) and as a 'council of God.' (*Tral.* 3).

the submission to the ecclesiastical authority, represented primarily by the bishop.⁸⁸ According to him the bishop is ‘God’s grace’ and the presbyterium, the ‘law of Jesus Christ.’ God is the bishop par excellence, the invisible bishop who manifests himself in the visible bishop.⁸⁹ Around this visible bishop all must gather and form a harmonious unity as in a symphony. To be with the bishop is an assurance for having part in the Church, in Jesus Christ and in God. On the contrary, to be separated from the bishop is tantamount to be separated from God: “Let us be careful, then, if we would be submissive to God, not to oppose the bishop.”⁹⁰

However, it is possible to ask whether Ignatian ecclesiology was as wholly non-universalist as Afanasiev wants us to believe. For when Ignatius teaches, in *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, that Christ sets up ‘an ensign’ for all ages, for Jews and Gentiles alike, ‘in the one body of his Church,’ (ἐν ἐνί σώματι τῆς ἐκκλησίας αὐτοῦ),⁹¹ the Church in question is not necessarily the Church as it is manifested in a place. Many commentators, especially on the Catholic side, tend to give a universal breadth to the term, ‘Catholic Church,’ found in an analogical statement of Ignatius found later in the same letter, according to which what the bishop is to the local church, Christ is to the καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία.⁹² We may also observe that in the *Letter to the Magnesians*, Christ is referred to by the title ‘the bishop of all,’ πάντων ἐπίσκοπος.⁹³ These allusions can be taken as indicative of Ignatius’ awareness of the Church universal. In this sense, as Afanasiev himself admits,⁹⁴ the reference to the Roman church in the opening greeting of Ignatius’ *Letter to the Romans*, as presiding in ἀγάπη can be interpreted as presidency in the Church. Now, it is possible to consider the ‘Church’ in question as standing also for the Church universal, especially when we understand it in conjunction with the above references. In this context, the following remark of A. Nichols is noteworthy:

[I]t is not certain that the mystery of co-inherence between the one Church and the many churches is exhausted for Ignatius by the local epiphany of the one in each of the many. There may also be a sense in which the one Church is present in the many precisely as many. It is this further dimension, alluded to in the pregnant phrase ‘the charity,’ which Afanas'ev studiously ignores.⁹⁵

⁸⁸ “Let nothing exist among you that may divide you; but be ye united with your bishop,” IGNATIUS, *Magn* 6, 4.

⁸⁹ Cf. IGNATIUS, *Magn* 2: 3.

⁹⁰ IGNATIUS, *Eph* 5: 3.

⁹¹ IGNATIUS, *Smyr.* 1: 2.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 8: 2.

⁹³ IGNATIUS, *Magn.* 3: 1.

⁹⁴ See *infra* our discussion on Ignatius of Antioch under the title, “Pre-eminence of the Church of Rome in the Communion of Churches: Early Witnesses.”

⁹⁵ A. NICHOLS, “Appeal to the Fathers,” p. 131

3. Universal Ecclesiology as a Slipping away from the Primitive Conception of the Church

3.1. Introduction

Afanasiev's main contention is that the ecclesiology which is in force now in the East as well as in the West is different from the original primitive ecclesial vision. This does not mean that the universalising tendencies were totally absent in the primitive Church. "Such tendencies were already there in the Jerusalem Church,⁹⁶ but they were not recognised by other local Churches, especially by those Churches which were founded by St. Paul."⁹⁷ The universal ideology, which was born in the Jerusalem Church, thinks Afanasiev, did not disappear with the destruction of this holy city, rather it got enforced progressively under the influence of the Roman imperial ideology, which viewed Rome as the centre of all the local Churches.⁹⁸ Afanasiev is keenly attentive to this transformation which came about in the ecclesial conscience.

In order to detail this development, the author has recourse to certain chosen patristic writings, which—in his opinion—paved the way for this departure from the primitive ecclesiological vision.⁹⁹ Afanasiev's patristic exegesis, in this matter, is centred on Cyprian of Carthage who was, in his opinion, instrumental for the transformation of the traditional Eucharistic Ecclesiology into the Universal Ecclesiology. In what follows an attempt is made to account for the Afanasievan portrayal of Cyprian and other patristic writers clubbed together with him.

3.2. Cyprianic Ecclesiology as Universal Ecclesiology

The characterisation of Cyprian of Carthage is pivotal in the ecclesiology of N. Afanasiev. According to the Russian theologian, this martyr bishop of Africa played a major role in the ecclesiological mutation—from the primitive Eucharistic Ecclesiology to the later Universal Ecclesiology—that happened during the course of history. Strongly leaning on this idea, Afanasiev made it the point of departure of his thesis, according to which "the true ecclesiology of the primitive Christianity might have been clouded since Saint Cyprian, and

⁹⁶ As Afanasiev puts it elsewhere, "primitive Christian conscience considered the local Churches as an extension in space of the Church of Jerusalem," N. AFANASIEV, "Doctrine de la Primauté," p. 407.

⁹⁷ ID, "Apôtre Pierre et évêque de Rome," p. 474.

⁹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Here it must be noted that the Afanasievan use of the material was far from being disinterested. Even a rather casual reading of the writings of Afanasiev will give one the impression that he divides Fathers into two camps: those who favour the Eucharistic ecclesiology and those who oppose it.

that a hierarchical-juridical notion would have spread ever since both in the West and the East.”¹⁰⁰

3.2.1. Unity of the Church and Its Empirical Multiplicity

For Cyprian, as was for his master Tertullian,¹⁰¹ the Church is one, because Christ is one.¹⁰² However, he noticed that the unity of this one and unique Church is empirically found in a multiplicity of the Churches. A man well-versed in precise legal categories and quite at home in the Roman way of thinking, Cyprian felt that the empirical unity of the Church, which presupposed concord and love between the multitude of local Churches, was something quite arduous and hard to realise.¹⁰³ For he noticed “that in the empirical life the concord between the local Churches was frequently broken and transformed into discord, so much so that the love which should reign among them gave way to mutual enmity.”¹⁰⁴ This conviction was consolidated by the increasing number of threats at that time from heretics and schismatics who were tearing apart the Church. As against this, Cyprian saw the Roman Imperial State, still intact in his days, as a solid example of unity. The entire inhabited world was transformed, so to say, into a single unity by the Roman Empire. If the Empire was a body, its soul was the Emperor. Afanasiev thinks that this ideal of imperial unity must have, at least indirectly, influenced Cyprian when he formulated his doctrine of the unity of the Church.¹⁰⁵

Convinced as he was of the ontological unicity of the Church, it was necessary for Cyprian to reconcile it with the multiplicity with which the Church appeared empirically. He has, therefore, had recourse to the doctrine of the Body of Christ, which St Paul originally used only to speak about the structure of the local Church. As Afanasiev explains, just as many members of a local Church make up one body of the Church in Paul, in Cyprian all local Churches are members of the one Church: ‘*una ecclesia per totum mundum in multa membra divisa.*’¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ O. ROUSSEAU, “Préface,” in: N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 10.

¹⁰¹ “Il suffit de rappeler que le maître de Cyprien a été Tertullien...”, ID, “Doctrines de la Primauté,” p.403. “C’est une constante chez l’Africain: *Ecclesia una!*,” B. MAILLEUX, “Cohérence d’une pensée ecclésiologique: Les ministères chez Tertullien,” *Irén.*74 (2001), p. 35.

¹⁰² “Deus unus est et Christus unus, et una ecclesia,” *Ep.*, 43, V, 2. Cf. TERTULLIAN, *De Virginibus Velandibus.*, 2.

¹⁰³ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 12. “Cyprien avait le sentiment qu’à son époque l’unité empirique de l’Eglise n’était pas assez solide,” ID, “Doctrines de la Primauté,” p. 404.

¹⁰⁴ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 12.

¹⁰⁵ “...malgré lui, il apporta dans l’Eglise le concept romain de l’empire. L’idée de l’Eglise universelle se déduisait, chez Cyprien, du concept de l’empire ; elle était en quelque sorte une application de ce concept à la doctrine de l’Eglise,” ID, “Doctrines de la Primauté,” 403 ; “C’est plutôt inconsciemment que Cyprien, inspiré par l’idée de l’empire, bâtit sa doctrine de l’Eglise sur la notion d’un organisme unique,” *ibid.*, p. 404.

¹⁰⁶ CYPRIAN, *Epistole*, 55, 24, 2.

All the local Churches compose the Body of Christ, one and unique, but from an empirical point of view the Church is to a certain degree the sum of its separated parts. [...] The different parts of this Church, its members, are linked (*conexa*) among themselves as the branches of the same tree are linked or as the simple words are united (*conjuncta*) to form composite words. According to another expression of Cyprian, all the local Churches taken together form the *compago corporis ecclesiastici* or an assembling of the body of the Church, that is a whole, a union similar to the union between soul and body of man.¹⁰⁷

3.2.2. Catholicity: An Attribute of the Universal Church

For Cyprian, the Church is, by its very nature, ecumenical/universal, for it is spread throughout the whole world and embraces all the Churches.¹⁰⁸ Explaining this point further, Afanasiev adds:

The fullness and the unity belong to this Church spread *per totum mundum*, and not to the isolated local Churches, which, as being just members of the Church, possess only a part of its plenitude. It is not each local Church that is the ‘catholic’ Church, as Ignatius of Antioch taught; it is the totality of the local Churches which forms the universal or ecumenical Church...¹⁰⁹

According to the interpretation of Afanasiev, as far as the notion of catholicity is concerned, Cyprian is not at all innovative. As was for his predecessors, so for him too catholicity signifies *unity and fullness*. However, one can notice a change as to the subject to which catholicity is predicated. Afanasiev argues that, unlike the Pauline writings, where catholicity is an attribute of the local Church, in the Cyprianic *corpus*, catholicity can be predicated only to the multiplicity of the Churches. The shift we observe here is, thus, not in the notion of catholicity, but in the notion of the Church. Thus, according to Cyprian, in the empirical order the *Catholic Church* coincides with the universal (ecumenical) Church. This universal Church, which alone is catholic in the fullest sense, is a unique organism, divided into many parts. This organism, while being one, appears in the empirical life as an assemblage of local Churches, which are considered as parts.¹¹⁰

The local Church being only a part of the universal Church cannot possess in herself the principle of the unity of the Church. Lest the parts be disintegrated in the empirical reality, the principle of its unity must be found neither outside them nor within them, but in their totality, that is, in the universal Church itself, which contains all these parts.¹¹¹

3.2.3. ‘Corpus ecclesiae’ and ‘Corpus episcoporum’

How does the universal Church manifest itself in the concrete reality? “In a concrete manner, only the local Churches, that is, the parts of the universal Church exist, and not the

¹⁰⁷ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” pp. 13-14; cf. ID, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 404.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 13.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 14.

¹¹¹ ID, “Una Sancta,” p. 449.

universal Church itself.”¹¹² To avoid being uniquely an abstract idea, the universal Church must have a means to manifest itself. It is to this effect that Cyprian linked notions of Church and episcopate. He establishes a parallelism between the two. Just as Church is one, the episcopate is also one. Just as the one and unique Church manifests itself in empirical life through a multiplicity of local Churches, so also the one and unique episcopate manifests itself through a multiplicity of bishops.

According to Cyprian, the universal Church manifests itself in the episcopate, whose unity is ensured by the ‘*concors numerositas*’ of the bishops. That is why, in a certain sense, the ‘*corpus ecclesiae*’ manifests itself in the ‘*corpus episcoporum*’. Hence, for Cyprian, the episcopate is the manifestation of the Church itself [...]. The Church is in the episcopate, because it manifests itself through it in the empirical reality, but the episcopate is also in the Church, because otherwise the Church cannot manifest itself through it.¹¹³

Put differently, the unity of the Church postulates the unity of the episcopate and the unity of the episcopate safeguards the unity of the Church.¹¹⁴ Just as the many local Churches together form but one *corpus*, so also the many bishops together form a *corpus* in which each is united to others thanks to the harmony reigning in the entire episcopate.¹¹⁵

3.2.4. Episcopate is united in ‘*Cathedra Petri*’

According to Cyprian, the episcopate is one¹¹⁶ because ‘one is the throne of Peter, in which the origin of unity is established.’¹¹⁷ Just as there is only one God, one Christ and one Church, so too there is only one *throne*, the throne of Peter. The throne of Peter is occupied by the

¹¹² ID, “Infaillibilité de l’Eglise,” p. 188.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹¹⁴ CYPRIAN, *De unitate*, V.

¹¹⁵ “Each bishop does not act in isolation or independently of others, but together they form ‘a multiplicity united in concord (*concors numerositas*)’. As the local Churches form a ‘corpus’ in which each Church is united with others by close links, so also the bishops form a ‘corpus’, in which each one is united to all others thanks to the concord which reigns in the entire episcopate [...]. With regard to the whole—the episcopate—the multiplicity of bishops is only a secondary phenomenon,” N. AFANASIEV, “Una Sancta,” p. 450. Afanasiev’s view is shared by others too: “The Church’s unity, he [Cyprian] affirms, is derived from the unity of the one God in Trinity; it finds its expression and safeguard in the unity of the episcopal college. For the episcopal authority is corporate, being represented in each place by the local bishop, who exercises there the plenitude of the collegiate authority of the whole body; he cannot be overruled, in that place, by the majority of his fellow bishops, although disputed matters are to be submitted to the judgement of the whole college. It seems certain that this doctrine was suggested by the collegiate nature of magistracies under the Roman constitution; it is eminently the product of a lawyer-statesman,” H. BETTENSON, (ed. and trans.), *The Early Christian Fathers. A Selection from the writings of the Fathers from St. Clement of Rome to St. Athanasius* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 24, *hereafter cited as* H. BETTENSON, *Early Christian Fathers*.

¹¹⁶ “*Episcopatus unus est, cujus a singulis in solidum pars tenetur*,” *De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate*, 5. “Quelle que soit la façon dont on analyse grammaticalement la phrase, on y reconnaîtra l’affirmation que l’épiscopat tout entier appartient à la fois à tous les évêques et à chaque évêque. Tous les évêques ne possèdent pas plus l’épiscopat qu’un seul évêque; chaque évêque le possède dans toute sa plénitude mais indivisiblement des autres évêques. C’est donc bien la plénitude de l’économie des mystères de Dieu (cf. I Cor. 4, 1) que l’évêque apporte ainsi à la communauté humaine qui lui est confiée,” B. BAZATOLE, “L’Evêque et la vie chrétienne au sein de l’église locale,” in: *L’Épiscopat et l’Eglise universelle*, «UnSa – 39» (Paris: Cerf, 1962), p. 333, *hereafter cited as* B. BAZATOLE, “L’Evêque et la vie chrétienne.”

¹¹⁷ CYPRIAN, *Epistole*, LXXIII, VII, 1.

episcopate as a whole in such a way that each bishop is the successor of Peter as long as he forms part of the episcopate.¹¹⁸ Thus, every bishop, in as much as he is the bishop of a local Church, is also the bishop of the Catholic Church as a whole in which there is only one throne.¹¹⁹ Afanasiev explains further:

If the bishop constitutes the source of the unity of each local Church, then episcopate must be the source of the unity of the whole Church. The plurality of bishops does not entail the plurality of their thrones, for there is but one throne in the whole universal Church: it is the throne of Peter which is occupied by the entire episcopate: *Episcopatus unus est, cujus a singulis in solidum pars tenetur*.¹²⁰

3.2.5. From the Unity of the Episcopate to the Unity of the Church

Ideally, the unity of the episcopate should flow from the unity of the Church. But the opposite is true in empirical life, where *concors numerositas* of bishops unites the local Churches, which they preside over, into one *ecclesia catholica*.¹²¹

It may be more correct, in accordance with the ideas of Cyprian, to say that the division of the catholic Church into the local Churches is the result of the diffusion in empirical life of the one unique episcopate under the form of a multiplicity of bishops.¹²²

The episcopal concord ensues from the very nature of the episcopate. According to Cyprian, a discord among bishops is impossible as they together possess the throne of Peter. It follows, therefore, that those who are not in accord with the episcopate as a whole cease to be part of the episcopate. Consequently, the Church presided over by him will not have a place in the universal Church. The *concors numerositas* of bishops finds its empirical expression in the assembly of bishops. Hence, the council appears to be the organ by which the episcopate manifests itself.¹²³ In this way, the unity and concord of the episcopate is always intact.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ “This chair of Peter is occupied by the whole episcopate, so that each bishop is the successor of Peter, but only when he forms part of the episcopate. Because of this each bishop, as the bishop of a local Church, is that of the Catholic Church, in which there is only one chair, which belongs to the unique episcopate of which each bishop is a member,” N. AFANASIEV, “Una Sancta,” pp. 449-450; cf. ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 14; ID, “Apôtre Pierre et évêque de Rome,” p. 636.

¹¹⁹ Cf. ID, “Una Sancta,” p. 449.

¹²⁰ ID, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 404; cf. CYPRIAN, *De unitate ecclesiae*, 5.

¹²¹ “Selon Cyprien, c’est le principe de l’unité de l’épiscopat qui est le principe de l’unité de l’église universelle,” ID, “Una Sancta,” p. 449.

¹²² ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 15.

¹²³ Cf. ID, “Infaillibilité de l’Eglise,” p. 188. Here Afanasiev notes that it is highly improbable that Cyprian had in mind a universal council. But when such councils were later assembled, Cyprianic doctrine was applied to it, cf. *ibid.* p. 189 and ID, “Collégialité des évêques,” p. 8.

¹²⁴ “Dans l’unité ontologique de l’épiscopat, il ne peut guère y avoir de discorde, parce que chacun de ses membres a la possession, ensemble avec les autres, de la chaire commune. Cette possession en commun (*in solidum*) exclut la discorde et exclut aussi le membre qui est en désaccord avec les autres ; à partir du moment où ce membre s’est trouvé en désaccord avec les autres, il perd sa part dans l’épiscopat, de sorte que la concorde de l’épiscopat et son unité restent intacts,” ID, “Una Sancta,” p. 450.

“For Cyprian, the universal Church and the local Church, on the one hand, and the episcopate and the bishop, on the other, are correlative notions.”¹²⁵

According to him, the bishop—in as much as he is a member of the episcopate (‘multiplicity united by concord’)—is the sign of a local Church’s belongingness to the *ecclesia Catholica*.¹²⁶ In its turn, the episcopate is the distinctive empirical sign of the *ecclesia Catholica*. In other words, it may be said that the *corpus ecclesiae* manifests itself in the *corpus episcoporum*.¹²⁷ The limits of the Church are traced—in the case of the local Church—by the power of the bishop and—in the case of the *Catholica*—by the episcopate. Only those who are united with their bishops can find themselves within the Church. That is the idea conveyed, thinks Afanasiev, by the famous words of Cyprian: “We must know that the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop, and that if someone is not with the bishop, he is not in the Church.”¹²⁸ Thus, there cannot be a bishop without the Church and *vice versa*. Cyprian also establishes a direct parallelism between the local Churches united into one *ecclesia catholica* and the episcopal presidents formed into one episcopate.

Afanasiev here compares the Cyprianic vision of the Church to a truncated cone, of which the larger base denotes the multiplicity of the local Churches and the narrower end denotes the ‘concordant multiplicity’ of bishops. There is perfect correspondence between the smaller and larger bases. Thus, corresponding to every point in the larger base (viz. a local Church), there exists a point in the narrower end (viz. a bishop). Without the larger base, the smaller end cannot exist, because the bishops exist in the Church, and without the Church, there is no bishop. In the same way, the larger base cannot exist without the smaller, because the Church is in the bishop: the throne of Peter, which the episcopate occupies, was established by Christ as the only one in his unique Church, and without it there is no Church.¹²⁹ That is to say, we cannot separate the two bases, because the universal Church is represented by the whole cone and not simply by one of the bases. Just as at the head of every local Church there is a bishop who is a member of the unique episcopate, so also the universal Church has at its head the concordant multitude of the episcopate.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 451.

¹²⁶ Afanasiev thinks that this Cyprianic doctrine has conserved its value until today. Thus, a local Church is considered as belonging to the *Catholica* if its bishop is in communion with the episcopate. This belongingness has, however, assumed two forms: 1) in the Catholic Church, it is conditioned by the communion with the bishop of Rome, transformed as a submission to the latter; 2) in the Orthodox Church, it is conditioned by the communion – which has also assumed the character of juridical submission – with the head of the autocephalous Church to which the local Church belongs.

¹²⁷ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, “Infaillibilité de l’Eglise,” p. 188.

¹²⁸ CYPRIAN, *Epistle*, 66, VIII, 3.

¹²⁹ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 15-16; ID, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 405.

Having thus presented the main features of Cyprianic ecclesiology, Afanasiev now proceeds to make a critical appraisal of the view of the Carthaginian bishop.

3.2.6. Afanasiev's Critique of Cyprianic Ecclesiology

A) Cyprianic Ecclesiology Calls for Universal Primate

Albeit being a wonderful pastor, St Cyprian was not, in Afanasiev's opinion, coherent in his theological *exposé*.¹³⁰ For, "he left a literary work which suffers from internal contradictions and which constitutes a subject of discussion until today."¹³¹ Afanasiev thinks that St Cyprian, who considered the Church of Rome as the *ecclesiae matricem et radicem*¹³² and as the *ecclesia principalis unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est*,¹³³ did not complete his ecclesiological system. In other words, he did not draw the logical conclusions from the premises he had laid down.

Cyprian had all the data to complete the truncated cone, for according to his doctrine, there should have been really just one bishop at the head of the universal Church. He did not want to place the bishop of Rome outside the *concors numerositas* of bishops and yet the place he gave to the Church of Rome placed it above this concordant multitude.¹³⁴

Afanasiev's view is that, despite being aware of the preponderant position of the Roman Church, Cyprian did not dare draw the definitive conclusion concerning the bishop of Rome, because his primitive ecclesial consciousness "did not allow him to make the bishop of Rome the head of the episcopate."¹³⁵

But without a head, the ecclesial love or *concors numerositas*¹³⁶—which characterises the Cyprianic doctrine of the episcopate—will be an abstraction devoid of any practical incarnation. For in the actual life of the Church, given the share of power recognised to each individual bishop, it is not seldom that one comes across mere *numerositas* without any concord. Cyprian himself, towards the end of his life, had to painfully face this hard truth.¹³⁷

¹³⁰ "Cyprien était plus génial dans son activité dans l'Eglise que dans sa pensée théologique. Il a légué à la postérité une image idéale de l'évêque qui apparaît avec tant de lumière et de netteté que nous le voyons en pensée, image dans laquelle et sur laquelle il n'y a aucune ombre," ID, "Doctrines de la Primauté," p. 406; cf. ID, "L'Eglise qui préside," pp. 16-17.

¹³¹ ID, "Doctrines de la Primauté," p. 406.

¹³² *Ep.*, 48, III, 1.

¹³³ *Ep.*, 59, XIV, 1.

¹³⁴ N. AFANASIEV, "L'Eglise qui préside," p. 17; cf. ID, "Doctrines de la Primauté," p. 406.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ "A ses yeux la pluralité des évêques constituait une *concors numerositas*, c'est-à-dire une concorde réalisée par l'amour fraternel des membres entre eux. Ainsi, selon Cyprien, la concorde dans l'amour des évêques représente le pouvoir dans l'Eglise, mais en elle-même, elle exclut le moment du pouvoir : les évêques ne sont pas soumis les uns autres, mais ils sont unis comme différents sons qui forment un accord musical," ID, "Doctrines de la Primauté," p. 405.

¹³⁷ "Au déclin de sa vie, il assista à la chute de son système et il vit que *concors numerositas* n'était qu'un idéal et que, dans la vie empirique, il y avait une *numerositas* qui n'était pas *concors*," ID, "Doctrines de la Primauté," p. 406; cf. ID, "L'Eglise qui préside," p. 18.

According to Afanasiev, this fact is exemplified in the conflict between Cyprian and Pope Stephen over the question of the reception of the *lapsed (lapsi)* back into the Church.¹³⁸ In Afanasiev's opinion, this controversy was, in fact, provoked by Cyprian himself, who wanted other Churches, including that of Rome, to follow the practice of the Church of Carthage.

This episode demonstrates the hidden conflict between the principle of universalisation introduced by Cyprian and the primitive ecclesial consciousness. The severity of Cyprian was inspired in part by the primitive doctrine which held that "outside the eucharistic assembly, there is no Church and hence there is no salvation."¹³⁹ That is to say, sacramental life is born from the Church-assembly. But now, according to the new interpretation, a local assembly is nothing more than a *part* of the universal Church. As such it cannot be a creative source of sacramental reality.¹⁴⁰ So when a group from the local community keeps away from the Eucharist, because it is opposed to the law of the universal Church, it is excluded not only from the mutual communion, but also from the Church: it is not anymore Church.¹⁴¹ This reasoning of Cyprian was unacceptable to Pope Stephen who unwaveringly remained faithful to the primitive ecclesiological vision, according to which the local eucharistic community was the creative source of sacramental reality. An angry reaction of Cyprian followed. As Afanasiev observes,

It is not an exaggeration to say that Cyprian wanted Stephen to follow his indications, as did his predecessor Cornelius. But when Stephen began to speak Cyprian's language, then Cyprian found in Stephen's mouth his own proper opinions inadmissible and revolted passionately against them, by opposing to Stephen with the councils convoked by him.¹⁴²

Going further, he asserted—thereby ignoring his own doctrine on the unity of the episcopate—that each bishop is accountable before God alone and that he cannot be judged by others nor can he himself judge others.¹⁴³ This shows that, without a primate, the Cyprianic system could not succeed. Thus, concludes Afanasiev, the Universal Ecclesiology goes hand

¹³⁸ "...dans son conflit avec l'Eglise de Rome, il va jusqu'à la limite de ce qu'il est possible d'affirmer sans manquer à la foi," B. NEUNHEUSER, "Eglise universelle et Eglise locale," in: G. BARAUNA (ed.), *L'Eglise de Vatican II. Etudes autour de la Constitution conciliaire sur l'Eglise*, «UnSa – 66» (Paris: Cerf, 1967), p. 617, hereafter cited as B. NEUNHEUSER, "Eglise universelle et Eglise locale."

¹³⁹ N. AFANASIEV, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, pp. 73, 82; ID, "Dve idei," p. 19, ID, "Doctrine de la Primauté," p. 404.

¹⁴⁰ ID, "Una Sancta," pp. 442, 448; ID, "Doctrine de la Primauté," p. 417.

¹⁴¹ ID, "Una Sancta," pp. 441, 442, 444, 457, 459-460; 463.

¹⁴² ID, "L'Eglise qui préside," pp. 59-60. Here Afanasiev comments that when Cyprian came up with the authority of the council to counter the decision of the pope, he was introducing a novelty unknown to the Church until then.

¹⁴³ "Cette thèse non seulement ne correspondait pas à ce que contenait l'Eglise avant Cyprien, mais encore ne répondait pas à ce que contenait la doctrine de Cyprien lui-même," ID, "Doctrine de la Primauté," p. 406.

in hand with the idea of universal primacy¹⁴⁴: “The Universal Ecclesiology, according to which the whole empirical Church forms a unique organism, carries within it the doctrine of a unipersonal head of the Church.”¹⁴⁵

The ecclesiological system left incomplete by Cyprian was—thinks Afanasiev—later completed by the Roman bishops themselves. This development was, in his opinion, inevitable,¹⁴⁶ for Cyprian had laid down the foundations of this later construction. As our theologian reasons:

Isn't it Cyprian who demanded that Stephen depose Marcian, bishop of Arles, something which transgressed the laws of the local Church? Isn't it Cyprian who sent to Rome his treatise *De unitate ecclesiae* in which the magical term *Cathedra Petri* was used? Did he not write that he who abandons the 'throne of Peter puts himself outside the Church? Did he not write to Cornelius that Rome is *Cathedra Petri et ecclesia principalis, unde unitas sacerdotis exorta est*?¹⁴⁷

So, according to Afanasiev, Cyprian had left sufficient germinal notions for the development of a monarchical universal primacy.

B) Introduction of Law into Ecclesial Life

Afanasiev points out yet another inevitable negative consequence of the Cyprianic system. In his view, Cyprian's attempt to organise the Church after the model of the Roman State brought with it the juridical moment of power too.¹⁴⁸

In Cyprian's thought, the doctrine of power in the Church was bound up with the words of Christ in Mt 16, 18. [...] Mt 16, 18 was used as a basis for the affirmation that the power was transmitted to Peter, on whom the Church was built up, where he received the 'power of keys'. In other words, Cyprian believed that Christ spoke of the universal Church. If we recognise the doctrine of the universal Church, we are logically forced to conclude the existence of power in it.¹⁴⁹

As there is only one throne in the Church—that of Peter—“the power in the Church belongs to the episcopate and through it to each bishop in his Church.”¹⁵⁰ Each Church has at

¹⁴⁴ “Cyprien n'a pas réussi à construire son système sans l'idée de la primauté: ce qui témoigne que, si l'on s'en tient à l'ecclésiologie universelle, la doctrine de la primauté est une sorte de nécessité,” ID, “L'Eglise qui préside,” p. 18.

¹⁴⁵ ID, “L'Eglise qui préside,” p. 24. In this regard, it must be noted that the conciliar principle does not seem to be a solid argument against the necessity of primacy. For the council itself presupposes a primacy within the episcopal body. Whether it is local or ecumenical, the council presupposes always a permanent head of the Church.

¹⁴⁶ “L'évêque de Rome lui-même s'est chargé à sa place de tirer les conclusions qui s'imposaient. D'un point de vue logique, c'était inévitable,” ID, “L'Eglise qui préside,” p. 17; cf. ID, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 406.

¹⁴⁷ ID, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 418.

¹⁴⁸ “Cyprien a vraiment introduit le moment juridique dans l'idée du pouvoir à l'intérieur de l'Eglise...,” ID, “L'Eglise qui préside,” p. 17. “On ne peut pas édifier l'unité universelle de l'Eglise à l'instar de l'unité de l'empire romain, sans élément de base de cette unité, c'est-à-dire : le droit [...Donc] dans le cadre de l'Eglise universelle, Cyprien devait inévitablement arriver à la doctrine du pouvoir dans l'Eglise...,” ID, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 405.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 405; cf. ID, “L'Eglise qui préside,” p. 17.

its head a bishop who is a member of the unique episcopate and the universal Church has at its head the concordant multitude of the episcopate.

Cyprian told of the Church that it is a closed garden and a sealed spring. The limits of this closed whole is outlined by the episcopate, and outside of these limits there is no Church. On the other hand, the limits of the local Church are defined by those of the power of the bishop. Only those who are with the bishop belong to the local Church, that is, those who are under his power.¹⁵¹

And only those who are with the bishops belong, through him, to the *Catholica*, the universal Church.¹⁵²

3.2.7. Concluding Remarks

Going through the Afanasievan exegesis of Cyprian, one gets the impression that he is guided throughout by his *a priori* convictions, viz. that the primitive ecclesiology was entirely based on the local eucharistic community; that it was at no time tainted by universalist tendencies as one would see in later times; that the mutation towards a Universal Ecclesiology was triggered by Cyprian who allegedly viewed the Church in terms of the monolithic unity exemplified by the Roman *Imperium*. It is to defend these theses that Afanasiev devoted some of his masterfully crafted essays.¹⁵³ However, many are among the scholars who do not share Afanasiev's views.

A) Roman Imperium and Cyprian

T. Camelot is categorical in his disagreement with Afanasiev. According to him the fact that Cyprian has received a Roman education and acquired the Roman spirit have not changed or influenced his ecclesiology which always remained biblical.

Nous ne saurions partager l'opinion du P. Afanassieff, pour qui Cyprien devrait à sa formation latine et à son sens romain de l'Imperium la notion d'une Eglise universelle, qui par lui se serait introduite dans la tradition occidentale. Que Cyprien ait une formation latine et qu'il ait reçu l'empreinte de l'esprit romain, c'est trop évident. Mais autant qu'on peut voir, rien n'indique que son ecclésiologie ait été influencée par l'idée romaine de l'Imperium. Les mots mêmes d'*imperium*, *imperator*, *princeps*, sont absents des index de l'édition Hartel. Quand Cyprien prêche l'unité, il fait appel, non pas à l'idéologie impériale, mais aux comparaisons classiques du roi ou des abeilles, du guide du troupeau, du chef d'une bande de brigands (Ep. 66, 6), ou aux images bibliques de l'arche de Noé ou de la robe sans couture (De Un., 6, 7).¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ ID, "Una Sancta," p. 451.

¹⁵² "C'est par l'intermédiaire l'évêque que l'église locale qui lui est confiée se trouve dans la «catholica»," ID, "L'Eglise qui préside," p. 451.

¹⁵³ ID, "L'Eglise qui préside," "Doctrine de la Primauté," "Dve idej," etc.

¹⁵⁴ TH. CAMELOT, "Saint Cyprien et la primauté," *Ist.*, 4 (1957), p. 424, n. 4, *hereafter cited as* T. CAMELOT, "St Cyprien et primauté."

This opinion is shared also by A. Nichols.¹⁵⁵ According to him, it is highly unlikely that Cyprian regarded the Roman *imperium* as the model for the life of the Church. First of all, in solidarity with the fellow North Africans of his time who had an instinctive dislike for the Roman imperial power,¹⁵⁶ he also must have shared in this sentiment. Secondly, his experience of the two major Roman persecutions (under Decius and Valerian) would have only hardened his attitude towards the Roman State. To add to these, if Tertullian was Cyprian's master—as Afanasiev himself admits¹⁵⁷—then, the former's insistence on Church as an eschatological reality totally separate from the secular world should have also dissuaded the Carthaginian theologian from being enthusiastic about the Roman *Imperium*.

From the Orthodox side, J. D. Zizioulas also points out that the bishop of Carthage's attention was focussed mainly on the local Church of Carthage.¹⁵⁸ Hence, the opinion¹⁵⁹ according to which it was Cyprian who for the first time expressed the idea of a Church organisation on the basis of Roman *Imperium* (i.e. a universal unity of which local Churches constitute *parts*) is unsustainable according to Zizioulas.¹⁶⁰

B) Local and Supra-local aspects of 'Ecclesia una' in Cyprian

Yet another contention of Afanasiev is that the Cypriatic ecclesiology is entirely universalistic in perspective. This claim too falls short of convincing many.

First, given Cyprian's admiration for Tertullian, it is more plausible to think that he too must have shared the views of his predecessor,¹⁶¹ who, in fact, did not envisage Church on the universalist model. According to Tertullian, the unity of the Church depends on the acceptance by all the local Churches of the binding authority of the *regula fidei*, inherited from the Apostles. In every Church where the apostolic rule of faith is fully received, the Church in its fullness can be found. Basically, it is an ecclesiology of the *whole* present in the *part* (whole Church present in the local Church). It is interesting to note that, quite like

¹⁵⁵ A. NICHOLS, "Appeal to the Fathers," p. 248.

¹⁵⁶ The superficially Romanised Punic and Berber population of North Africa had an endemic dislike for the Roman imperial government.

¹⁵⁷ "Il suffit de rappeler que le maître de Cyprien a été Tertullien...", N. AFANASIEV, "Doctrine de la Primauté," p.403.

¹⁵⁸ According to Zizioulas, in the title of his famous book, *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate*, the term *catholicae ecclesiae* refers to the local Church of Carthage, whose unity Cyprian wanted to safeguard through the work.

¹⁵⁹ He refers to "Doctrine de la Primauté," of Afanasiev.

¹⁶⁰ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *L'Eucharistie, l'évêque et l'Eglise durant les trois premiers siècles*, trans. by Jean-Louis Palierno, «Théophanie» (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1994), p. 139, hereafter cited as J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Eucharistie, évêque et Eglise*.

¹⁶¹ A. Nichols notes that Cyprian took from his African predecessor a) his stress on the eschatological character of the Church, b) his veneration for the martyrs c) his depiction of the Church as the inverted image of the idolatrous State, d) his use of the Roman juridical concepts to analyse the structure of the Church and finally e) his *point de depart* in the idea of the local Church, cf. A. NICHOLS, "Appeal to the Fathers," p. 249.

Tertullian, Cyprian, too, took the local Church as his *point de départ*.¹⁶² His well-known ecclesiological treatise, *De unitate ecclesiae*—considered the first of its kind from the patristic times—is reminiscent of Cyprian’s attention to the local Church. The *unity of the Catholic Church* discussed in this doctrinal treatise is not the unity of the universal Church, but the unity within the local Churches of Rome and Carthage,¹⁶³ at that time threatened by division.¹⁶⁴ It is also from within this context that Cyprian develops his doctrine on the episcopate, wherein he formulates a notion of the Church in which both the local and supra-local aspects of the *Ecclesia una* receive their full due.¹⁶⁵

That is to say, Cyprian’s perspective is not limited to the local Church. He asserts that the Church exists not only in a place, but rather it is the totality of the local Churches. Hence the unity of the Church calls for the communion of all the local bishops, each of whom is unique in his particular place. This ‘intercommunion’ realises the *unicity of the episcopate*, which along with the *unicity of the local bishop in his Church*, is the necessary condition for the *unicity of the Church* as a whole—*Ecclesia una*.¹⁶⁶ This is where lies, according to Cyprian, the danger of schism. It divides the bishops and Churches among themselves and, thereby, destroys the unicity of the *Ecclesia una*.¹⁶⁷ Novatian schism pushed Cyprian to develop further his doctrine on collegiality. So, it is not enough for a bishop—to be a true bishop—to be legitimately elected in his Church; he has got to remain in communion with his co-bishops.¹⁶⁸ However, to Cyprian’s mind, the episcopal office does not confer on a local bishop the pastoral charge over flocks other than his own. Nevertheless, in a different sense, every bishop has charge over the entire Church in as much as the episcopate as a *Corpus* has charge over the total Church. It is important to note that for Cyprian the bishops, taken together as a

¹⁶² “The Church is not, therefore, solely the sociological reality which the episcopal hierarchy organises in juridical fashion. The Church addressed by Cyprian the pastor is primarily the eucharistic assembly formed *quando in unum cum fratribus convenimus et sacrificia divina cum Dei sacerdote celebramus*. [...] The cultic assembly gives to the sociological assembly its reality as figure of the divine unity in Christ,” A. DEMOUSTIER, “L’ontologie de l’Eglise selon saint Cyprien,” *RSR*, 52 (1964), p. 570 (*hereafter cited as* A. DEMOUSTIER, “Ontologie de l’Eglise”); cf. CYPRIAN, *Epistle*, 63, 13.

¹⁶³ “Le traité *De catholicae Ecclesiae unitate*, il ne faut pas s’y tromper, est d’abord un traité de l’unité de l’Eglise locale,” T. CAMELOT, “St Cyprien et primauté,” p. 423.

¹⁶⁴ “Breaches of unity begin locally (as they had first in Carthage, and then in Rome), and it was only in view of them that he wrote the treatise at all,” M. BÉVENOT, “In solidum and St Cyprian: a correction,” *JTS* 6 (1955), p. 247, *hereafter cited as* M. BÉVENOT, “In solidum.”

¹⁶⁵ “C’est un traité de l’unité de l’Eglise (locale et universelle), l’unité fondée sur la parole du Christ, illustrée par les images bibliques, réalisée par la concorde des évêques, menacée par les hérésies et schismes: tout écrit est un appel pressant à l’unité,” T. CAMELOT, “St Cyprien et primauté,” p. 427.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 343.

¹⁶⁷ As A. BÉVENOT explains, “revolts against the authority of local bishops” was for Cyprian “a breach with the Church universal,” cf. M. BÉVENOT, “In solidum,” p. 248.

¹⁶⁸ CYPRIAN, *Epistle*, 55, 24; 48, 4; 55, 21; 60, 1.5

Corpus, have nothing that a single bishop does not have.¹⁶⁹ This is where lies the major difference between the Cyprianic view and the later universalist perspective sketched by Afanasiev in his *exposé*.

During the latter part of his life,¹⁷⁰ we see Cyprian stressing more and more on the importance of the union of all local Churches and the unicity of the *Ecclesia una*,¹⁷¹ without, however, losing sight of his *point de départ*, viz. the local Church. As A. Nichols puts it, following almost verbally the explanation given earlier by A. Demoustier,¹⁷²

The bishop unites each of his faithful to the total Church since as a successor of the single episcopate of Peter he has the capacity to realise the unity of the body. He must be united to the other bishops, but the episcopate he possesses is simply that which all share together. Here, one equals all.¹⁷³

As in his earlier writings, here too, Peter is the origin of the episcopate of each local bishop and the apostolic college is considered as the episcopate of all bishops taken as a whole; but now, the local Church is not any more envisaged in isolation, but in its rapport with the total Church, “in the sense that the one and the entire Church of Christ is entirely present in each *as united to the rest*.”¹⁷⁴ Owing to the Petrine and apostolic succession, each Church is identical with the original Church and, therefore, the multiplicity of local Churches dispersed in time and space constitutes but one reality. Hence one can speak of an “identity, i.e., a reciprocal equality between the local Church and the total Church.”¹⁷⁵ It is following this logic that Cyprian employs the Pauline image of body—which for him is a type of the unity of the many in one—not only to a local Church, but to the universal Church and to the episcopate as well. It is in this context that we must understand the famous Cyprianic *dictum* often cited by Afanasiev: ‘*una ecclesia per totum mundum in multa membra divisa...*’¹⁷⁶ Instead of being a slogan of the Universalist Ecclesiology, this phrase shows the polyvalent way in which the Pauline body image is used to depict a reality which is one and many at different levels.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁹ Cf. “*Episcopatus unus est cujus a singulis in solidum pars tenetur*,” CYPRIAN, *De unitate ecclesiae*, 5. A. Demoustier explains this lapidary *dictum* of Cyprian as follows: “Chacun a le pouvoir tout entier et ils l’ont tous ensemble. Il n’y a pas plus dans le tout que dans la partie,” A. DEMOUSTIER, “Episcopat et union à Rome,” p. 346 ; cf. M. BEVENOT, “In solidum,” p. 247.

¹⁷⁰ *Vide* especially his *Epistles* 52 and 56 through 68.

¹⁷¹ “Alors que l’Eglise qui est unique en étant catholique ne peut pas être séparée ni divisée, mais qu’elle est partout étroitement liée et intimement unie par le ciment des prêtres adhérents les uns aux autres,” CYPRIAN, *Epistle*, 66, 8; cited in A. DEMOUSTIER, “Episcopat et union à Rome,” p. 346.

¹⁷² “L’évêque unit chacun de ses fidèles à l’Eglise totale puisque, unique successeur de l’unique épiscopat de Pierre, il a le pouvoir de réaliser l’unité du corps et qu’il a, uni aux autres évêques, le même et unique épiscopat que tous *in solidum* possèdent comme successeurs des apôtres,” *ibid.*, p. 347.

¹⁷³ A. NICHOLS, “Appeal to the Fathers,” p. 251.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

¹⁷⁵ A. DEMOUSTIER, “Episcopat et union à Rome,” p. 349.

¹⁷⁶ CYPRIAN, *Epistle*, 55, 24.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. A. NICHOLS, “Appeal to the Fathers,” p. 251.

This fact receives further clarification in the letter *Ad Fortunatum* and in *De unitate ecclesiae*.¹⁷⁸ According to the former, the unity of the Church is realised by the actual intercommunion of local Churches, provided each of them remains in communion with the original Church—the apostolic Church. So the intercommunion of local Churches does not merely *signify* the unity of the Church, but, in fact, *realises* it. The unity thus realised is the fruit not only of the intercommunion of local Churches, but also of the identity of each of them—through apostolic succession—with the original apostolic Church. In this sense, the Church is one and many. This becomes clearer in *De catholicae Ecclesiae unitate*, where it is pointed out that from the beginning, there is but a single episcopate, possessed by each Apostle in particular and all together. That is to say, the one and the many are found in the original Church as well. Hence, it is natural that the same is present also in the later Church. The Cyprianic notion in this regard is skilfully summed up by A. Demoustier as follows:

The first bishops—the apostles—each possessed the fullness of the episcopate, and all of them shared in that same power whose unicity was founded on Peter. Remaining united in the exercise of this episcopate, they brought about the unity of the Church: they were this first and unique Church of Christ. The succession—at once Petrine and apostolic—perpetuates both this possession by each one of the fullness of power (*super Petrum*) and this intercommunion of all in the single episcopate (*per apostolos*). In each of the bishops is found the power of all. Thus, communion with one bishop is communion with all; in communicating with his own pastor, the faithful of one Church communicate with all the faithful of all the other Churches: belonging to the body of one Church is belonging to the total body.¹⁷⁹

Therefore, all local Churches are, by succession and mutual union, identical with the Church of the origins and actually realise what there was at the beginning. In this context, if one asks, ‘What is the centre of Church unity according to Cyprian: the local bishop in his Church or the concord of all bishops (as alleged by Afanasiev)?,’ the answer is simply that we do not have to choose between seeing the local bishop as the centre of the unity of the Church and reckoning the concord of the episcopate as the centre of unity. The reason is that for Cyprian, the second qualifies the first—instead of displacing it—and enriches it, while removing nothing of its significance.¹⁸⁰ T. Camelot correctly articulated it when he interpreted *Catholica* as found in Cyprian:

La *catholica*, c’est - soit l’Eglise *universelle*, « una Ecclesia per totum mundum in multa membra divisa. [...] Conexam et ubique conjunctam catholicae ecclesiae unitatem » (*Ep.*, 55, 24), « Ecclesia universa per totum

¹⁷⁸ CYPRIAN, *Ad Fortunatum*, 2; *De unitate ecclesiae*, 4; 5.

¹⁷⁹ A. DEMOUSTIER, “Episcopat et union à Rome,” p. 352; trans. as given in A. NICHOLS, “Appeal to the Fathers,” p. 252.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. A. NICHOLS, “Appeal to the Fathers,” p. 252. It is interesting to note in this context that Vatican II cites Cyprian for demonstrating the importance of local Churches and for describing the role of the local bishop as sign and guarantee of the Church's unity at its most fundamental level. Cf. *LG* 23 directly referring to Cyprian's *Ep* 66.8 and 55.24 (*CSEL*, Vienna, 1855), 3.2: 733, 642.

mundum... unitatis vinculo copulata » (*Ep.*, 66, 7); - soit l'Eglise *locale*, en tant qu'elle fait partie de la *catholica*, et qu'elle est par conséquent, en face des schismes, la seule Eglise authentique. [...] Mais si cette Eglise locale est, concrètement, la première que Cyprien ait en vue,¹⁸¹ logiquement, et réellement, l'Eglise universelle est première. Le baptême en effet agrège, non à l'Eglise de Carthage ou à celle de Rome, mais à l'Eglise tout court, à la *Catholica*, à l'Eglise universelle. [...] Si l'on peut hésiter sur le sens précis de *catholica* en tel ou tel passage, il n'y a pas de doute que pour Cyprien, l'Eglise, c'est l'unique Eglise du Christ répandue dans le monde entier; la communauté locale n'est l'Eglise que parce qu'elle est l'Eglise universelle en un lieu déterminé.¹⁸²

C) Cyprian's view on the Primacy of Rome and its Bishop

Afanasiev alleges that the monarchical colouring, which Cyprian gives to his portrait of the bishop of Rome, finally led to considering the universal primacy of the pope as the centre of Church unity. This invites us to take a close look at how Cyprian conceived the role of the bishop of Rome in the scheme of things. It is beyond all doubt that Cyprian did not accept the Roman primacy, as we understand it today. According to him all bishops possess the same power as the bishop of Rome.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, it is undeniable that he attached great importance to the see of Rome. This is manifested not only during the Novatian crisis, but also during his quarrel with Pope Stephen. Was such respect inspired merely by the civil position of Rome within the empire? There is a large section of scholars who would answer this question negatively. It is true that, for Cyprian, every local Church is founded on Peter and as such has the same power as the Church of Rome. Yet Cyprian speaks of no other Church that it is the *locus Petri*¹⁸⁴ and no other Church is called *cathedra Petri*.¹⁸⁵ He also uses such expressions as *ecclesiam principalem* and *ecclesiae matricem et radicem* with regard to the Church of Rome.¹⁸⁶ It seems that the clue to determine the Cyprianic view on the role of the Roman Church and its bishop within the communion of Churches lies in what he has to say about the Petrine position within the college of Apostles. According to him, Peter and the other Apostles have the same power, but the only difference is that the latter received it after the former. That is to say, Peter has a chronological priority over the college and this priority is the foundation of the unity of the college. The apostolic college is one because, while in communion with each other, they are also in solidarity with the one who was the first

¹⁸¹ "L'Eglise une, c'est d'abord l'Eglise particulière, l'Eglise locale. [...] Ainsi, dans l'Eglise locale, qui est la première réalité, concrète et visible, que Cyprien a sous les yeux et dans la pensée, l'évêque est le signe et le lien, le garant de l'unité." T. CAMELOT, "St Cyprien et primauté," p. 422.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 423-24.

¹⁸³ CYPRIAN, *Epistle*, 66, 3; 72, 3; 55, 21.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. ID, *Epistle*, 55, 8.

¹⁸⁵ cf. "La *cathedra*, c'est le *locus episcopi* : cela concerne toujours, semble-t-il, une église locale. Or Cyprien n'emploie ces expressions qu'au sujet de Rome," A. DEMOUSTIER, "Episcopat et union à Rome," p. 354.

¹⁸⁶ It signifies that Rome enjoys chronological anteriority and as such it is the mother and root of unity.

to receive Apostleship, viz. Peter. In this context, “for Cyprian the Roman Church preserves or represents this chronological priority and so the authority of Peter in unifying the other Churches in communion with her.”¹⁸⁷ That is why Cyprian calls the Roman Church the ‘root’ or ‘mother’ of the Churches. If all Churches are founded on Peter, no other Church was founded *super Petrum* by Peter himself, argues Cyprian. The special role of Peter is to manifest (*ostendere*¹⁸⁸) the origin of the unity of the apostolic college. Just as the Apostles, receiving *in solidum* the episcopate, entered into communion with Peter, so also the bishops of various local Churches retain their due episcopate by entering into or remaining in communion with the Roman Church, whose foundation is the most primordial. Thus the specific role of Rome is to manifest the unicity of the Church. It must be here underlined that, according to Cyprian, the unity of the bishops and, therefore, their Churches is not achieved through communion with Rome, but through intercommunion and apostolic succession. Nevertheless, in his scheme of things, the communion with Rome demonstrates the unity among bishops and Churches and that this unity is the same as that which Peter himself signified at the beginning.¹⁸⁹

D) Juridical Character of Cyprianic Ecclesiology

According to another allegation of Afanasiev, Cyprian—while building up the universal unity of the Church after the model of the Roman Empire—was obliged to replace the sacramental conception of the Church by a juridical one. But A. Demoustier, who studied the question in detail, does not share this view. According to him, “in the writings of Cyprian the Church is not only Body, but also Mother, Bride, House of God.”¹⁹⁰ These images should signify that there is something deeper than juridical and institutional in Cyprianic conception of the Church.¹⁹¹ According to Cyprian, the Church as mother brings forth sons and daughters through baptism, and in the Eucharist, she gathers them in the unity of a visible body, which is the Body of Christ. If the generative power of the Church is manifested first of all in baptism, it blossoms in the Eucharist.

¹⁸⁷ A. NICHOLS, “Appeal to the Fathers,” p. 253.

¹⁸⁸ CYPRIAN, *Epistle*, 73, 7.

¹⁸⁹ “...étant unis à Rome, les évêques savent et montrent qu’ils sont tous unis entre eux et que cette unité est celle qui se signifiait en Pierre à l’origine,” A. DEMOUSTIER, “Episcopat et union à Rome,” p. 358.

¹⁹⁰ A. DEMOUSTIER, “Ontologie de l’Eglise,” pp. 554-555.

¹⁹¹ “La notion de Corps chez Cyprian est incontestablement juridique, elle est aussi ontologique et eucharistique. Séparer les fils de la Mère c’est disperser les membres du Christ,” *ibid.*, p. 556; cf. *Epistle*, 44, 3.

The Church is not, therefore, solely the sociological reality which the episcopal hierarchy organises in juridical fashion. The Church addressed by Cyprian the pastor is primarily the eucharistic assembly formed ‘when we gather among brothers as one and celebrate the divine sacrifices with the priest of God’.¹⁹²

The Eucharist—although seldom spoken of by Cyprian—is indeed at the heart of his ecclesiological thinking. The Church for him is not simply a more or less abstract entity, a moral body, which has no other visible figure than the unitary visible institution. “She is the unique eucharistic assembly which realises, in the sociological assembly, the Trinitarian unity.... All the eucharistic assemblies are the same, for all of them remain united to the origin which is reproduced in each of them, thus keeping them identical among them.”¹⁹³ It is here that the specific role of the bishop intervenes. If the Eucharist as the *sacramentum* signifies that Christ realises the divine unity of the local assembly, the bishop is the guarantee that this assembly, gathered here and now, is the very same as that of the Last Supper and as that of all other assemblies which depend on the same Supper through succession in time.¹⁹⁴ If this is true, how can the allegation that Cyprian abandoned the traditional Eucharistic Ecclesiology stand? For in Cyprian, Eucharist remains the key link between the Church as a sociological phenomenon and its transcendent ground—Trinitarian communion; it permits the passage between the two.¹⁹⁵

3.3. Universalist Tendencies in the *Didache*

At the heart of Afanasiev’s critique of St Cyprian is the conviction that the primitive ecclesiology was not universalist, but eucharistic and that the former ecclesiological vision got started with the Carthaginian bishop-theologian. This thesis is greatly weakened by the picture of the primitive Church found in the *Didache*.¹⁹⁶ Therefore Afanasiev was obliged to

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 570, cf. CYPRIAN, *De oratione* 4: “quando in unum cum fratribus convenimus et sacrificia divina cum Dei sacerdote celebramus.” Here *cum Dei sacerdote* refers to the officiating bishop: “Le prêtre (à ne pas confondre avec le *presbytre*) préside et consacre. La plupart du temps il s’agit en fait de l’évêque (*episcopus*), mais les deux vocable ne sont pas pour autant exactement synonymes. *Sacerdoce* est le terme générique, il est exclusivement employé lorsqu’il s’agit de la vie religieuse et sacramentelle proprement dite. *Episcopus* a sens plus précisément spécifié ; il est le chef suprême de ce sacerdoce (*sacerdotium*) hiérarchisé en degrés,” *ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 587.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ “Cyprien serait-il responsable de l’abandon d’une conception plus ancienne de l’Eglise fondée sur l’Eucharistie? L’aspect polémique de son œuvre aurait pu égarer tel ou tel de ceux qu’il influença. Mais sa pensée reste ferme alors même qu’elle n’est pas toujours explicite. Il y a l’unité ; c’est l’unité de la communion. Il y a le fondement « spirituel et céleste » de cette unité : la Trinité qui se communique dans l’unité du Christ *ex utroque genere*. Mais l’Eucharistie est le passage de l’une à l’autre.... L’assemblée cultuelle donne à l’assemblée sociologique sa réalité comme figure de l’unité divine dans le Christ,” *ibid.*, pp. 587-589.

¹⁹⁶ Only in the last quarter of the 19th century did this primitive Christian writing become accessible to the scholars, following its discovery in 1875 by the Metropolitan Bryennios of Serrae. While working in Constantinople in the library of the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem, he found a manuscript dated 1056 which contained copies of the Epistles of Clement, Barnabas and Ignatius, and a document purporting to set out the ‘Teaching of the Apostles’, which came to be known as the *Didache*. From its content, it became clear that this

counter the arguments of those who, inspired by the *Didache*, claimed that there existed in the primitive times two types of ecclesial organisation: a charismatic one and a secular one. The charismatic organisation, according to this thesis, consisted of persons having ministry linked to a charism received directly from God (e.g., apostles, prophets and doctors). The secular type of organisation was, on the contrary, constituted by such ministries as those of bishops, presbyters and deacons who were established by the community and they depended on the community.

If we accept this scheme, it would follow that the *charismatic* ministers like Apostles, prophets and doctors were not, in general, attached to a local Church, instead they moved from one Church to another.¹⁹⁷ According to Afanasiev, the crux of the problem is not whether the so-called charismatic ministers were itinerant or not, but whether they belonged to a local Church or to the Church in general.

It is true that, reading through the texts of the *Didache*, one gets the impression that “besides the functionaries each local Church created for its needs, there existed also persons whose ministry was neither limited to nor bound up with a particular local Church, but concerned the Church as a whole.”¹⁹⁸ For Afanasiev, it is a sufficient indication to show Didachist’s adherence to the Universal Ecclesiology. The picture painted by the *Didache*, continues our author, is not, however, in accord with what we know about the primitive Church: at that time no distinction was made between the local Churches and the Church as *Gesamtkirche*. According to the understanding of the period, every local Church is the *catholic* Church and not simply a *part* of a *Gesamtkirche*.¹⁹⁹ It is this catholic vision, which determined the understanding of ministry: it was seen more as an ecclesial reality (i.e., belonging to the Church as a whole) than a communitarian one (i.e. exclusively bound up with particular communities). The fact that a bishop exercised his ministry within a single community and a prophet in several communities did not affect the nature of their ministry,

treatise was of an ancient date. It must have been composed a) before the itinerant prophets were displaced by a settled permanent ministry, b) when the episcopacy was not yet the universal form of Church government, and ‘bishop’ was synonymous with ‘presbyter,’ c) when the «agape» was still conjoined with the Eucharist and d) when liturgy and theology was in an earlier stage of development. Many scholars were inclined to date it as early as A. D. 60, or at any rate, not later than A. D. 100. A. Harnack rated this early Christian literature as the missing link between *1 Corinthians* and the *Pastorals*, especially in the context of the evolution of the universal charismatic ministers of the Word to the local monarchical episcopate. However, this document, which in Harnack’s opinion, shed light into unknown areas of primitive Christianity, was soon proved to be enigmatic in the eyes of many. Nowadays there is a general tendency to regard the treatise as an archaizing work. Cf. H. BETTENSON, *Early Christian Fathers*, p. 6; A. DE HALLEUX, “Les Ministères dans la *Didachè*,” *Iren.*, 53 (1983), 5-29, *hereafter cited as* A. DE HALLEUX, “Ministères dans la *Didachè*.”

¹⁹⁷ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 130.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.131-132.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 132.

for both exercised their apostolate in the *Church*. This is because when someone is made a bishop in a particular local Church he becomes, *de facto*, also a bishop of the Church of God. That is to say, the link which binds a bishop to his local Church does not diminish the catholic character of his ministry which ensues from the catholicity of his local Church. The same can be said about the prophetic ministry: it is also ecclesial and universal. It was exercised always in a particular local Church and not in Church in general.²⁰⁰ And that which takes place in one of the local Churches—since it takes place in the Church of God—takes place also in all others, because they too are equally Church of God.

Afanasiev is critical also of the role that Didachist gives to the prophet in the community. Although, in general, the *Didache's* teaching on this ministry accords with the apostolic epistles,²⁰¹ when it says that a true prophet must be received like the Lord and his words cannot be judged,²⁰² it appears to be a departure from the position of St Paul, who demanded the examination of every word pronounced by a prophet.²⁰³ In order that the word of the prophet becomes true prophecy receivable by the Church, it must first undergo the judgement of the Church. In other words, according to the Pauline vision, the word of the prophet and the judgement of the Church together constitute prophecy. In this sense, prophecy belongs to the Church. It is this ecclesial conditionality which is absent in the *Didache*, says Afanasiev.

According to St Paul, the prophetic revelation is accorded to the Church through the intermediary of the Prophet, while, according to the author of the *Didache*, this revelation would be accorded to the prophet almost independent of the Church.²⁰⁴

This change in attitude, points out our theologian, signals a weakening of the ecclesial factor in the ministry of the prophet which would lead to the prophetic ministry being exercised outside of the eucharistic assembly.²⁰⁵ Unlike the Pauline writings, which stress the importance of the reception of the prophetic revelation by the community, the Didachist asserts that the prophecy of a genuine prophet is *eo ipso*²⁰⁶ true prophecy. Here the Didachist cuts off the prophet from his proper context: the eucharistic assembly.

²⁰⁰ “All that the prophet accomplished outside the local Church could not have ecclesial character, for the Church of God in Christ did not exist outside the local Churches,” *ibid.*, p. 132.

²⁰¹ A true prophet cannot teach anything contrary to what is contained in the *Didache*, XI, 1

²⁰² *Didache* XI, 8

²⁰³ *ICor*, 14, 29.

²⁰⁴ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 179.

²⁰⁵ “Ce changement dans l’approche du discours prophétique témoigne d’un certain affaiblissement, dans ce ministère, du facteur ecclésial, ce qui devait conduire à la possibilité de prophétiser en dehors de l’assemblée eucharistique,” *ibid.*, p. 179.

²⁰⁶ That is, without the need for a reception by the community. This idea is expressed by *Didache* 11, 8: “You shall not test or examine any prophet who speaks in spirit.”

Another particularity of the prophetic ministry found in the *Didache* is that the author ascribes to the prophet the title of high priest²⁰⁷ and accords him the right to ‘give thanks’ (*eucharistein*)²⁰⁸. Here again Afanasiev smells the influence of the Universal Ecclesiology. As he explains, in the early period the dignity of the high priest in a local Church belonged to the bishop; as such he was the high priest of the Church of God. It is in this capacity he ‘gave thanks’ in the eucharistic assembly. Now, giving the very same possibility to the prophet is “equivalent to attributing to him the functions of *proéstôs*, who was, in the ‘Great Church’, a bishop.”²⁰⁹ When this dignity is given to the prophet, there is a total change of vision: the prophet, being not attached to any local Church, is first of all the high priest of Church in general and it is in this capacity that he becomes the high priest of any local Church he finds himself in. So what is emphasised here is the notion of the ‘Church in general’.

The pontificate of the prophet forms part of the universal Church which is composed of the local Churches. For this reason, a local Church can temporarily remain without a high priest, with a bishop as substitute to the prophet, which does not deprive the universal Church of its pontiff.”²¹⁰

According to Afanasiev, one cannot “accept the doctrine which considers the pontifical dignity of the prophet as a characteristic of the prophetic ministry. By its nature it does not contain pontifical ministry, but it can be cumulated with it if the prophet was chosen as the *proéstôs* of a local Church.”²¹¹ Also when the *Didache* says that the bishops are to ‘serve you in the ministry (*leitourgian*) of the prophets and teachers’²¹², Afanasiev sees there an attempt by the Didachist to give a rather secondary role to the bishop in relation to the prophet. In his interpretation of the *Didache*, Afanasiev gives special attention to the following texts:

(1) “As this broken bread was scattered on the mountains, but brought together, was made one, so gather your Church from the ends of the earth into your kingdom” (IX, 4)

(2) “Remember, O Lord, your Church. Deliver it from every evil and perfect it in your love. Gather it from the four winds” (X, 5).

According to him “[t]he Church spoken of here is not the local Church where the Church of God dwells in all its plenitude, but the Church which encompasses all the local Churches spread out in the world.”²¹³ Afanasiev thinks that although one cannot determine with precision the sources of this universalist idea, we can presume that the Didachist is under the influence of the Jewish mentality. Accordingly, what comes to the fore is not the primitive

²⁰⁷ Cf. *Didache*, 13, 3.

²⁰⁸ “But allow prophets to give thanks as they will,” *Didache*, 10, 7.

²⁰⁹ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 180.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 182-183.

²¹² *Didache*, XV, 1.

²¹³ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 183.

eucharistic conception of the Church, but the the idea of Church as the People of God, as the new Israel.

This tendency, seen in a Christian writing as primitive as the *Didache*,²¹⁴ is a strong argument against Afanasiev's main thesis that universalist elements were completely absent in the primitive ecclesiology. This might be the reason why he conveniently chose to relegate *Didache* to a milieu outside the Great Church.²¹⁵

3.3.1. Concluding Remarks

The reason for Afanasiev's refusal to accept the elements of the Universal Ecclesiology found in the *Didache* is based on his view that this patristic writing belongs to a later period and to an unorthodox milieu. Here he seems to be influenced by F.E. Vokes²¹⁶ who also held a similar view. According to Vokes, the *Didache*, coming from a Church influenced by 'moderate Montanism,' "gives in the form of a summary of apostolic teaching a description of what can be called the 'apostolic element' of Montanism; ... its purpose is the defence of the 'New Prophecy'."²¹⁷ Afanasiev conveniently borrows this view of *Didache* to come down heavily on these elements of the Church order in the book which did not suit his purpose and to present them as deviations.²¹⁸

The above thesis of Vokes was strongly challenged by Jean-Paul Audet,²¹⁹ who readily situates the *Didache* in the Jewish-Christian milieu. According to him the work must have been written around the year 60 in Syria or Palestine, probably in Antioch.²²⁰ Audet's view, which has been ever since supported by other scholars, challenges Afanasiev's judgement and use of the *Didache*. As A. Nichols has put it, "[i]f the text is as early as the earliest Gospel, then in terms of empirical antiquity the Universalist Ecclesiology must be allowed to be as ancient as its 'eucharistic' counterpart."²²¹ Afanasiev's argument may still hold ground, if it is shown beyond doubt that the *Didache*—despite its antiquity—represents a sub-tradition rather than the mainstream. But then one must prove the close link between Montanism and the Jewish-Christian milieu. But unfortunately this link is not clear. Moreover, "to suppose that the specifying qualities of Jewish-Christian Churches can make no contribution to a

²¹⁴ ID, "L'Eglise qui préside," p. 60.

²¹⁵ "Un seul milieu aurait pu donner naissance à cet enseignement, les cercles montanistes, mais alors la *Didachè* serait beaucoup plus tardive." ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, pp. 182.

²¹⁶ F.E. VOKES, *The Riddle of the Didache* (London: SPCK, 1938), cf. N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 103.

²¹⁷ F.E. VOKES, op. cit, p. 220.

²¹⁸ "Un seul milieu aurait pu donner naissance à cet enseignement, les cercles montanistes, mais alors la *Didachè* serait beaucoup plus tardive," N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, pp. 182-183.

²¹⁹ J.-P. AUDET, *La Didachè, Instruction des Apôtres*, « Etudes bibliques » (Paris: J.Gabalda, 1958).

²²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, pp.187-210.

²²¹ A. NICHOLS, "Appeal to the Fathers," p. 128.

normative ecclesiology is to accept the disputable thesis that theological history must belong unconditionally to the victors.”²²²

It seems to us that Afanasiev has not given due consideration to the local Church in the *Didache*. In fact, existence of a local hierarchy is more clearly pronounced in the *Didache* than in the Pauline captivity letters.²²³ And the ministers of the local Church are chosen by the community itself; these ministers were destined for a local ministry and not for a universal service.²²⁴ As P. Batiffol has noted,

...dans le *Didachè*, l'église locale est juge de la créance à donner à ces missionnaires itinérants. [...] *Quiconque vient et enseigne une doctrine différente de la doctrine reçue, ne l'écoutez pas* (XI, 2) : quiconque vient, et donc c'est un missionnaire du dehors, et la communauté le juge sur ces paroles. La communauté est devenue le foyer véritable qui se suffit : ces missionnaire doivent être accueillis, seulement en passant.²²⁵

3.4. Origen of Alexandria

Origen of Alexandria, when seen through Afanasiev's looking glass, cuts a rather negative figure than positive.²²⁶ Origen is, according to him, responsible for a couple of notions, which clashed with the Eucharistic Ecclesiology he developed. First is the idea that a personally unworthy bishop cannot celebrate the Eucharist for the people.²²⁷ The second is the Alexandrine theologian's tendency to relativise the importance of sacramental life especially, the eucharistic assembly.²²⁸ Origen considers the sacramental signs of the liturgy as mere images of the reception of the Logos in the human mind. This view enters into conflict with Afanasiev's own sacramental realism and his insistence on the transcendent presence of the Holy Spirit in his ecclesial gifts. But the principal allegation of Afanasiev against Origen is

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 128.

²²³ “Ainsi donc, éliez-vous des évêques et des diacres dignes du Seigneur, des hommes doux et désintéressés, véridiques et éprouvés; car eux aussi exercent pour vous le ministère des prophètes et docteurs,” DIDACHE, XV, 1.

²²⁴ “La communauté élit pour elle (ἐαυτοῖς), pour son service locale, et non pour un ministère universel,” P. BATIFFOL, *L'Eglise naissante et le catholicisme* (Paris: J.Gabalda, 1922), p. 128, hereafter cited as P. BATIFFOL, *L'Eglise naissante*.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

²²⁶ It does not, however, mean that Afanasiev was unaware of the merits of this great Alexandrine theologian. In fact, he did appeal to his authority, especially when he spoke about the concelebration of sacramental acts by προεστώς and the people (*In Leviticum*, hom., IX, 1. Cf. ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 71) and about the development of the προεστώς into a pastor (*Commentary on Joshua VII*, 6. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 230).

²²⁷ “La notion de la légitimité des actes sacramentels en fonction du mérite personnel de l'évêque qui les accompli semble venir d'Origène,” *ibid.*, p. 71 ; cf. ORIGENE, *in Matth.*, 12, 14.

²²⁸ “Etant donné ses tendances spiritualistes, les commentaires de la Parole devaient être pour lui plus importants que l'assemblée eucharistique; mais le peuple avait-il tort de préférer cette dernière à la synaxe au cours de laquelle Origène lisait ses homélies?,” *ibid.*, p. 92; cf. ORIGENE, *Comm. sur la Genèse*, hom. 10, where Origen complains about people preferring Eucharistic assembly to the synaxes.

that the latter advanced the cause of the Universalist Ecclesiology which is found in its germinal form in the *Didache*.²²⁹

3.4.1. Concluding Remarks

It is true that universalism is strongly present in Origen. This comes to the fore especially when he speaks of Churches throughout the world as the ‘single body’ of the Church²³⁰, of the Church as the ‘single house’ outside of which the paschal Lamb should not be eaten,²³¹ as the ark of Noah, which alone saves from the Flood,²³² and as the Bride of Christ.²³³ This does not mean, however, that he totally ignores local Churches. As G. Bardy has commented, the Alexandrine doctor speaks more willingly of Churches than the Church. “He is sensitive to the fact that, in his time Christianity took the external form of a federation.”²³⁴ If this observation of Bardy, a first rate Patristic scholar, is true, then it must be assumed that the doctrine of the local Church is not totally absent in Origen. Rather the doctrine of local Church appears in his writings as conjoined to his universalist vision of the Church. In other words, he portrays the Church as one and manifold. Hence, A. Nichols rightly observes that “[i]t may well be, therefore, that here, as with Cyprian, the presence of a universalism complementing or deepening a eucharistic particularism has sufficed to make Afanas’ev see only the former.”²³⁵

4. The Local Church according to the Ecclesiology of Afanasiev

4.1. The Eucharist Makes the Church

The neuralgic point of Afanasievan ecclesiology is the eucharistic assembly of the local Church. He bases his system on the inseparable relationship he finds between the Church, the Eucharist and Christ. According to him, to speak of the Church is to speak of Christ, and to speak of Christ is to speak of the Eucharist.²³⁶

²²⁹ “...l’idée de l’Eglise universelle sera avancée avec beaucoup de force par Origène, et développé par Cyprien de Carthage. Les sources de l’idée universaliste ne sont pas très claires, mais il n’y a presque aucun doute que l’auteur de la *Didachè* l’avait puisée dans la mentalité judaïque,” *ibid.*, p. 183.

²³⁰ *In Matt.* XIII, 24.

²³¹ *In Genes.* XII, 3.

²³² *In Genes.* II, 3-6.

²³³ *In Cant. Cant.* I, 7.

²³⁴ G. BARDY, “Origène,” *DTC*, XI. B., col. 1553.

²³⁵ A. NICHOLS, “Appeal to the Fathers,” p. 139.

²³⁶ N. AFANASIEV, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 82; ID, “Dve idej,” pp. 26-29.

4.1.1. Institutional Moments of the Eucharist and the Church

The foundational moments of the Church are to be sought in the Christ event. According to Afanasiev, the earliest roots of the Church go back to the confraternity²³⁷ of Jesus' disciples gathered around him. This *chabûrah* of the followers of Jesus outlived him, and, after the arrival of the Spirit, became the Church. Afanasiev identifies three moments in the coming into being of the Church:

- (a) First among these moments is Jesus' promise that he would build up his Church (Mt 18: 17-19). At the time of this promise the Church did not yet exist. According to Afanasiev, during the life-time of Jesus, the disciples did not form the *ecclesia*, because—although with Christ—they were not yet 'in Christ' (ἐν χριστῷ).²³⁸
- (b) The promise was followed by the institutional act, which took place during the Last Supper. Even there, the Church promised by Jesus did not fully become a reality.²³⁹
- (c) The moment of actualisation of the Church took place on the day of Pentecost.²⁴⁰ For it is on that day, the Eucharist—instituted during the Last Supper—was for the first time celebrated,²⁴¹ an event which will be actualised in other places too.²⁴² As Afanasiev formulates it,

²³⁷ In many ways this fraternity was similar to the fraternity which existed among the Jews of the period known as *chabûrah*. The term *chabûrah* comes from *chaber* meaning friend.

²³⁸ "Au temps de la vie du Christ, ses disciples ne formaient pas l'Eglise, ni même le noyau de l'Eglise. Pendant sa vie terrestre le Christ était toujours avec ses disciples [...] mais les disciples n'étaient pas en Lui. Ils étaient avec Lui, mais n'étaient pas «ἐν χριστῷ»: donc ils ne formaient pas l'Eglise," N. AFANASIEV, "Sacrement de l'Assemblée," p. 204. "Strictly speaking, the Messianic Community, gathered by Jesus the Christ, was not yet the Church, before His Passion and Resurrection, before 'the promise of the Father' was sent upon it and it was 'endued with the power from on high', baptized with the Holy Spirit' (cf. Luke xxiv, 49 and Acts I, 4-5), in the mystery of the Pentecost," G. FLOROVSKY, "Church: Her Nature..." p. 62. Cf. ID. "Le corps du Christ vivant. Une interprétation orthodoxe de l'Eglise," in: *La Sainte Eglise universelle. Confrontation œcuménique. «Cahiers théologiques de l'actualité protestante, hors-série-4»* (Neuchâtel-Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1948), p. 18, *hereafter cited as* G. FLOROVSKY, "Corps du Christ vivant."

²³⁹ "C'est par l'institution de l'Eucharistie [...] que fut instituée l'Eglise. C'était la fondation de l'Eglise, mais non pas son actualisation, car la Sainte Cène n'a pas été l'Eucharistie, mais seulement son institution. [...] La Sainte Cène n'était pas l'Eucharistie, car le Christ n'était pas encore «élevé» sur la croix, n'était pas encore glorifié et l'Esprit n'était pas encore descendu sur les disciples," N. AFANASIEV, "Sacrement de l'Assemblée," pp. 204-205; Cf. ID, "Le 'monde' dans l'Ecriture Sainte," *Irén.* 42 (1969), 3-22.

²⁴⁰ "[Pentecôte] était en même temps l'actualisation de l'Eglise de Dieu en Christ dans l'église locale de Jérusalem. De pair avec ceci c'était l'accomplissement de la promesse donnée par le Christ dans Mt. XVI, 17-18," N. AFANASIEV, "Apôtre Pierre et évêque de Rome," p. 622.

²⁴¹ "The Church—which was instituted by Christ during the Lord's Supper—became a reality on the day of the Pentecost, when the first Eucharist was celebrated by the disciples. The first creation by God in the Son and through the Son corresponds to a new creation 'in Christ' in the Spirit and through the Spirit." ID, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 5, cited in B. SCHULTZE, "Eucharistie und Kirche in der russischen Theologie der Gegenwart," *ZKT*, 77 (1955), p. 267, *hereafter cited as* B. SCHULTZE, "Eucharistie und Kirche."

²⁴² "...si la sainte cène institue l'Eglise par anticipation (avant la Croix et la Résurrection), son accomplissement s'opérera le jour de la Pentecôte, et très précisément *au moment de la première eucharistie des apôtres*. L'Eglise locale de Jérusalem est donc le *premier* lieu territorial institutionnel qui clôt le temps de l'incarnation et ouvre le *temps de l'Eglise*. L'événement s'actualisera plus tard dans d'autres lieux," P. EVDOKIMOV, "Ecclésiologie eucharistique," p. 133.

During his terrestrial life, Christ laid the foundation of his messianic community, whose construction was to begin after his death and resurrection.²⁴³

The Lord's Supper will become the Eucharist when *His Disciples* were to celebrate it, in their turn, by breaking the bread and by blessing the cup.²⁴⁴

According to Afanasiev, there is a close relationship between this first eucharistic celebration and the last meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. As he puts it, “[t]he first eucharistic assembly on the day of Pentecost exactly reproduced the Last Supper of Christ.”²⁴⁵ In this Christian *chabûrah*, where the bread broken by Peter—who, being the eldest among the members of the confraternity of Jesus, must have occupied the central place in the assembly (i.e. the very same place occupied by Christ during the last supper)—was the same as the bread broken by Jesus; the cup blessed by him was the same as the cup blessed by Jesus.²⁴⁶ The same bread is broken and the same cup is blessed in every eucharistic celebration across the length and breadth of the time and space. The Russian theologian finds also a parallelism between the mode of presence of Christ during the Last Supper and the eucharistic celebration. In both Christ is really present. But there is a difference in the way in which he is present in the one and the other. If during the former, Jesus was physically and personally present, during the latter his presence is mediated through the eucharistic gifts, which become really the body and blood of Christ.²⁴⁷

The close relationship found between the Lord's Supper and the Eucharist should not, however, lead one to think that the latter is a mere repetition of the former, because the Lord's Supper is a once-for-all-event (ἐφάπαξ) which will not be repeated. The Eucharist must be seen, instead, as a “prolongation of the Lord's Supper envisaged in its particular aspect: it is an ecclesiological Lord's Supper.”²⁴⁸ Seen as the ecclesiological Lord's Supper, Eucharist presupposes not only the Last Supper wherein the Eucharist was instituted, but also the entire Paschal mystery: death, resurrection, glorification and the coming of the Holy Spirit.²⁴⁹ According to Afanasiev, the arrival of the Spirit was crucial for the actualisation of the first

²⁴³ N. AFANASIEV, “Apôtre Pierre et évêque de Rome,” p. 468.

²⁴⁴ ID, “Sacrement de l'Assemblée,” p. 204; cf. ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit* p. 246. Afanasiev allocates a central role to Pentecost in the coming into being of the Church, because “...dans sa pensée l'existence de l'Eglise était impensable sans célébration de l'eucharistie...,” N. KOULOMIZINE, “Les rôles liturgiques...,” p. 215.

²⁴⁵ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 248.

²⁴⁶ “Cette première assemblée eucharistique du jour de la Pentecôte reproduisit exactement la Cène du Seigneur. Aucun doute n'est permis à ce sujet,” *ibid.*, p. 246.

²⁴⁷ “Dans l'Eucharistie le Christ demeure avec nous, comme Il demeurerait avec les apôtres pendant la Sainte Cène: seulement sa présence est remplacée par les dons eucharistiques qui sont le corps et le sang du Christ...,” ID, “Sacrement de l'Assemblée,” pp. 205-206.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

²⁴⁹ “En tant que Cène ecclésiologique, l'Eucharistie implique non seulement le dernier repas du Christ, mais aussi le Golgotha, la résurrection, la glorification et la Pentecôte,” *ibid.*, p. 205.

Eucharist. “The Eucharist was realised on the day of the Pentecost in the Spirit and by the Spirit.”²⁵⁰ It is the Spirit who makes of the Christians the Body of Christ.²⁵¹ In Afanasiev’s view, it was when the Eucharist—as the ecclesiological Lord’s Supper—was celebrated for the first time at Jerusalem that the Church promised by Jesus was actualised.

4.1.2. Identity between the Eucharist and the Local Church

The Eucharist and the local Church, which drew the attention of Afanasiev for many years, was also one of the themes often treated by the Russian émigrés, away from their Mother Church. As Bernhard Schultze has observed, in the modern Russian theology—down from Khomiakov through Bulgakov to Afanasiev—we notice a common view which considers the Eucharist as the basic sacrament (*Ursakrament*).²⁵² Khomiakov held that the invisible love and unity of the faithful are expressed not only in terms of the common profession of faith but also in terms of sacraments, above all in the Eucharist. He stresses especially the intrinsic connection between the Eucharist and the Church. He considers the Eucharist not as a sacrifice but as a sacrament, and sacraments are, according to him, communally realised by the people of God as a whole. Eucharist is, in this context, the ‘sacrament of sacraments’ and it existed before the hierarchy and is independent of it. In fact, the hierarchy as an institution is sacramental, i.e. resulting from the sacrament of the Eucharist.²⁵³

Heir to the theological legacy of Khomiakov, Afanasiev re-examines in his turn the view that the Church is an *Ursakrament*. Referring himself to Pseudo-Denys’ definition of the Eucharist as the ‘holy assembly’ (ἡ ἁγιοῶτη σύναξις) and as the ‘sacrament of sacraments’ (τελειῶν τελειή),²⁵⁴ Afanasiev thinks that the author of *De hierarchia ecclesiastica* must have borrowed the term ‘assembly’ from the early ecclesial tradition which was still intact during his time. According to the Russian theologian, the expression ‘holy assembly’ is reminiscent of another expression used by the primitive Church to depict the Eucharist as an assembly,

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 205. “...the life of the Church is founded on two correlative mysteries: the mystery of the Last Supper and the mystery of the Pentecost. One would find everywhere this duality in the existence of the Church,” G. FLOROVSKY, “Corps du Christ vivant,” p. 19.

²⁵¹ “By the Spirit Christians are united with Christ, are united in Him, are constituted into His Body,” ID, “Church: Her Nature...,” p. 63.

²⁵² “In der Tat nähert sich eine Linie innerhalb der neuen russischen Theologie, von Chomjakov über Bulgakov zu Afanas’ev, immer mehr der Auffassung, das eigentliche Ursakrament sei die Eucharistie. Gewiß, auch die Kirche ist „Ursakrament.“ Diese doppelte Tatsache führt ganz von selbst dazu, Kirche und Eucharistie in Vergleich zu setzen, ihr gegenseitiges Verhältnis zu erforschen und näher zu bestimmen. Am meisten hat sich darum Afanas’ev bemüht, der Kirche und Eucharistie fast vollständig zu identifizieren scheint. In seiner eucharistischen Ekklesiologie, mit der wir uns eingehender beschäftigen wollen, erscheint die Eucharistie als das eigentliche „Ursakrament“, B. SCHULTZE, “Eucharistie und Kirche,” pp. 257-258.

²⁵³ Cf. J. J. HOLTZMAN, “Eucharistic Ecclesiology,” pp. 5-21.

²⁵⁴ That is, according to Pseudo-Denys, without it ‘it is almost impossible that any other hierarchical sacraments are celebrated’ (*De hierarchia ecclesiastica*, III, 1).

viz. ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ. The use of this expression is not limited to the New Testament writings;²⁵⁵ we see it re-appear in the writings of apostolic Fathers, too.²⁵⁶

What is central to the vision of Afanasiev is a twofold identity: (a) that of the Church and the eucharistic assembly and (b) that of the local Church and the Church of God. This identity is possible because of the inseparable relationship between the eucharistic assembly and Christ.

A) The Eucharistic Assembly and the Church

Boris Bobrinskoy has recently observed that one of the great discoveries of the contemporary Orthodox theology is the centrality given to the Eucharist.²⁵⁷ This fact can be verified in the ecclesiology of Afanasiev. For the identity between the Eucharist and the Church is the central column of Afanasievan ecclesiological system. According to him, the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably bound up. He holds that the biblical expression ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ presupposes those who are gathered for the eucharistic celebration. He draws our attention to the fact that in some of the manuscripts of the *Acts* we find the expression ‘τῆ ἐκκλησία’ in lieu of ‘ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ’ (Acts 2: 47). According to him, it may be taken for the oldest exegesis of ‘ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ,’ and it constitutes an adequate eucharistic definition of the Church. It signifies that “[a]s eucharistic assembly, ‘ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ’ is, in a certain sense, identical to ‘Church’: that is why one of the terms could be easily replaced by the other.”²⁵⁸ This interpretation is vital for the later development of Afanasievan ecclesiological system, which is based on the inseparable relationship that exists between Christ, the Eucharist and the Church. “One cannot separate the Eucharist from the Church. Where there is the Eucharist, there is the Church, and the Eucharist is where the Church is.”²⁵⁹

The eucharistic assembly was not *simply* a gathering of the members of a given local Church; it was the assembly of the Church in its plenitude, the assembly of the people of God in Christ. During this assembly, the participants become the Body of Christ by their communion of the body and blood of Christ. To gather for the eucharistic assembly means to

²⁵⁵ Acts 2, 47: “And the Lord added to their number (‘ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ’) day by day those who were being saved.”

²⁵⁶ “On the day which is dedicated to the sun, all those who live in the cities or who dwell in the countryside gather in a common meeting—‘ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ’. (ST JUSTIN, *Apology*, 67, 3).

²⁵⁷ “Le renouveau théologique de notre époque trouve sa source dans la redécouverte de la centralité de l’Eucharistie, tant dans la vie du croyant que dans celle de l’Eglise toute entière,” B. BOBRINSKOY, “Communion trinitaire...,” p. 175.

²⁵⁸ N. AFANASIEV, “Sacrement de l’Assemblée,” p. 201.

²⁵⁹ ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 31; cf. ID, “Una Sancta,” p. 453; ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 196; P. EVDOKIMOV, *L’Orthodoxie*, 2e éd. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1979) p. 129, hereafter cited as P. EVDOKIMOV, *L’Orthodoxie*.

gather ‘as Church’ and to gather ‘as Church’ means to gather for the eucharistic assembly.²⁶⁰ In the perspective of the primitive Church, those who participate in the same eucharistic assembly were taken as belonging to the same local Church. That is to say, one’s membership in a local Church was determined by the eucharistic assembly. The participation in the local eucharistic assembly was the only sign of full adhesion to the Church of the place. Consequently, those who were found unworthy of the eucharistic-being-together were no more considered as members of the local Church constituted by that eucharistic assembly.²⁶¹ For without being part of the eucharistic assembly it was not possible to be Church.

B) Christ and the Eucharistic Assembly

In Afanasiev’s view, a eucharistic assembly can be identified with the Church because Christ is present there. “Wherever a eucharistic assembly is held, that is where the Church is, because that is where Christ is.”²⁶² And the Church is, as we know, the Body of Christ.²⁶³ The eucharistic assembly constitutes the Body of Christ in an eminent way;²⁶⁴ because “the whole Christ is present in the eucharistic sacrifice. Thus, the eucharistic gathering concretely and mystically embodies the Church.”²⁶⁵ “Where there is the Body of Christ, there is Christ, because we cannot detach Christ from His Body and His Body from Christ. The Body of Christ is indivisible because Christ is indivisible.”²⁶⁶ In this sense, the Church “is Christ in his Body.”²⁶⁷ Since each local Church is the Body of Christ in its eucharistic aspect, it follows:

Each local Church is the Church of God in Christ, for Christ corporally dwells in the eucharistic assembly, and it is owing to the communion to the body of Christ that the faithful become members of his body. The indivisibility of the body of Christ conditions the plenitude of the Church which dwells in each local Church.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁰ “Zu eucharistischer Versammlung zusammenkommen bedeutet daher sich ‚zu Kirche’ versammeln. ‚Wenn ihr euch zu Kirche versammelt... [...] Die Kirche ist da, wo die Eucharistie vollzogen wird; und wo die Eucharistie vollzogen wird, da ist die Kirche,” N. AFANASIEV, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 16, trans. from Russian as found in B. SCHULTZE, “Review on ‘Trapeza Gospodnja,’” p. 444.

²⁶¹ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 72.

²⁶² ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 196.

²⁶³ “The chosen people of the New Testament in their totality comprise the Body of Christ, whose head is Christ himself (I *Cor.* 12:22, 27). To abide in the Church means to be included in the Body of Christ, to become its member through partaking of the Body of Christ,” ID, “Canons of the Church,” p. 57,

²⁶⁴ “Die irdische ‚Gesellschaft’ Christi wird sein Leib – sie wird Kirche. ‚Die Kirche Gottes ist in Christus’, da das Volk Gottes sich durch Gott ‚in Christus’ versammelt; und deshalb gehört es Gott so, wie Ihm Christus gehört. [...] Die Glieder einer örtlichen Kirche erweisen sich als Glieder des Leibes Christi, und wenn sie auf eucharistischer Versammlung beisammen sind, dann sind sie ‚Gottes Kirche in Christus. [...] In der Eucharistie ist Christus in der Fülle Seines Leibes gegenwärtig—ein Leib und ein Kelch—, Sein Leib aber ist die Kirche,,” TG, p. 16, translation from Russian as found in B. SCHULTZE, “Review on ‘Trapeza Gospodnja,’” p. 444.

²⁶⁵ ID, “Canons of the Church,” p. 57.

²⁶⁶ ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 11.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 27.

However, the identity between Christ and the Church is not total. “The Church is identical with Christ because it is His Body inseparable from Him but is also not identical with Him, because it is only His Body, and not Himself. Christ remains personal, and does not become a collective and pantheistic Christ.”²⁶⁹

C) The Local Church and the Church of God

Afanasiev holds that “[t]he eucharistic assembly is the assembly of all the Christians living in the same locality who gather in the same place for one and the same thing (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό), to become, through the Eucharist, ‘one (εἷς)’ in Christ Jesus.”²⁷⁰ The presence of Christ in each of these eucharistic gatherings makes each of them ‘the Church of God in Christ.’

Each local Church is the Church of God in Christ, for Christ corporally dwells in the eucharistic assembly, and it is owing to the communion to the body of Christ that the faithful become members of his body. The indivisibility of the body of Christ conditions the plenitude of the Church which dwells in each local Church.²⁷¹

Afanasiev notes, however, that the being of the local Church cannot be limited just to the period when the eucharistic assembly is held. Christians are and remain members of the Body of Christ even outside the eucharistic assembly. This is because our aggregation to the Church takes place by the sacrament of baptism, which is then immediately followed, in the ancient Church, by the baptismal Eucharist.²⁷² That is to say, the baptised already form a confraternity. The term ‘ἐκκλησία,’ applied to the local Church in St Paul, designates at once the confraternity of all the Christians living in a given locality and their gathering for *the one and the same thing* (“ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό”). It does not, however, follow from this that the ‘ἐκκλησία’ has two meanings; just as ‘confraternity’ presupposes the ‘assembly,’ so also the ‘assembly’ presupposes the ‘confraternity.’ The confraternity gathered “ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό” is the ‘the Church of God in Christ.’ Nevertheless, one must make a distinction between the realisation of the Church at the eucharistic gathering and outside it. Afanasiev explains as follows:

The local Church is identical, yet non-identical, with the Church of God: identical because the local Church becomes the Church of God when it gathers “ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό.” It is in the eucharistic assembly that the Church of God can fully manifest itself; whereas outside it, the local Church, as the ‘Body of Christ’ can but, more or less, become the Church of God, or come close to it. [...] Outside the eucharistic assembly the local Church, as the confraternity of Christians, remains completely in the present aeon, while the Church of God breaks the flood of time, and without exiting the present aeon, belongs to the aeon to come. The apparition of the aeon to come takes place during ‘the Table of the Lord’, to which the Lord returns in his glory [...]. The Local Church becomes each time the Church of God when the eucharistic assembly takes place and it is in

²⁶⁹ ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 11.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁷¹ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 27.

²⁷² Cf. ST JUSTIN, *Apology*, 65; PSEUDO-DENYS, *De hierarchica ecclesiastica*, II, II, 7.

permanent ‘becoming’ outside the assembly. [...] Only in the eucharistic assembly do the new creation and the new world find their place in the new aeon. The local Church in which the Church of God exists is the witness of the tragic break up between the Church and the World.²⁷³

D) The Eucharist Structures the Local Church

According to Afanasiev, the Church entered into history as a society having a determined form of structure. Because, as he puts it, “[t]he organic structure of the Church as the Body of Christ presupposes a particular order, *taxis*, deriving from the very essence of the Church.”²⁷⁴ And the Church as the Body of Christ is fully manifested when the local Church is celebrating the Eucharist. Hence, argues Afanasiev, “the structure and order of the Church comes from the eucharistic assembly which contains the whole basis of the ecclesial organisation.”²⁷⁵ As far as the structure of the Church is concerned, there was lot of uniformity among the early local Churches. The reason is simple:

The basis of the ecclesial organisation was the same in all the Churches, because they came from the very essence of the Church. It was formed in the Church of Jerusalem during the course of its first eucharistic assembly, and was carried on in each local Church, because the eucharistic assembly remains unchanged in time and in space.²⁷⁶

According to Afanasiev, the first eucharistic assembly of Jerusalem furnishes the foundation of what is essential to the structure of the Church.²⁷⁷ The first eucharistic assembly, which coincided with the actualisation of the Church in history, was presided over by St Peter, who then occupied the place which was that of Christ during the Last Supper. All eucharistic assemblies, gathered ever since, must be considered as identical to the first one presided over by Peter.

The ecclesial organisation established during the course of the first eucharistic assembly remains, therefore, fundamentally unique and unchanged. Peter was not a superior apostle who would be placed above the other apostles and, consequently, above the Church.... He was only the first or the eldest among them; he could not, therefore, do without them, for then he would have ceased to be the eldest of the apostles.²⁷⁸

It is by reason of his being the first or eldest among the Apostles that Peter became the ‘one who gives thanks’. This first place of Peter was in later times occupied by the bishop.²⁷⁹

²⁷³ N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 32.

²⁷⁴ ID, “Canons of the Church,” p. 1936.

²⁷⁵ ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 196.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 273-274.

²⁷⁷ “Toute la structure ecclésiastique sera alors repensée par Afanassieff à partir de cette première assemblée eucharistique, où Pierre, au milieu des Douze, occupe pour la première fois dans l’histoire de l’Eglise la place qu’occupait le Seigneur lors de la Cène. Cette vision domine, dans la pensée d’Afanassieff, la conception qu’il se fit de la primauté pétrinienne,” N. KOULOMIZINE, “Les rôles liturgiques...,” p. 216.

²⁷⁸ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 248-249.

²⁷⁹ Afanasiev has this to say concerning this development: “...the ministry of presbyters got developed from the order of the first eucharistic assembly, which has its origin in the Last Supper. [...] They inherited from the apostles their ministry of presidency in the Church of Jerusalem... They inherited from the apostles the ministry

Peter became the head of the Church of Jerusalem, but he shared the ministry of *proéstôs* with the other disciples (so too in the early local Churches, there were many *proéstôtês* among whom there was but ‘one who gave thanks’). The ministry of the bishop thus forms part of the essential and basic organisation of the Church. The eucharistic assembly, which is the *sine qua non* condition for the existence of a local Church, is dependent on the one who presides over this assembly.²⁸⁰ Hence, the ministry of the ‘one who presides over the Eucharist can be deemed neither as a product of the historical development of ecclesiastical organisation, nor as a phenomenon uniquely of the Pauline Churches. Instead, this ministry was found in all places where there was a eucharistic assembly, i.e. Church.²⁸¹

Afanasiev devotes several pages for the exegesis of certain key passages of Ignatius of Antioch²⁸² which, according to him, witness to the eucharistic conception of the structure and organisation of the Church. He thinks that while writing these words Ignatius had in mind both the Last Supper and the first eucharistic assembly of Jerusalem.²⁸³ Thus, the deacons accomplish—in the eucharistic assembly—Christ’s own *diaconia* during the Last Supper, viz. serving others. By presenting the presbyters as the senate of God or as the assembly of the Apostles, “Ignatius attests that at a given moment in the history of the Church, their (Apostles’) place was occupied by the presbyters.”²⁸⁴ This information from Ignatius can be corroborated by the data in the Acts.

of *proéstôtês*, but not the apostolic ministry itself. [...] They were the first *proéstôtês* of the first local Church. By inheriting the ministry of presidency, the presbyters took the places of the apostles in the eucharistic assembly, not only in Jerusalem, but in all other eucharistic assemblies, where priests continue to take the place of the apostles,” *ibid.*, pp. 266-267.

²⁸⁰ “The eucharistic assembly which was assembled for the first time in the Church of Jerusalem had to be recreated in each local Church, because the eucharistic assemblies of all times and all places are identical: they merges with the first eucharistic assembly,” *ibid.*, p. 267. Hence, argues Afanasiev, while founding a new Church, the apostles always instituted *proéstôtês*, *ibid.*

²⁸¹ Afanasiev refers himself especially to the following passages: Cf. *Rm* 12: 8; *Acts* 15: 22; *Heb* 13: 17. 24; 1 *Clement*, I 3.XXI, 6; PASTOR OF HERMAS, *Visions* II, 2; III, 9.

²⁸² “See that ye all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as ye would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the law of God.” (*Smyrn.* VIII, 1); “...your bishop presides in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the apostles, along with your deacons, who are most dear to me, and are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ...” (*Magn.* VI, 1); “And do ye reverence them [deacons] as Christ Jesus,... even as the bishop is the representative of the Father of all things, and the presbyters are the Sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles of Christ.” (*Trall.* III, 1).

²⁸³ “The place of Christ in the Last Supper is later occupied by Peter and by the one who was at the centre of the eucharistic assembly; for Ignatius, the bishop is therefore the image of the invisible Bishop,” N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 318.

²⁸⁴ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 257.

4.1.3. The Principle of Unity of the Primitive Local Church

Countering the argument of Rudolf Sohm,²⁸⁵ who said that in various ancient Greek and Roman cities, a multitude of groupings of Christians co-existed, Afanasiev asserts that “[i]t is held for certain that the Christians of the same city had the awareness of their unity, in other words, they had the awareness of being the Church.”²⁸⁶

Now, what could have generated this sense of unity among the primitive Christians? Could it have been the person of the bishop? According to Afanasiev, although it is possible to consider the bishop as this rallying point from the 2nd half of the 2nd century at the earliest, for the period anterior to it, when monarchical bishops were not yet in the scene, we must find some other principle of unity. Could it have been the city itself that united Christians there? A view in this sense was held by A. von Harnack²⁸⁷ and, following him, by P. Batiffol.²⁸⁸ According to Batiffol, the Christianity of the primitive period was a city-religion.²⁸⁹ City unified the Christians living within its boundaries and made them into a confraternity called ἐκκλησία, which was also known after the name of the city. There was but one Church in every city. But Afanasiev points out that neither Batiffol, nor Harnack, on whom the former depends, explains in the first place on what ground Christianity had to be a city-religion. Batiffol’s claim could be justified only if there existed an essential principle owing to which Christianity had to be inevitably a city-religion. But no such principle is found either in the teaching of Christ or in that of the Apostles. Hence, according to the Russian theologian, if at all the city contributed to the unity of a local Church, it did so only as an empirical factor—i.e. something which exerted influence from without—, and not as something which flows from the essential nature of the Church.²⁹⁰ If we were to consider city (πόλις) as the principle of unity of the local Church, says Afanasiev, then we have to also admit that this unity was

²⁸⁵ *Kirchenrecht*, Band I (München, 1923), pp. 16ff; cf. ID, “Assemblée eucharistique,” p. 1: “L’opinion de Sohm, comme d’ailleurs toute sa conception de l’histoire de l’église primitive, ne fut pas pleinement partagée.”

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁸⁷ A. von HARNACK, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1902-1924, ⁴1927), hereafter cited as A. von HARNACK, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung*.

²⁸⁸ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, “Assemblée eucharistique,” p. 3. Afanasiev here refers to P. BATIFFOL, *L’Eglise naissante*, pp. 41-42.

²⁸⁹ Years before him, A. Harnack voiced the opinion that Christianity developed as a city-religion (‘Städtereligion’) and was organised on the basis of the city. cf. A. von HARNACK, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung*, p. 539. This view will be later shared also by H. DE GENOUILLAC who then adds that Christianity inherited this characteristic from Judaism: “le juif est homme de grandes villes, souvent de faubourgs, mais jamais de campagnes,” *L’Eglise chrétienne au temps de saint Ignace d’Antioche* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne & Cie, 1907), p. 9. According to him, unlike the pagan religions which organised themselves in conventicles and chapels, Le christianisme seul devint tôt et resta, d’une façon générale, organisé par cité.... La forme la plus frappante du même fait, c’est l’unicité de communauté dans chaque ville....” *ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁹⁰ “The link between the Church of God and the polis is not an organic link. If St Paul had addressed to Christians living not in a city but in the countryside, he would have drafted his address in the same way,” N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 3.

merely accidental, a sheer product of historical circumstances. To admit that or to make Church unity dependent on empirical factors is as good as denying it. Briefly, to the mind of the Russian ecclesiologist, the city factor or more generally locality does not play a vital role as far the unity of a local Church is concerned. According to him, the unity of the Church is something unconditional and not relative, i.e. it is not dependent on empirical factors, because it flows from the very nature of the Church.²⁹¹ Although the limits of a local Church often coincided with the limits of a city (πόλις), this factor did not have the value of a principle. It was just a historical coincidence which does not allow us to conclude that primitively Christianity was a religion of cities.²⁹² For quite early on, the limits of the local Church overflowed the limits of the city.

In this context, Afanasiev puts forward the thesis that the internal principle of the unity of the local Church, as far as the apostolic period was concerned, was the eucharistic assembly. During this period, the limits of a local Church were determined by the limits of the eucharistic assembly. As he explains, “[t]he eucharistic assembly is the assembly of all the Christians living in the same locality who gather in the same place for one and the same thing (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό), to become, through the Eucharist, ‘one (εἷς)’ in Christ Jesus.”²⁹³

He reminds us also that the idea of ‘ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό’ as the principle of the unity of the Church is found also in the patristic literature. “It is almost a technical term to designate the eucharistic assembly.”²⁹⁴ We find it not only in St Ignatius of Antioch, but also in St Justin and Pseudo-Denys. When Justin notes that “on the day which is dedicated to the sun, all those who live in the cities or who dwell in the countryside gather in a common meeting—ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό,”²⁹⁵ for Pseudo-Denys Eucharist is the sacrament of sacraments (τελετῶν τελετή) and, as such, it “is a symbol or a proto-type of the Church.”²⁹⁶ Afanasiev’s purpose in engaging in the above discussion was to draw the following conclusion: “for the Christians of the first centuries, the fundamental principle of ecclesial life consisted in being always together (κοινῆ πάντες), gathered for the same thing (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό). This principle formed part of the concept of ‘Church’ ...”²⁹⁷

²⁹¹ “L’unité de l’église locale est un facteur interne, découlant de la nature même de l’Eglise. A cette condition seulement, l’unité de l’église locale peut avoir un caractère inconditionnel, et non seulement relatif,” N. AFANASIEV, “Assemblée eucharistique,” pp. 3-4.

²⁹² Cf. P. BATIFFOL, *L’Eglise naissante*, p. 44.

²⁹³ N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 30.

²⁹⁴ ID, “Sacrement de l’Assemblée,” p. 200.

²⁹⁵ ST JUSTIN, *Apology*, 67, 3. “...en parlant de l’ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό il [Justin] avait en vue l’assemblée Eucharistique,” *ibid.*, p. 200.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 201; cf. PSEUDO-DENYS, *De hierarchica ecclesiastica*, III, 1.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

The Eucharist is not an act of isolated individuals or groups; rather it is an ecclesial act. All must be assembled ‘ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ’ in order that the Church in its fullness can celebrate the Eucharist. It is in this capacity, says Afanasiev, that the eucharistic celebration is, at least during the apostolic times, the principle of the unity of a local Church. As he puts it, “the eucharistic assembly manifests the Church of God in Christ in the plenitude of its unity: it is therefore the unique principle of the unity of the local Church and that of the Church of God which exists in each local Church.”²⁹⁸

However, Afanasiev is himself aware that this thesis of his, to be defensible, must be substantiated by another historical datum, viz. whether or not there were more than one eucharistic assembly per local Church during the pre-Nicene period.

4.1.4. Unicity of Eucharistic Celebration under One Unique President per Local Church

Afanasiev assumes from the outset that during the apostolic times there was but a single eucharistic assembly per local Church—a practice which would be later replaced by a multiplicity of eucharistic assemblies, at least from the 3rd century onwards. If it were otherwise, it would seem as though the process of the development of the ecclesial organisation was a movement from an initial plurality of eucharistic assemblies within the same local Church to a unicity to move again back to a plurality. This, however, seems to be improbable, according to Afanasiev. In his view, the words of Jesus—“where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them”²⁹⁹—cannot be taken as a proof for the existence of a plurality of eucharistic assemblies per local Church in the primitive period. One of the first proponents of this idea, according to Afanasiev, was Tertullian.³⁰⁰ But he notices that the mainstream Church of Tertullian’s time, which was not unaware of the above logia of Jesus, “did not approve the conducting of separate eucharistic assemblies within the limits of the same local Church.”³⁰¹ According to our theologian, the crux of the matter consists in the manner in which this ‘gathering of two or three’ took place. Afanasiev can’t see how Christ can be present in the midst of the faithful who, beside the common assembly, hold other gatherings.³⁰² It is impossible because they are not organised in the name of Christ. For the Church, which is the Body of Christ, cannot be divided just as Christ himself is indivisible.

²⁹⁸ ID, “Assemblée eucharistique,” p. 4.

²⁹⁹ Mt 18: 20.

³⁰⁰ At the basis of Tertullian’s ecclesiology is the principle that “Where there are the Three, there is also the Church which is body of the Three” (*De Baptismo*, 6, 2). Since Church is the Body of the Three, “where there are three faithful, there is a Church, even if they are lay people” (*De Exhortatione castitatis*, 7, 3). Hence, “all gatherings of persons, united in the same faith, and no matter how much is their number, is recognised as Church by the one who founded and consecrated it” (*De Pudicitia*, 21, 16-17).

³⁰¹ N. AFANASIEV, “Assemblée eucharistique,” p. 5.

³⁰² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 5.

Hence, if at all such gatherings existed in the primitive times, they existed not as Church of God, but as sects manifesting thereby ecclesial separatism and individualism—the antipode of union of all in Christ. The union of all in Christ, as our author sees it, is neither a mechanical union of people who, having fixed common goals, come together, nor a unity of philosophical schools based on their common world vision; rather “it must be the ontological union of all in Christ, within the one eucharistic assembly.”³⁰³ Basing himself on the above theological premise, Afanasiev says that “we have the right to suppose that during the apostolic period, the local Church had but one eucharistic assembly.”³⁰⁴ In asserting this he had in mind the following words of Ignatius of Antioch: “Take heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to unite us to His blood, one altar, as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons.”³⁰⁵ As far as Afanasiev is concerned, the eucharistic assembly is the gathering of *all* in the same place for the same thing. This principle flows from the very nature of the Eucharist instituted by Christ.³⁰⁶ because Christ is one and the Church is one. Hence, within the limits of a local Church, there can be but one eucharistic assembly lest Christ will be fragmented.³⁰⁷

Having said that, it is still not impossible, thinks Afanasiev, to argue—based on certain biblical data—in favour of the existence of multiplicity of eucharistic assemblies in the same local Church. One such data is the existence of what is called *domestic Churches* during the apostolic period. The term *κατ’ οἶκον*—often found in Pauline writings³⁰⁸—is generally translated as *domestic Church*. According to our theologian, this translation amounts to an exegesis, according to which the Church is seen as composed of the members of a household (*οἶκος, domus*). If we accept this exegesis, we will have to give a convincing answer as to how St Paul—a relentless advocate of the unity of the local Church—could have tolerated within the same Church such separatist tendencies which catered to group interests. According to Afanasiev, the general tendency during the apostolic period was to stress the unity by the gathering of all the members of the Church in a single eucharistic assembly. Hence, Afanasiev thinks that—following the usual meaning of the expression *κατ’ οἶκον*—we must rather translate it as ‘Church which is in the house of (somebody)’.³⁰⁹ This

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁰⁵ IGNATIUS, *Phil IV*.

³⁰⁶ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 19.

³⁰⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 20.

³⁰⁸ 1 *Cor* 16, 19; *Rm* 16, 3-4; *Col* 4, 15; *Philem* 1-2, etc.

³⁰⁹ In a foot note to *Philm* 2, TOB comments: “l’assemblée chrétienne primitive se rassemblait dans la maison d’un chrétien notoire.” Afanasiev also shared this opinion. Cf. N. AFANASIEV, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, pp. 19-28.

interpretation itself cannot be taken as a strong argument in favour of the unicity of eucharistic celebration per city, if one could otherwise establish with some certainty that there was a multiplicity of eucharistic assemblies in the same city. But that is what we do not know, says Afanasiev. Hence, we have to look for further indications in the New Testament which may shed more light into the real meaning of the above expression.

Thus, writing to the Romans from Corinth during his second visit to the city, St Paul tells them that “Gaius, who is host to me and to the *whole* Church, greets you.”³¹⁰ That Gaius was Paul’s host is clear. How could he have been the host to the whole Church of Corinth as well? Does it mean that all the Christians of Corinth were enjoying Gaius’ hospitality? It seems highly improbable, thinks Afanasiev. What is probable is that “Gaius mettait sa maison à la disposition du “ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ” des chrétiens de Corinthe. Dans sa maison, se réunissait l’assemblée Eucharistique, dans laquelle résidait toute le plénitude de l’Eglise.”³¹¹ Now, argues Afanasiev, if all Christians of the Church of Corinth could gather in Gaius’ house, it should have been also possible for those of Ephesus to gather in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. In the same manner Nympha was the hostess of the Church of Laodicea and Philemon the host of the Church in which he was member.

Afanasiev now picks up a passage from the epistle to the *Romans* which, in his eyes, is rather difficult to interpret: “Greet Priscilla and Aquila ...greet also the *Church in their house*.”³¹² Basing on what we have said above, it would be natural to explain it as follows: Priscilla and Aquila who were hosts to the Church of Ephesus (where they were in exile after their expulsion from Rome), became, on their return to Rome, the hosts of the Church in that city. If they had lived in Rome before their expulsion, it is probable that they returned to their old dwelling place. It is also not improbable that the Christians of Rome gathered in the house of Priscilla and Aquila before their exile and continued to do so even in their absence. So, on their return to Rome, they became again the hosts—which they previously were—of the Church of Rome. But the passage is not that simple to interpret in this way. Given the fact that this letter is already addressed to the Church of Rome, the clause ‘greet *also* the Church in their house’ implies that this Church and the Church of Rome are not the same. How to explain it? “Le fait est que nous ne sommes pas du tout sûrs qu’Aquilas et Prescille se soient installés, à leur retour en Italie, à Rome même. Et même plus : on ne peut pas affirmer qu’ils

³¹⁰ Rm 16: 23.

³¹¹ N. AFANASIEV, “Assemblée eucharistique,” pp. 10-11. J. D. Zizioulas also agrees with Afanasiev on this point: “Aussi longtemps qu’existait une unique église réunie «chez quelqu’un» elle constitua bien toute l’Eglise de Dieu dans cette ville,” J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Eucharistie, évêque et Eglise*, p. 95.

³¹² Rm 16: 3-5.

aient habité Rome avant leur exile.”³¹³ It is probable that the Aquila couple lived, prior to their exile, not in Rome but in the surroundings, not far from it or even in a town nearby. Even if they lived in the city before their exile, they could have very well chosen to live outside it on their return from Ephesus. Then we can understand the meaning of ‘the Church in their house.’

St Paul’s choice of the term *κατ’ οἶκον*, instead of the more common term *ἐν οἴκῳ*, to designate the place where the Christians of a given city gathered to celebrate the Eucharist suggests to Afanasiev the technical character of the expression. This is an expression with an ecclesiological import which can be compared with his more usual formula—‘Church which is at...’—which was used to designate the Church of God as it is manifested in a particular place or region. Afanasiev sees in the formula, Ἡ ἐκκλησία ἡ οὖσα ἐν Κορινθῳ, an ecclesiological expression based on the eucharistic conception of the Church. It conveys the idea that the Christians living at Corinth manifest, in their eucharistic assembly, the Church of God. If the accent here is on the city in which the eucharistic assembly is located, the formula, “κατ’ οἶκον”, highlights the house³¹⁴ in which the Christian community gathers for its eucharistic celebration. That is to say, the expression, “κατ’ οἶκον,” does not include the idea of plurality of eucharistic assemblies in the same local Church. Now if at all there were many eucharistic assemblies in the same city, that would only mean that there were more than one local Church there.³¹⁵

Afanasiev now attends to yet another argument in favour of the plurality of eucharistic assemblies in primitive local Churches, this time drawn from the Lucan tradition as recorded in Acts 2, 46.³¹⁶ According to Afanasiev, the argument stands or falls according to the explanation given to the phrase, “breaking bread from house to house.”³¹⁷ The explanation that first comes to our mind is that the primitive Christians of Jerusalem in their totality used to assemble in the temple for prayers, and for the eucharistic assembly they used to gather in separate houses, thereby implying a multitude of eucharistic assemblies in Jerusalem. But, according to Afanasiev, it is not a satisfactory explanation. He asks: “Pourrions nous supposer que les premiers chrétiens, qui se réunissait tous ensemble pour la prière dans le Temple,

³¹³ N. AFANASIEV, “Assemblée eucharistique,” p. 13.

³¹⁴ According to Afanasiev, there is no permanent relationship between the local Church and the house in which it assembles. Houses can be changed. But it remains the assembly of all – not simply the gathering of a group or a part of the community.

³¹⁵ Cf. ID, “Assemblée eucharistique,” p. 15.

³¹⁶ “καθ’ ἡμέραν τε προσκαρτεροῦντες ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, κλῶντές τε κατ’ οἶκον ἄρτον, μετελάμβανον τροφῆς ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει καὶ ἀφελότητι καρδίας...,” cf. *Jerusalem Bible*.

³¹⁷ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, κλῶντές τε κατ’ οἶκον ἄρτον, cf. *Jerusalem Bible*.

rompaient leur unité et l'union de leurs cœurs dans les réunions chrétiennes isolées ?”³¹⁸ Now what did Luke mean by the expression, ‘breaking of the bread’: was it just an ordinary Jewish meal, with all the religious significance it had in the Jewish tradition, or was it really a eucharistic assembly? Afanasiev thinks that if it were just an ordinary meal, Luke would not have to mention it at all, for any Jerusalem Jew, having attended the Temple services, used to take his meals at home with his family. If it was not a familial meal, then it must have been a common meal. And the common meal held by the Christians of the time, according to the witness of St Paul, was ‘the Table of the Lord’. This means that the ‘breaking of the bread’ of which Luke speaks must be a eucharistic assembly.

As to the wording ‘κατ’ οἴκων’ used in the passage, although from a grammatical point of view, it can be translated as ‘in their homes’, it does not, however, necessarily follow from this that these gatherings took place simultaneously. Thus according to Afanasiev, if we do not hold fast to the idea of simultaneity, this Lucan passage does not come into conflict with the principle of one eucharistic assembly per local Church. Rather it can be taken for referring to successive eucharistic assemblies held in different houses.³¹⁹ As Afanasiev explains it, “[e]n employant l’expression ‘κατ’ οἴκων’, Saint Luc voulait probablement souligner le fait que pour la ‘fraction du pain’ les chrétiens ne se réunissaient pas dans le Temple, comme ils le faisaient pour la prière quotidienne.”³²⁰ Thereby he wanted to convey the idea that the place where the Jerusalem Christians gathered for the eucharistic assembly was not permanent; it could change from time to time.³²¹ They could have gathered in any house for the eucharistic celebration provided it could hold all members of the local Church. Probably, the increase in the number of members could have prompted them to look for larger houses from time to time. If ‘κατ’ οἴκων’ is taken in this way, it implies in no way the plurality of eucharistic assemblies in the Jerusalem Church.³²² Thus, we see that the Lucan usage of the expression ‘κατ’ οἴκων’ is close to its more technical use by St Paul.³²³ Further, this interpretation

³¹⁸ N. AFANASIEV, “Assemblée eucharistique,” p. 17.

³¹⁹ The English translation given by *Jerusalem Bible* corroborates with the opinion of Afanasiev: “And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread *from house to house*, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart” (Our italics). The rendering of *TOB* does not seem to be that clear: “Unanimes, ils se rendaient chaque jour assidûment au temple; ils rompaient le pain à domicile, prenant leur nourriture dans l’allégresse et la simplicité de cœur.”

³²⁰ N. AFANASIEV, “Assemblée eucharistique,” p. 18.

³²¹ “Les chrétiens de Jérusalem se réunissaient pour la ‘fraction du pain’ non pas dans une seule et même maison, mais dans différentes maisons, au cours de la période décrite par Saint Luc....,” N. AFANASIEV, “Assemblée eucharistique,” p. 18.

³²² “‘κατ’ οἴκων’ étant ainsi compris, il ne peut être question de ce que cette expression indique la pluralité des assemblées dans l’églises de Jérusalem,” N. AFANASIEV, “Assemblée eucharistique,” pp. 18-19.

³²³ N. Koulomizine has noted that this argument of Afanasiev is less convincing. As he notes, “La difficulté d’une telle interprétation ne lui [Afanasiev] échappa pas, étant donné la petitesse des maisons de Jérusalem et le

accords with another of St Luke's preferred themes, viz. κοινωνία. For the communion among the Jerusalem Christians, emphasised by Luke, would have been impossible if isolated eucharistic assemblies were held there. In fact *Acts* 2: 44 clearly mentions that all those who believed were ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ, in the same place. And we know that the expression ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ, in Lucan usage, conveys the idea of the unity and the wholeness of the Church, manifested in its unique eucharistic assembly which gathered all its members. Hence the following remark of Afanasiev: "...nous sommes prêts à affirmer que le principe, selon lequel une église locale doit avoir *une seule* assemblée Eucharistique, s'est formé à Jérusalem, cette assemblée étant le fondement de son unité."³²⁴ This Jerusalem tradition was later carried on to other places like Rome, Corinth, Antioch, etc.³²⁵ According to Afanasiev, the Church organisation during this time had not much changed from that of St Paul. All these make highly improbable, concludes the Russian theologian, the existence of separate domestic Churches within the limits of the same local Church, as it is often claimed. Hence he prefers to hold that at least during the first two or three centuries, there was but one eucharistic assembly in every local Church. According to the ecclesiological vision of the period,

le signe de l'Eglise locale était l'assemblée eucharistique dans laquelle l'Eglise de Dieu trouvait son expression la plus complète. L'Eglise locale était là où il y avait une assemblée eucharistique, ce qui excluait l'existence simultanée de deux ou plusieurs assemblées eucharistiques dans une même Eglise locale.³²⁶

Afanasiev also warns against seeing this situation as something accidental or as a sign of underdevelopment of ecclesial organisation.

C'était, au contraire, l'expression de la thèse fondamentale de l'ecclésiologie eucharistique: l'Eglise est là où est l'assemblée eucharistique. On peut aussi formuler cette thèse d'une autre façon: là où est l'Eucharistie, là est l'Eglise de Dieu, et là, où est l'Eglise de Dieu, là est l'Eucharistie. Il s'ensuit que l'assemblée eucharistique est le signe distinctif empirique de l'Eglise. Ceux qui prennent part à l'assemblée eucharistique d'une église locale, appartiennent à cette église. Donc, les limites empiriques de l'Eglise sont déterminées par les limites de l'assemblée eucharistique.³²⁷

Thus, according to Afanasiev, if the local Church, the Body of Christ, is where the eucharistic assembly is, then it excludes the simultaneous existence of two or more eucharistic assemblies within the same local Church.³²⁸ As the manifestation of the Church, eucharistic

grand nombre des fidèles," N. KOULOMIZINE, "Les rôles liturgiques...", p. 215, cf. N. AFANASIEV, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, 22ff.

³²⁴ N. AFANASIEV, "Assemblée eucharistique," p. 23.

³²⁵ For details, see our discussions on "Traces of Eucharistic Ecclesiology in Clement of Rome," and "Eucharistic Ecclesiology of Ignatius of Antioch."

³²⁶ N. AFANASIEV, "Statio Orbis," p. 67.

³²⁷ ID, "Una Sancta," p. 453; cf. ID, "Doctrine de la Primauté," pp. 407-408.

³²⁸ "L'Eglise locale était là où il y avait une assemblée eucharistique, ce qui excluait l'existence simultanée de deux ou plusieurs assemblées eucharistiques dans une même Eglise locale," ID, "Statio Orbis," p. 67.

assembly was the centre of the life of every local Church. All that was vital for a local Church took place during the eucharistic assembly (reception of new members, investiture in view of ministries; exclusion of unworthy members; reception back into the community of the penitent).

4.1.5. Shift from a Unique Eucharistic Celebration to a Multiplicity of Eucharistic Assemblies

If during the primitive times the eucharistic assembly (‘ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ’) was the principle of unity, this does not seem to be the case during the later period during which the rule of one eucharistic gathering per local Church was violated through the principle of Greco-Roman city-states (πολις, *civitas*): now within the same episcopal city, many eucharistic celebrations were held independent of the bishop. This, according Afanasiev, led to “a deformation of the nature of the Church and the nature of the eucharistic gathering.”³²⁹

Afanasiev thinks that an attentive reading of the Ignatian letters can inform us that the first signs of the breaking up of the unique assembly started to appear already during this remote period. We see an Ignatius making use of his authority and persuasion to safeguard the unity of the eucharistic assembly. This situation must have also influenced Ignatius’ characterisation of the bishop as the image of the invisible Bishop.³³⁰ Topologically he occupies the place which Christ occupied during the Last Supper. “The topological doctrine of Ignatius on the pontifical dignity of the bishop was not exclusively the fruit of his theological speculations; it ensued mainly from the necessity of the contemporary ecclesial life.”³³¹

At that time, alongside the unique eucharistic assembly, new private eucharistic assemblies began to be assembled. Ignatius was opposed to this tendency—which was partly necessitated by the growth of the local Church—saying that this broke the unity of the local Church in question. According to him, within the limits of a *polis*, there must be only one altar, one bishop, because there is only one Lord and only one faith. For a time, one would think that he succeeded in this attempt, but in the long run it turned out to be nothing more than a measure capable of merely slowing down the process of break up, and not its permanent fixture. Besides, this insistence of Ignatius on the importance of the bishop, instead of stopping the tendency to create more eucharistic assemblies in the same city, only led to placing the bishop

³²⁹ ID, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 10.

³³⁰ ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 318.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

above all these assemblies. “Ignatius could not have foreseen this consequence of his doctrine.”³³²

An ecclesiological crisis took place when, due to the pressure of circumstances, there were more than one eucharistic assembly within the same local Church. Strictly speaking, the eucharistic assembly ceased to be, then, the sign of the unity of the local Church. Instead, the bishop became this sign. It was in fact a rupture between the bishop and the eucharistic assembly. This was a painful experience for the ecclesial conscience of the Church. Hence several attempts were made to safeguard the unity of the local Church. One such attempt was the Roman practice of *fermentum*, a practice which affirmed the existence of the unity of the eucharistic assembly presided over by the bishop.

A) Fermentum

Taking hint from the report of *Liber Pontificalis* that, during the time of pope Evaristus (100 – 109), *tituli* (titles) were distributed among the presbyters, Afanasiev suggests that it is possible that, during the time of the said pope, the presbyters were entrusted with various units of the city with the charge of instructing the catechumens. This instruction took place during the *σύναξις*, which was also the occasion for the gathering of all the Christians living in that particular part of the city. After the *σύναξις* the presbyters used to distribute the Eucharist already consecrated by the bishop during the central eucharistic celebration. Such local gatherings of the faithful could not yet be called a eucharistic assembly in the proper sense of the word, since the sacrament of the Eucharist was not celebrated there.

But by the beginning of the 4th century, this *σύναξις* got transformed into a real eucharistic celebration, which—thanks to the *fermentum* (according to which a portion of the consecrated host from the Eucharist of the bishop was brought to each of the synaxes which come under his authority and included in their chalices)—preserved the unity of the episcopal assembly. The presbyter of a *titulus*, who used to preside over the *σύναξις* in its primitive form, could not have been a priest. But the one who celebrated the Eucharist to which *fermentum* was added was indeed a priest. Thus the unique assembly presided over by the bishop was divided into several assemblies, whose unity was conserved by a ‘theological speculation.’ That is, although there were, *de facto*, many eucharistic assemblies, it was affirmed, through the practice of *fermentum*, that ideally there was but a single eucharistic assembly in the Church of Rome. In the practice of *fermentum*, the accent was laid on the unicity of the Eucharist, which presupposes the unicity of the bishop.

³³² *Ibid.*, p. 321.

According to Afanasiev the practice of *fermentum* may be considered as the one that stands in the midway of the evolution from eucharistic assembly as the principle of the unity of the Church to the bishop as the principle of the unity of the Church.³³³ In the measure in which this second principle got established, the practice of *fermentum* got disappeared. This took place during the course of the 5th century, when the presbyters of *tituli* acquired the right to celebrate the eucharist in an autonomous manner.

B) *Statio Urbis*

Some time later there appeared the practice of *Statio Urbis*, where the accent is transferred to the unicity of the bishop within the limits of a local Church, which presupposes the unicity of the eucharistic assembly. When the Universal Ecclesiology got established in the ecclesial consciousness, the theological reflection renounced the principle one eucharistic assembly per local Church and held on to the principle of the unicity of the bishop.

4.1.6. Shift from the Eucharist being the ‘Sacrament of the Church’ to a ‘Sacrament in the Church’

As far as the primitive Church was concerned, the eucharistic assembly is a ‘holy assembly’ (ἡ ἁγιωτάτη σύναξις) and the Eucharist, the sacrament of the Church (μυστήριον τῆς ἐκκλησίας), because it is in the eucharistic assembly that the Church of God is manifested in all its fullness as the Body of Christ.

In Afanasiev’s evaluation the Eucharist has lost, in today’s theology and liturgical practice, its significance as the sacrament of the Church; it is now transformed into a sacrament *in* the Church. This transformation got started when the basic principle, ‘one eucharistic celebration per local Church,’ was transgressed. Thus, when the eucharistic assemblies were multiplied in one and the same local Church, the ‘ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ’ ceased to be the principle of the unity of the local Church and ceased to be the manifestation of the Church of God in Christ.

This marks, in Afanasiev’s judgement, the beginning of the individualisation of ecclesial life: from now on the sacraments, especially baptism and confirmation, were celebrated in the assembly of a group of faithful presided over by a presbyter. “Little by little the sacraments become sacramental acts celebrated for the good of each isolated member of the Church by persons who possess the power of celebration.”³³⁴ As far as the Eucharist was concerned, “Having admitted that it is possible to celebrate the Eucharist for a group of members of the local Church, the ecclesiastical power had to admit that it could be celebrated according to the

³³³ According to Afanasiev, “le principe purement eucharistique qui déterminait les limites de l’Eglise locale s’est transformé en principe juridique: les limites de l’Eglise locale ont commence à être déterminées par celle du pouvoir de l’évêque,” ID, “*Statio Orbis*,” p. 72.

³³⁴ ID, “*Sacrement de l’Assemblée*,” p. 207.

desire of one or many believers.”³³⁵ The climax of this individualisation is the private eucharistic celebration in which the priest alone celebrates in an empty Church. An attempt to justify this practice has been made by renouncing the realistic idea of the assembly by transporting it to the domain of the mystic. Thus, it is said that the Eucharist remains the act of the Church even when it is celebrated by the priest alone, because the saints and the dead members of the Church take part in it. This notion, according to Afanasiev, is not only an undue spiritualization of the Eucharist, but also it leads to the splitting up of the notion of the people of God.³³⁶

For Afanasiev the Eucharist is primarily an assembly, a communitarian event. According to him, the expressions, “being always all together (κοινῇ πάντες), gathered for the same thing (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ),”³³⁷ summarise the primitive understanding of the Eucharist.

The ecclesial piety is a ‘κοινῇ πάντες’, and not an individual piety: the Church never denied this latter, but it cannot replace the ecclesial piety. There isn’t in the Church sacramental acts which could be accomplished for the benefit of certain of its members and in the absence of other members of the Church. Always and everywhere the Church celebrates its sacraments as the assembly of the people of God in Christ, and the Eucharist is the sacrament of the Church.³³⁸

It is this nature of the Eucharist as the assembly of the faithful gathered to celebrate the Supper of the Lord which was weakened, says Afanasiev, by emphasising on sacrifice as an isolated sacramental act. As he puts it, “separated from other aspects of the Eucharist, the sacrificial moment loses its ecclesiological character...”³³⁹ As a result of this, the Eucharist itself loses its ecclesial character.

The sacrament of the assembly is transformed into another sacrament in which the people can take part, but this participation is not essential for the celebration of the Eucharist. The theological thinking did not succeed in overcoming this weakening of the ecclesiological nature of the Eucharist.³⁴⁰

4.1.7. Space Factor and the Multiplicity of Local Churches

Afanasiev thinks that the space factor should have contributed to the multiplication of the initial assembly into a multitude of local Churches. As he puts it,

The plurality of local Churches is the result of the empirical factor of space. Because of this factor, the unity and the plenitude of the Church were safeguarded by the plurality of the local Churches, in each of which was manifested the whole Church of God.³⁴¹

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 208.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 212-213.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ ID, “Assemblée eucharistique,” p. 30.

The Church was from the beginning anxious to overcome the space factor and it did so as far as it was possible. Thus the Christians of a city wanted to have a single and unique eucharistic assembly.³⁴² It is possible that, at an earlier phase of history, the Christians of Jerusalem together with those of the surrounding areas formed a single eucharistic assembly. (Yet during this early period itself, it must be believed that the remoteness of the places like Caesarea and Joppa should have led to the creation of separate eucharistic assemblies there.³⁴³) But with the rapid growth of membership, it would become soon impractical, if not impossible, to assemble all the Christians of a big city like Antioch or Jerusalem into a single eucharistic assembly. This situation should have forced the creation of more than one local Church in the same city. Thus we see that the space factor, which played an important role in the emergence of a multitude of local Churches around a city-Church, also produced a similar result within the city itself, when the number of faithful rendered practically impossible to hold an assembly of all the believers at the same place (‘ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ’).³⁴⁴

What really took place was not a division of a unique eucharistic assembly into a multitude of eucharistic assemblies; rather it was the formation of separate local Churches within the limits of the same city in order to facilitate the participation of the faithful in the eucharistic assembly. This is especially true since, the city factor did not belong to the essence of the concept of the Church, as a constitutive element; it was just an empirical element, which the Church indeed took into account as long as it served its needs and purposes.³⁴⁵

L'unité de l'église ayant existé, avant la formation dans la même ville, de plusieurs assemblées Eucharistiques, n'aurait pas été rompue, car elle aurait continué de garder son assemblée Eucharistique unique. La relation entre l'église locale primitive et les église nouvellement formées, aurait été la même qu'entre les églises existant dans différentes villes.³⁴⁶

Thus, according to Afanasiev, as long as the ecclesial conscience held eucharistic assembly as the principle of the unity of the local Church, the above multiplication of local Churches within the same city would not create any problem, for, then, it was not at all a case of the

³⁴² “Il est possible, que pendant les première années de la vie de l'église de Jérusalem, les habitants de cette ville formaient une seule assemblée Eucharistique, conjointement avec les habitant des environs les plus proches de Jérusalem...” *ibid.*, p. 30.

³⁴³ “A Joppé, comme à Césarée, ceux qui crurent ont pu former une église locale... En tout cas, lors de la dernière visite de Saint Paul à Jérusalem, il existait à Césarée une église locale (Actes 21, 8-15),” *ibid.*, p. 31, n. 1.

³⁴⁴ “En conservant l'assemblée Eucharistique en tant que principe d'unité de l'église locale, la conscience ecclésiale n'aurait pas rencontré de difficultés en ce qui concerne la formation de plusieurs assemblées dans une même ville, lorsque le facteur ‘espace’ l’y forçait,” *ibid.*, p. 31.

³⁴⁵ “Just as the inhabitants of two different cities formed two local Churches, the inhabitants of the same city could form two or more Churches. The principle of city [...] did not form part of the concept of the Church as a constructive element; but this principle was an empirical fact which the Church took into account when it responded to its needs and goals, but she could omit it when it became uncomfortable for her,” *ibid.*

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

division of a unique eucharistic assembly into many separate assemblies, but the creation of separate local Churches, each of which possesses its proper and unique eucharistic assembly. Thus, in Jerusalem, Christians could have—like synagogues—divided themselves into different groups, each having its own eucharistic assembly. The same may be said about Alexandria.³⁴⁷ And “the relation between the primitive local Church and the newly formed local Churches would have been the same as that between the Churches of different cities.”³⁴⁸

4.1.8. Concluding Remarks

A) Centrality of the Eucharist

According to the basic premise of Afanasiev, the Church exists only when there is the possibility of a eucharistic celebration. So, in order to bring out the centrality of eucharistic liturgy, Afanasiev examines extensively the New Testament writings as well as patristic literature. The description of apostolic eucharistic gathering, as given in Acts 2: 47— ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, ‘always everyone and always together for one and the same thing’—is taken as a definition of the Church by Afanasiev. In so doing he asserts the communal nature not only of the liturgical worship but also of all ecclesial life. On this point the following text from his article, *L’Eglise de Dieu dans le Christ*, may be enlightening: “L’Eglise locale devient chaque fois l’Eglise de Dieu, quand l’assemblée eucharistique y a lieu, et elle se trouve en devenir permanent en dehors de l’assemblée.”³⁴⁹ That is to say, in his view, a Church is fully Church only at the eucharistic assembly. This is because “[s]eulement dans l’assemblée eucharistique la nouvelle créature (c’est-à-dire l’homme baptisé) trouve sa place dans le nouvel éon.”³⁵⁰ Thus according to him, the Eucharist is the eschatological sign par excellence. The *eschaton*, to use an expression of Florovsky, is already ‘inaugurated’ in the eucharistic mystery of the Church.

According to B. Schultze, although there is a close connection between the Eucharist and the Church, both symbolic and real, we cannot assert an identity between them. But Afanasiev, in his view, is inclined to insist a lot on this identity. In doing so, he neglects other important aspects of Church life. The activity of Christ and the Church is not exhausted in the priestly office and in the Eucharist; besides these, there exist also the teaching and the pastoral

³⁴⁷ “...les chrétiens de Jérusalem avaient dû se diviser en plusieurs groupes, à l’instar des synagogues, et chacun de ces groupes pouvait avoir sa propre assemblée Eucharistique. L’histoire de l’église d’Alexandrie laisse entendre plus clairement qu’il avait existé, dans cette ville, plusieurs assemblées Eucharistiques,” *ibid.*, p. 32.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³⁴⁹ *Id.*, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 32.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

offices. Accordingly, the Church is more than the sacraments and sacramentals and eucharistic sacrifice. Afanasiev lends little attention to the teaching and pastoral offices.

Afanasiev admits that, from an empirical point of view, no eucharistic assembly can gather all the believers. Nevertheless, none of these assemblies may be considered a part or splinter; Afanasiev sees in each of them ‘something more.’ Yet one may ask whether this ‘more’ is real or symbolic.

It must be also pointed out that Afanasiev is suspicious about the elements of ecclesial life developed later. This is clearly evident in Afanasiev’s understanding of the eucharistic communion. Although he is right in maintaining that the eucharistic celebration and the communion should not be separated, it must not be ignored that the eucharistic celebration is also a sacrifice and a sacrificial meal. When the author asserts that the participation in the eucharistic assembly can be realised only through communion, the fact that the Eucharist is also a sacrifice—according to the apostolic tradition—is ignored. When he rules out the question of worthiness and unworthiness in the eucharistic communion, the apostolic admonition in 1 Cor 2, 28 is not taken seriously into consideration. The Eucharist is a sacrament of the living: it requires that the communicant be in a state of grace.

B) The Church and the Body of Christ

The Afanasievan concept of the Church is deeply influenced by the Pauline doctrine of the Body of Christ, as it is expressed in the First Corinthians.³⁵¹ In the Pauline passage—“because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread”—, two notions are associated: that of the eucharistic bread and that of the ecclesial body. This is the first place where the Church is called the Body of Christ because of its association with the Eucharistic Body. As far as Paul is concerned, the community of Corinth is the Body of Christ. This assertion must be based on two facts: 1) Paul’s own personal encounter with the risen Lord, who revealed to him the inseparable relationship between Him and the Church, his Body, 2) the fact that this concept is rooted in the eucharistic experience of the apostolic Church.³⁵² In other words, the doctrine of the Church—as the Body of Christ—was revealed to the Apostles during the first eucharistic celebration on the day of Pentecost. It is this revelation which Paul will receive as a tradition.

³⁵¹ “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread,” *1 Cor.* 10: 16-17.

³⁵² “Selon toute probabilité, les apôtres lors de la Sainte Cène n’ont pas assimilé tout ce qui a été dit par le Christ... C’est dans l’Esprit et par l’Esprit qu’ils ont compris le sens de ce qui a été fait par le Christ pendant la Sainte Cène,” ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 9.

In his insistence on the imagery of ‘the Church-Body of Christ’, Afanasiev seems to ignore other images which are also indispensable to the grasp of the mystery that is the Church. Undoubtedly, the organic and mystical unity between the head and members is better illustrated in the image of the Church as the Body of Christ. But the image of the Church as the Bride of Christ shows more clearly that each of the members of the Church is not a mere ‘material organ,’ but a separate individual being, a person. These persons, when they are gathered in the eucharistic celebration, are in a special way gathered and united both objectively and subjectively. Human personality is not a ‘universal abstraction’ but is, in a certain way, a ‘universal concretum’, i.e. a world in a small format – a microcosm in which the connecting lines of all times meet together, when the rays of the created light and the eternal light encounter. A Christian as a graced person is—much more than a natural man—a microcosm in a special way, when he celebrates the Eucharist in union with Christ and fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

C) The Local Church and the Church of God

The identity between the local Church and the Church of God is central to the ecclesiology of Afanasiev. According to him, it is the local Church which is the Church of God. That is why, Paul addresses himself to the Corinthians as follows: ‘To the Church of God which is at Corinth’ (1 Cor, 1: 2). According to him the very notion of a Universal Church is contradictory to this eucharistic concept of the Church and it did not exist in this primitive period. It was introduced into ecclesial life by Cyprian of Carthage.

Now if we observe how he makes use of this key text, it becomes clear that he carefully avoids those parts which could argue for the existence of the universal Church.³⁵³ It is undeniable that in 1 *Cor.* the term ‘Church’ refers to a local reality. But, as Koulomizine has observed, “il n’en est pas moins certain que dans la perspective de Paul lui-même toute Eglise locale est spirituellement liée à toutes les Eglises et qu’en s’adressant à une Eglise, il s’adresse à elles toutes. Il est certain qu’une Eglise locale ne pourrait exister comme une monade isolé.”³⁵⁴

³⁵³ “To the Church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with *all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, both their Lord and ours,” 1 *Cor.* 1: 2.

³⁵⁴ N, KOULOMIZINE, “L’ecclésiologie eucharistique...,” p. 125. “In Korinth ist also die »Kirche Gottes« anwesend; die Ortsgemeinde darf und kann sich nicht anders verstehen als die Repräsentantin des endzeitlichen Gottesvolkes. Aber sie ist auch nicht allein »Kirche Gottes«; sie soll sich an die anderen Gemeinden erinnern, die alle an ihrem Ort den Namen des gemeinsamen Herrn Jesus Christus anrufen. Der Apostel holt die Korinther betont in diese Gemeinschaft hinein (»an ihrem und an unserem Ort«) und sucht so in ihnen ein »gesamtkirchliches« Bewußtsein zu wecken. Als aktuelles Anliegen darf man vermuten, daß er ihnen jede Möglichkeit nehmen will, »sich hochmütig der Gnade Gottes zu rühmen und sich abzusondern.«” R.

Having said that, the fact remains, as L. Bouyer has rightly observed, that Afanasiev “a mis le doigt sur une donnée essentielle, qui est comme la clé de toute l’ecclésiologie du Nouveau Testament et des plus anciens Pères. L’idée fondamentale du P. Afanassieff est que la réalisation concrète de l’Eglise se fait au plan local dans la célébration de l’eucharistie.”³⁵⁵

This fact was clearly expressed by Afanasiev as follows:

Là où se tient une assemblée eucharistique, là est l’Eglise, parce que là est le Christ. L’Eglise ne peut exister sans assemblée eucharistique et l’assemblée eucharistique ne peut ne pas manifester la plénitude et l’unité de l’Eglise.³⁵⁶

Is each local eucharistic assembly—like every Christian, as we noted above—a microcosm in which the universal Church is reflected? It is undisputed that each and every eucharistic assembly expresses in a special way what is said about any Christian gathering in *Mt* 18: 19-20. But at the eucharistic assembly, Christ is present not only morally and in the power of grace, but also truly, actually and essentially. Where the head is, there is also the whole body, the whole man. In the same way, the Church is present in the Eucharist—in Christ—as bound together with the head. In this way we can understand the real symbolism of the Eucharist established by Christ. It symbolises the unity of the whole mystical body of Christ (1 Cor 12: 27). Following Paul, the Fathers of the Church have also seen in the eucharistic figure the symbol of the unity and wholeness of the Church realised in the Eucharist (Cf. *Did.* 9, 4). From the aforesaid, it is clear that the whole Church is manifested in every eucharistic celebration.

One of the basic ideas of Afanasiev is that the Eucharist expresses the social being and communitarian nature of the whole Church; the entire activity of the universal Church is contained in the activity of the local Church at its eucharistic celebration. This ecclesiology has left its resonance in the orthodox circles. Thus, P. Evdokimov confirms Afanasiev’s position when he says that “[l]’ecclésiologie eucharistique est plus ancienne que l’ecclésiologie universelle. Pendant les trois premiers siècles, chaque Eglise locale était autonome et indépendante en tant qu’Eglise de Dieu dans toute sa plénitude. Ce fait historique témoigne de l’absence d’une ecclésiologie universelle.”³⁵⁷ Elsewhere he points out: “La

SCHNACKENBURG, “Ortsgemeinde und «Kirche Gottes» im ersten Korintherbrief,” in: Heinz FLECKENSTEIN et al. (eds), *Ortskirche – Weltkirche. Festgabe für Julius Kardinal Döpfner* (Würzburg: Echter, 1973), p. 37, hereafter cited as R. SCHNACKENBURG, “Ortsgemeinde und «Kirche Gottes».”

³⁵⁵ L. BOUYER, *L’Eglise de Dieu, Corps du Christ et Temple de l’Esprit*, (Paris: Cerf, 1970), p. 174, hereafter cited as L. BOUYER, *L’Eglise de Dieu*.

³⁵⁶ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 196. “Là où est l’assemblée eucharistique, là est l’Eglise; et là où est l’Eglise, là est l’assemblée eucharistique,” ID, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 10.

³⁵⁷ P. EVDOKIMOV, *Le Christ dans la pensée russe. «Théologie sans frontières»* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), p. 211, hereafter cited as P. EVDOKIMOV, *Christ dans la pensée russe*.

plénitude du Corps est donné dans l'eucharistie, ce qui signifie que *toute* réunion eucharistique locale, correcte, c'est-à-dire ayant l'évêque à sa tête, possède toute la plénitude de l'Eglise de Dieu en Christ."³⁵⁸ More recently, J. Zizioulas reflects the view of Afanasiev when he wrote:

Les Eglises du Nouveau Testament, spécialement celles dont l'origine remonte à Paul, semblent avoir tellement identifié l'Eucharistie à l'Eglise elle-même que dans le témoignage que nous en avons les termes Eucharistie et Eglise sont interchangeable...³⁵⁹

D) Eucharistic Celebration and Mission

Reading through the Afanasievan literature on the eucharistic celebration, one may not fail to notice an important aspect of the eucharistic celebration missing there: he has hardly anything to say about the mission of the eucharistic community. Fully incarnating the Church of God during the eucharistic celebration, the local community of believers of a given place remains Church in a less complete way. The ethical consequences of the *communion* experienced and lived during the eucharistic celebration is missing in the Ecclesiology of Afanasiev. As W. Kasper has observed,

Le caractère de *communio* de l'eucharistie comporte par ailleurs des aspects éthiques importants. [...] il est [...] contraire à ce qu'est l'eucharistie de méconnaître les conditions et les conséquences éthiques de la célébration commune de l'eucharistie : l'agapè concrètement réalisée (cf. Mt 5, 23 s) qui suppose au minimum la mise en oeuvre des exigences de la justice sociale. On ne peut pas partager le pain eucharistique sans partager aussi le pain quotidien. Ce n'est pas sans raison que l'assemblée eucharistique s'achève par l'envoi dans le monde. Le rassemblement et la mission sont deux pôles qui ne doivent pas être détachés l'un de l'autre, ou opposés l'un à l'autre. La mission sans rassemblement devient intérieurement vide et creuse, mais le rassemblement sans mission devient stérile et finalement peu digne de foi.³⁶⁰

In brief, Afanasiev has an ideal picture of the Church and the Church unity; but he misses the reality which was given to the Church in history: in time and space. However, he is right in stating that the historical celebration of the Eucharist must be compatible with the original image of the Church—revealed by God and established by Christ—so that ideal, symbol and reality may not be far apart and exclude one another.³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ ID, "Ecclesiologie eucharistique," p. 130.

³⁵⁹ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "L'eucharistie: quelques aspects bibliques," in: ID, J.M.R. TILLARD, J.J. von ALLMEN, *Eucharistie*, «Eglise en dialogue – 12» (Mame, 1970), p. 36ff, *hereafter cited as* J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "L'eucharistie: quelques aspects."

³⁶⁰ W. KASPER, "Unité et diversité des aspects de l'eucharistie," in: *La théologie et l'Eglise*. Trad. par Joseph Hoffmann (Paris: Cerf, 1990), pp. 446-447, *hereafter cited as* W. KASPER, "Unité et diversité."

³⁶¹ Cf. B. SCHULTZE, "Review on 'Trapeza Gospodnja'," p. 448-449.

4.2. The Local Church as a Communion

4.2.1. Introduction

Afanasiev was appalled by the waning sense of communion in ecclesial life and the rising trend of individualistic tendencies. As he explains,

We profess faith in ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church’... but this faith goes completely unrealized in our actual life.... We cannot even explain why we profess our faith in the Church. Each one remains a separate atom in relation to all the others whom we do not even know. Often, we do not know those with whom we approach the chalice. We enter the Church building for ourselves alone, and not in order to ‘gather together as Church.’³⁶²

This predicament, in his view, is in sharp contrast to what really existed in the primitive Church. As always, Afanasiev turns to St Paul and the Fathers for his support. He points out that the Pauline letters and the writings of the Fathers, while resisting all types of individualistic tendencies, insisted very much on the communitarian aspect of the Church.

4.2.2. Preliminary Concepts

In the idea of communion, inherited from St Paul and the Fathers, both vertical and horizontal aspects are sufficiently given attention to. First, there is the communion between Christ and the believer: “The unity of Christ with the believers is not mystical but ontological: they are one with the Father and the Son through the Son, as the Son is with the Father.”³⁶³ This ontological unity leads to the horizontal aspect of communion viz. the communion among believers.

A) Sacramental Basis of Communion

Having underscored the nature of communion, Afanasiev asserts that the foundation of this communion in both aspects is baptism. Baptism abolishes all divisions. We cannot speak of any distinction among the baptised based on race (there is not any more division between Jews and Greeks) or social status (between the free men and slaves). The walls of division, which existed during the pre-baptismal period, are pulled down with the sacrament of baptism. This is possible because of the unity or communion which exists between the baptised and Christ.

The eucharistic celebration too, as baptism, creates a deep unity among the members of a community. As Afanasiev puts it, the eucharistic participation and communion create “the ontological unity of all members. Thanks to this unity of nature each one is linked to all and

³⁶² N. AFANASIEV, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, 119-120, trans. as in M. PLEKON, “«Always Everyone and Always Together»: The Eucharistic Ecclesiology of Nicolas Afanasiev's ‘The Lord’s Supper’ Revisited,” *SVTQ*, 41 (1997), p. 167-68, hereafter cited as M. PLEKON, “«Always Everyone and Always Together».”

³⁶³ ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 14.

all to each.... The members of the local Church formed one 'body' in their relations because the Church is the Body of Christ."³⁶⁴ Just as a 'Body' (σῶμα) cannot be fragmented, neither can a local Church be fragmented without affecting its constitution. "The concept of «σῶμα» which St Paul applied to the local Church is a derivative from the concept of the 'body' in the eucharistic sense."³⁶⁵ This Pauline teaching was faithfully followed during the primitive times:

The consciousness of the ancient Church did not know the individualisation of the modern ecclesial life. For the ancient Church 'I' could not exist without 'We'; but the 'We' was not a simple agglomeration of the separated 'I's either, because 'We' is the people of God, as a whole, in which each 'I' is included.³⁶⁶

The wholeness of the local Church flows from the doctrine of the Body of Christ who creates the ontological unity of all members.³⁶⁷

As the Body of Christ, the Church is composed not of one member but of many.³⁶⁸

The plurality of members is not abolished in the Church because the very existence of the organism is linked to the plurality of the members. The plurality of the members safeguard the wholeness of the organism and the wholeness of the organism presupposes the plurality of the members.³⁶⁹

B) 'Being always together' and 'Gathered for the same Thing' as the Fundamental Principle of Ecclesial Life

From the perspective of the Eucharistic Ecclesiology, the fundamental principle of the ecclesial life of the primitive Church was 'being always together', 'gathered for the same thing'. According to Afanasiev, Ignatius of Antioch was the champion of this ecclesiology.³⁷⁰ This principle holds together the twofold aspects of communion, viz. the believers' communion among themselves and their communion with Christ.

This principle formed part of the concept 'Church', which presupposed that a Christian separated from others did not belong to Christ, for it is together that all belong to Him, as members of his body, which can neither live nor act without one another. If one acts—all act also, if all act—each member acts also.³⁷¹

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 17.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁶⁶ N. AFANASIEV, "Quelques réflexions sur les prières d'ordinations de l'évêque et du presbytre dans la «Tradition Apostolique»,» Communication faite lors de la conférence liturgique de St-Serge de juillet 1959, *PenOrth*, 1 (1966), p. 8, hereafter cited as N. AFANASIEV, "Prières d'ordinations."

³⁶⁷ ID, "L'Eglise de Dieu," p. 17.

³⁶⁸ "I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" *I Cor* 1: 10.

³⁶⁹ N. AFANASIEV, "L'Eglise de Dieu," pp. 16-17.

³⁷⁰ "Being always all together (κοινῇ πάντες), gathered for the same thing (ἐπὶ τὸ ἅντὸ) – such is the essential theme of the epistles of Ignatius," ID, "Sacrement de l'Assemblée," pp. 212-213.

³⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 202.

4.2.3. Church is an Organism based on Grace

According to Afanasiev, the Church is an organism based on grace. Grace is the fundamental and unique principle of the entire life and organisation of the Church, the moving force behind all that takes place within the Church.

A) Law and Ecclesial Life

Afanasiev thinks that law and juridical thinking which came to control the entire ecclesial life in later times are elements heterogeneous to the Church. Having penetrated into the Church, law formed itself—under the influence of the Roman imperial law (*nomos*)—into a special law viz. ecclesiastical law (*kanón*). Even in its form as *ecclesiastical* law, law did not shed its nature. The ecclesial conscience placed ecclesiastical law alongside the imperial law, as though they were realities of the same order. Considering the opinion which holds that the arrival of law has positively contributed to the consolidation and organisation of the Church government, Afanasiev says that this is but a unilateral view because no one knows what would have been the state of ecclesial life if law had not penetrated into it. Besides, this assertion smacks of mistrust in the action of the principle of grace. Such thoughts, according to him, would never have crossed the minds of the Apostles who were so convinced of the powerful action of God. Besides, thinks Afanasiev, this view indirectly admits that the primitive Church did not know law and was quite content with grace: the unique principle of its life and organisation.

Afanasiev admits that the law has got its place in the empirical life— for it alone can protect one person from other persons or from the society or the government—and the Church recognises its need there. But she does not recognise any role to the law in the intra-ecclesial life.

B) Surpassing of Law by Love

According to Afanasiev, law is the result of the dampening of love among people.³⁷² In the empirical life, which is contaminated by sin, love is often absent; hence it is in need of law. In the Church, however, the situation is quite another. There, the imperfections of empirical life are surpassed and overcome: life under and according to the law becomes there life in grace. In the order of grace, law does not have any place, because the need to defend the individual does not exist there. The role of law is called for when love is missing; but if love regulates the relation among individuals, the need of law is ruled out, thinks Afanasiev.³⁷³

³⁷² Cf. ID, “Pouvoir de l’Amour,” p. 13.

³⁷³ “Il est juste de dire que le droit sauvegarde l’individu: mais si l’Amour règne entre les individus, a-t-on besoin du droit?” *ibid.*, p. 13.

The foundation of the personhood of man, which renders him capable of communion, is his adoption by God, who is the person par excellence as He alone possesses in himself the whole plenitude of life. This divine adoption takes place in the Church. In the Church, one is born to a new life full of grace—life of Christ in man—and the basis of this life is Love. That is why Ignatius of Antioch could characterise Church by the term, Love (*agape*).

L'Eglise est Amour, car sa base est l'Amour du Christ qui nous a aimés et qui a livré Sa vie pour nous. [...] En demeurant en Dieu, le chrétien demeure dans l'Amour, dont l'image est l'Amour de Dieu qui a envoyé Son Fils dans le monde. [...] Demeurer dans l'Eglise—c'est la vie dans le Christ, et la vie du Christ dans celui qui demeure dans l'Eglise. [...] Grâce à la vie du Christ dans l'homme, ce dernier devient une personne dans l'Eglise.³⁷⁴

As a person who remains in Love, a Christian cannot enlarge his personality to the point of being detrimental to other persons.

He who remains in the Love cannot enlarge his person in detriment of other persons,³⁷⁵ because each of them live in Christ. On the contrary, by reason of his perfect Love, he is ready to renounce himself for other persons up to giving his life for his brothers.³⁷⁶

Renouncing oneself in Christ's name is to renounce the essential laws of the individual in the empirical life. In order to overcome the law, one renounces it—an imperfect phenomenon—in the name of a perfect phenomenon, viz. life of grace.³⁷⁷ The Old Testament law, perfect as it was, was surpassed by love. What Christ said in his Sermon on the Mount cannot be contained within the limits of the law. It was the Good News of Love, which does not need law. For the one who lives according to the demands of the Sermon, the law is irrelevant.

Reconnaître le droit, c'est renoncer à la grâce, par laquelle les membre de l'Eglise vivent dans le Christ. [...] Reconnaître le droit, c'est retourner à la Loi, et « si la justice est produite par la Loi, le Christ est donc mort pour rien ».

Donc, dans la vie pleine de grâce, le droit n'est pas nécessaire pour défendre la personne contre l'extension des autres personnes ; il est encore moins nécessaire pour défendre la personne contre les atteintes de l'Eglise. On ne devrait même pas soulever une telle question, parce que l'Eglise, en créant la personne, ne peut pas, en même temps, lui porter atteinte, même dans la moindre mesure. C'est en tant que personne que

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³⁷⁵ According to Afanasiev, law, which is an indispensable element for the public empirical life, has basically a negative character. It regulates the relationship in society by fixing above all what the subject 'must not do' so that a human person is protected from all sorts of aggression from the part of other persons and also from the state. For the human person has a tendency to extend himself to the point of even threatening the existence of other persons and even that of the state. Hence, the state in order to protect other persons and itself, limits the individual by means of law. Like individual persons, the state too has a tendency to extend itself even at the expense of the persons.

³⁷⁶ N. AFANASIEV, "Pouvoir de l'Amour," 14.

³⁷⁷ "Renoncer au droit, c'est surmonter le droit, phénomène imparfait, au nom d'un phénomène parfait. C'est le christianisme qui a annoncé comment surmonter le droit, dans les relations entre les hommes, dans une nouvelle pleine de grâce," *ibid.*, 14.

le chrétien entre dans l'Eglise, qu'il y vit et qu'il y demeure. C'est à chaque homme unique en son genre et irremplaçable que s'adresse l'Eglise.³⁷⁸

C) Power of Love

From the aforesaid, it does not follow that there is no hierarchy in the Church. Indeed, there exists a hierarchy among the various ministries of the Church; it is a hierarchy of love. At the summit of various ecclesial ministries is the ministry of the bishop; as such he should be a model of Love as manifested by the kenotic Love of Christ.

Without Love the ministry of government [...] ceases to be what it is, because the pastors devoid of kenotic love towards the sheep, cease to be themselves sheep of Christ's flock. The pastorate, according to its nature and essence, is a manifestation of the Love, as the supreme ministry in the Church.³⁷⁹

As people entrusted with the duty to administer the people of God, the pastors do possess power. But this power should correspond to the nature of the Church. "The power in the Church cannot be founded on formal and juridical principles either, because the law is outside the Love. It cannot be founded on a religious principle, because God has not delegated his power to any one."³⁸⁰ In the Church, which is agape, there can exist only a power which is based on Love. It is not the charism of power that the God gives to the pastors, but the charism of Love, and through it, the power of Love. The submission of all to all takes place in the Church by the Love of Church toward Christ; in the same way the submission of all to the bishop takes place thanks to his Love and the reciprocal Love of all towards him.

True, a power based on Love is insufficient as far as the empirical life is concerned, because the principle of love is absent there. But that is not the case with the Church. It is an organism full of grace, in whose life, Love is the alpha and the omega. Hence, the power of Love is quite sufficient within the Church.³⁸¹ If we recognise a power other than that of Love, we would be weakening the importance of grace and denying the common charism of Love of all. "The power of Love with which the pastors are equipped is a sacrificial gift of the self and a sacrificial service for others..."³⁸² Only for the love of Christ and in Christ can one acquire this charism of Love to give oneself to others.

4.2.4. Structural Character of the Local Church

The fact that there is no law-based power in the Church does not mean that a chaotic situation was reigning in the primitive Church. Afanasiev here counters the widely-spread opinion especially in Protestant circles, according to which the primitive Churches—at least

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14-15.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22-23.

³⁸¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 23.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

the non-Palestinian ones—were in a permanent state of charismatic anarchy and that only the emergence of the episcopal power put an end to it.³⁸³

According to him, this argument forgets an essential truth, viz. the ecclesial organisation is not dependent on chance occurrences of history, rather it flows from the very essence of the Church. The Church has always had an innate structure which flows from its being the Body of Christ. Those who support the thesis of anarchy argue that we do not find any organisational structures in the primitive period, because the founders of the various Churches did not reckon it necessary to put in place such structures as they expected an imminent Parousia. Afanasiev disagrees with this view. According to him, the duration of the existence of the Church could not have played any role in the organisation of various local Churches.

Dès le tout début, il y avait un ordre, une structure, une harmonie, «taxis». Cette structure, cette harmonie, n'était pas quelque chose d'artificiel et d'étranger : il découlait du fait que le Corps du Christ avait une structure organique. Un organisme ne peut pas exister sans structure bien définie, conditionnée par sa nature.³⁸⁴

The structure and order presuppose the existence of a hierarchy whose role it is to safeguard the former. Therefore, the abundance of charismatic gifts³⁸⁵ in the earliest period of the Church does not mean total absence of the Church organisation. For, although law played little role in the early communities, a non-jurisdictional organisation of the Church was still possible. Hence, concludes the Russian theologian, the ecclesial organisation did not make sudden appearance in the 2nd century. It is, instead, the heritage of the primitive period, and has its foundation in the eucharistic assembly. The primitive Church's choice to call itself 'Church' is revelatory in this regard. This term evokes the idea of an organised people. The primitive Church's choice of this term, in Afanasiev's view, was determined by its consciousness of being the assembly of the people of God in Christ, which manifests itself in every eucharistic assembly, where Christ is always present.

According to Afanasiev, even if a Church were to exist just for a day, it should have had its *proéstôs*.³⁸⁶ In the early period, as we have seen above, the eucharistic celebration, which was unique in every local Church, was presided over by a unique president. And all in the

³⁸³ “Nous refusons catégoriquement d'admettre qu'aux temps apostoliques, à cette époque où, selon opinion généralement admise, il n'y avait pas de droit dans l'Eglise, l'anarchie, peut-être, pleine de grâce, régnait dans l'Eglise.” *ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ In fact, the Church is always in need of charismatic gifts. According to Afanasiev, the end of the charismatic period would be the end of the existence of the Church. The Church was, is and will for ever be a charismatic organisation. (Cf. 1 *Cor.* 14: 33.40).

³⁸⁶ This Greek term stands for the president of a eucharistic assembly. For details on this, *vide* the section on 'The Ministry of the Eucharistic President.'

assembly, because they are established as royal priests, concelebrated with him.³⁸⁷ The structure of the Church, thus manifested at the eucharistic assembly, was capable of manifesting and realising the unity of the Church, because it is an organic assembly, that is, it is a multi-personal unity of all its members.³⁸⁸ Everyone, who participates in the eucharistic assembly, becomes its living member filled with spiritual dynamism: with ‘divine grace.’³⁸⁹ Ecclesial dimension is inbuilt into one’s belongingness to the organic life of the ecclesial Body.³⁹⁰ This is the reason why the eucharistic assembly is considered by Afanasiev as the foundation of every ecclesial ministry.³⁹¹ The plurality of ministerial expressions ensues from the organic integrity of the ecclesial whole.³⁹² Adhering to the Church, each member is necessarily established by the Lord in the ministerial service, as personalised participation in the Church.³⁹³ The nature of the Eucharist as assembly calls for the harmony of different ministries and their continuity especially that of the one who occupies the place of Christ.³⁹⁴ However, it must be pointed out that no ministry can exist outside the concreteness—in time and space—of a living ecclesial assembly: the Church of the place.³⁹⁵

4.2.5. Diversity and Distinction and Complementarity of Ministries

Although no member of the Church is without a ministry, it is necessary to make a distinction between the ministry of the whole people of God and the special ministries accomplished by people who are specially called for it. This basic distinction of ministries led, in the course of time, to the formation of two groups within the Church, viz. the laity and the hierarchy. However, Afanasiev insists that the distinction between the two is not based on the fact that only one of these groups has ministry and the other has none.

But unfortunately it turned out, in the course of history, that one of these groups—the laity—was considered as devoid of any ministry. It was viewed as at the receiving end of the ministry of the hierarchy. It is in this light that the distinction between the hierarchy and the laity was characterised as one between the consecrated and the non-consecrated.³⁹⁶ Transferring this distinction into the liturgical life, in the assembly the ‘sacred place,’ (sanctuary) with the ‘consecrated clergy’ was sharply distinguished and separated from the

³⁸⁷ Afanasiev here depends on *1 Pt. 2: 9. 53.*

³⁸⁸ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, pp. 140-143; ID, “Narod svjatoj,” p. 14.

³⁸⁹ ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, pp. 12-16, 40-41, 85, 98.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21; cf. ID, “Ministry of the laity,” p. 261.

³⁹¹ ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 4; Cf. ID, “Pouvoir de l’Amour,” p. 21.

³⁹² ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 15, 24, 37, 85; cf. ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 17.

³⁹³ Cf. ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, pp. 97-100.

³⁹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 226 and 230.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 231-239; cf. ID, “Ministry of the laity,” pp. 262-263.

‘lay’ people. In so doing, the Church practice returned to the Old Testament priesthood according to the tribe.³⁹⁷ This situation, in Afanasiev’s view, is contrary to the principle according to which no member of the Church can be inactive; each one is endowed with a ministry.

Afanasiev’s view is that the ecclesial ministry—differentiated, manifold and shared by all—remains in its nature a reality which is whole. Since the basis of ministry is grace, all ministries are identical insofar as their nature is concerned; their difference comes from the difference in the gifts of grace.³⁹⁸ Hence, no member can, in the name of his ministry, elevate himself above another Christian brother.³⁹⁹ The classification of ministry doesn’t concern the diversity of nature among them and there cannot subsist a hierarchy of “dignity,” which distinguishes the degree according to “the ministerial importance”. The difference among the members is functional and not fundamental, ontological.⁴⁰⁰

A) Universal Priesthood

Just as love embraces every member of the Church, so also the ministry belongs to every member of the Church. The fundamental charism, from which all ministries in the Church proceed, is understood as ‘universal (royal) priesthood of the believers,’ of the ‘*laos*’ taken as an organic whole.⁴⁰¹ The universal priesthood of the believers realizes the unique priesthood of Christ.⁴⁰² Usually ecclesial ministry is expressed in three areas: in liturgy, Church government and teaching. In all these areas the laity, as members of the Royal Priesthood, have their role to play.

According to Afanasiev, priesthood is primarily that of the people of God. Drawing inspiration from John Chrysostom,⁴⁰³ he says that the Eucharist is primarily celebrated by the entire people of God, both the head and the people.⁴⁰⁴ Hence, it is important to stress the importance of what he calls ‘the concelebration of the whole people’ in the liturgical celebrations especially the Eucharist presided over by the bishop, surrounded by presbyters. “Every Christian present, as a member of God’s people, is cooperating with the bishop

³⁹⁷ Cf. ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 145.

³⁹⁸ Cf. ID, “Pouvoir de l’Amour,” p. 21,

³⁹⁹ Cf. ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 19.

⁴⁰⁰ ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 16; cf. ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 17.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, pp. 3-4, 108; ID, “Ministry of the laity, p. 256.

⁴⁰² Cf. ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, pp. 242-243.

⁴⁰³ “It is not priest alone who renders thanks [he is here speaking of the Eucharist]; it is the whole people,” *In I Cor XVIII*, 3.

⁴⁰⁴ Boris Bobrinskoy has recently noted that Father Afanasiev deserves due acknowledgment for having set the problem of lay participation in the Eucharist and liturgical worship in a new perspective in his book, *The Service of the Laity in the Church*, Cf. B. BOBRINSKOY, “The Church and the Holy Spirit in the 20th Century Russia,” *ER*, (July, 2000), available from www.findarticles.com.

whenever he accomplishes a liturgical act.”⁴⁰⁵ For the role of those who have been appointed by God to the royal priesthood cannot be passive. “The priesthood belongs to God’s people as a whole, and every member plays an active part in the liturgy as a co-minister with his bishop.”⁴⁰⁶ At the eucharistic assembly, in particular, the totality of the faithful of a given place becomes a unique assembly,⁴⁰⁷ and as such each member of this assembly is a ‘concelebrant’; each of them participates in the common fraction and communion.⁴⁰⁸ That is to say, each one of the priestly people took and consumed the Body and Blood at the table.⁴⁰⁹ In fact, the concept of the universal priesthood of all is based on this co-participation of all at the eucharistic assembly.⁴¹⁰ The eucharistic assembly, which is actively co-participated (concelebrated), not only recapitulates but also projects the role of each and all, starting from the assembly and moving towards the life shared in its various dimensions.⁴¹¹

In the beginning, only one member of the community took the place of Christ in the eucharistic assembly, all the others served together around him.⁴¹² The community that concelebrates the Eucharist is in cohesion with the one who leads the celebration: all together, all as one, all in one.⁴¹³ What is specific to the eucharistic president is not his priesthood (for he shares it with the rest of the people of God); rather it is his possession of the charism of leadership of the assembly.⁴¹⁴ All officiate during the eucharistic assembly, but it is expressed through just one. Only one offers; others concelebrate with him. One alone offers thanksgiving; the others join him. The people of God cannot officiate without him; neither can he officiate without the people of God. According to Afanasiev, if this structure belongs to the essence and nature of the eucharistic assembly, the later practice of juridically reserving concelebration only to *the consecrated* (ministerial priests) appears to be an essential shift.⁴¹⁵ As Afanasiev explains, this shift went hand in hand with a change in the nature of the Eucharist itself.⁴¹⁶

⁴⁰⁵ N. AFANASIEV, “Ministry of the laity,” p. 258.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. ID, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 24; cf. ID, “Statio Orbis,” p. 67.

⁴⁰⁸ ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 37, 49, 58-59, 88; cf. ID, “Ministry of the laity,” p. 258.

⁴⁰⁹ ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 45.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 56, 169; cf. ID, “Ministry of the laity,” p. 259.

⁴¹¹ ID, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 55, ID, “Ministry of the laity,” 263.

⁴¹² ID, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 65.

⁴¹³ Cf. ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 6, 144; ID, “Ministry of the laity,” p. 258; ID, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 60, p. 51.

⁴¹⁴ Cf. ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, pp. 14-15; 144-146; 233.

⁴¹⁵ Cf. ID, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 38-39; 59.

⁴¹⁶ “Die Übertragung der Konzelebration des Volkes auf eine besondere Gruppe von Priestern ging notwendigerweise Hand in Hand mit einer gewissen Verdunkelung der Nature der Eucharistie,” *ibid.*, p. 56 (as cited in B. SCHULTZE, “Review on ‘Trapeza Gospodnja’,” p. 445); “Die Eucharistische Versammlung hörte auf, Anzeichen für die Einheit der örtlichen Kirche zu sein, da sie nicht mehr, wie das früher der Fall war, die ganze

If Afanasiev is for the full participation of the laity in the liturgical domain, he is more reserved as far as their participation in the government and magisterium of the Church is concerned. According to him, “since the early times the people of God was governed and instructed by those who had been set to the ministries of government and teaching.”⁴¹⁷ This is because special gifts are needed for the exercise of these ministries. Those who were destined for these ministries were called by God not in the sacrament of baptism (which is common to all the members of the people of God) but by the sacrament of ordination, in which they received special gifts. Hence “Church-government and teaching are prerogatives of those who are specially called, and not of the whole of God’s people. The people do not govern themselves or instruct themselves; it is governed and instructed by its pastors, in accordance with the will of God who gave the work of the ministry.”⁴¹⁸

However, as Afanasiev sees it, the people of God are not entirely passive as far as the ecclesial government and teaching are concerned. These spheres too call for a participation of the laity; only that this participation is of a different kind. Although the laity do not possess the gifts of government and teaching, they do possess the gifts of ‘judgement’ and of investigation which are special gifts entrusted to the people of God. They enable the people to judge and examine what is going on in the Church and attest whether or not it takes place according to God’s will. In the early Church the people participated in all acts of the Church—receiving catechumens and penitents, ordination, excommunication, etc. Thus “the faithful are governed by their bishop not passively but with their own active participation, thanks to the full knowledge of what is happening in the Church and the testimony concerning what is God’s will.”⁴¹⁹ This testimony of the people was expressed through the consent (given by people to what is to be done in the Church) and reception (of what has happened in the Church as being in accordance with the will of God). Through the consent and reception, it is not the will of the people which is manifested, but the will of God.

Afanasiev holds the view that ever since the time of Constantine, Church organisation has given little room to people’s ministry of witness. “We know that the multiplicity of ministries has gradually disappeared from the life of the Church and been replaced in fact by one single ministry: the priesthood.”⁴²⁰ Hence, he calls for “a revival of the ministry of witness of the

Kirche Gottes in ihrer Fülle zeigt. Die Pfarrei ist nur ein Teil der Bischofskirche, und drückt deshalb nicht die Gesamtkirche aus,” N. AFANASIEV, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 63 (as cited in B. SCHULTZE, “Review on ‘Trapeza Gospodnja,’” p. 445).

⁴¹⁷ ID, “Ministry of the laity,” p. 259.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

whole people, for we must revert to a form of Church-life in which the people participate in all activities. In this connection we should recall the words of Cyprian of Carthage, which have been forgotten in the course of history: ‘From the very beginning of my episcopacy I made it a rule not to take any decision without your advice (i.e. the advice of the Presbyters) and without the agreement of the people.’⁴²¹

B) Hierarchical Ministry

According to Afanasiev, the hierarchical ministry is the most important of all ministries because the very existence of the Church depends on it. Just as Christ is the unique Pastor of the Church, so too, the bishops and presbyters are pastors of the Church in its historical *esse*. But they lead Christ’s flock, that is, they govern and teach the people of God, without ceasing to be at the same time sheep of this flock. This fact is not without consequence for the understanding of the position of the hierarchical ministers vis-à-vis the ecclesial community:

They are not *above* the flock, but *within* the flock, and it is because they are in the flock that they are pastors. If they were outside the flock, they would not be the sheep of Christ, and therefore they could not have been pastors.⁴²²

It is also remarkable to note in this context, as Afanasiev points out, that during the installation of a pastor, the Oriental tradition does not pray that he may be bestowed with God’s power but rather it prays that he may be filled with the grace of the ministry of pastorate. The reason is the following: were the pastors to possess God’s power, they would not be then within the flock of Christ but above it. It would then mean that they would no more be part of the sheep of Christ. In fact, the hierarchy cannot replace, in empirical life, Jesus Christ, the unique Pastor because no one can replace Christ as the Head of the Church. The pastors are not vicars of Christ on earth because in the Church there is but one Anointed; it is Christ. The idea of the vicariate of the pastors leads to the weakening of the importance of Christ’s own pastorate, as it is transposed into an invisible domain (invisible Church).

According to our theologian, the ministries, from the origins of the Church, have found an organic complementarity in their multilateral diversity.⁴²³ All ministries converge towards the ‘being together of all in the same place’ (ἐπὶ τὸ ἅπαντα): it is on the mutual relation of all that depends the veracity of the Church.⁴²⁴ The nature of the Eucharist as assembly, calls for the harmony of different ministries and their continuity especially that of the one who occupies the place of Christ. The eucharistic assembly, concelebrated by the people together with the

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 263. The author refers himself to CYPRIAN, *Epistle*, XIV, 4.

⁴²² ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 16.

⁴²³ Cf. ID, “Conscience canonique,” p. 114.

⁴²⁴ ID, “Ministry of the laity,” p. 260.

one who presides, attests to the fundamental ecclesiality of the ‘being together.’⁴²⁵ This assembly is the setting from which the hierarchical ministry takes its origin, and not from any juridical decision.

Afanasiev thinks that the characterisation of the hierarchical ministries in terms of power is linked with the penetration of law into the ecclesial life. He goes on to assert that “C’est dans la hiérarchie que se trouve le point par lequel le droit a commencé à pénétrer dans l’Eglise, et s’affirmer dans elle.”⁴²⁶ But the fact remains: the law cannot generate ministry.

The law defines neither the beginning, nor the end of the pastorate, because the source of grace, without which there cannot be ministry, is not found in the law, but in God, who gives the gift of grace ‘to each one individually as he wills’ (1 Cor 12, 11).

Law is not at the basis of the ministry of pastorate, for there does not exist law in the Church. The ministry of pastorate based on a juridical power is a historical temptation, resulting from the penetration of law into the Church.⁴²⁷

In fact, the power that law gives, by its nature, is not meant for service, it demands rather service from others. The power in the Church has a different source, viz. the eucharistic assembly. Such power is not an instrument of subjugation, but a service. The idea of power as ministry was first proposed by St Paul. Only power as service can be acceptable to the Christian conscience. The relationship between the pastor and the faithful is not founded on power which the former possesses. The leaders of the flock, the pastors, lead them not as possessors of power, but by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.⁴²⁸ The people led by the pastors are already established in the ministry of the royal priesthood. The ministry of the pastors is entirely dependent on God’s election. “They are pastors because it is God who chose and established them by the communication of the gifts of grace, and not because they were chosen by the people of God so that they may serve them.”⁴²⁹ However, a member-leader cannot preside without the continual dialogue with the members of body actively linked and disposed.⁴³⁰ “They [pastors] serve the Church and in the Church because they possess a special grace for their ministry. It is because they serve the Church that they possess this special grace.”⁴³¹

⁴²⁵ Cf. ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 40.

⁴²⁶ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 15.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴³⁰ ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 238; ID, “Ministry of the laity,” p. 263; ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 20: “Voilà pourquoi il y a dans . . . , et de son intégrité.”

⁴³¹ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 16.

4.2.6. The Ministry of Eucharistic President

Considering the importance given to the eucharistic assembly in the ecclesiology of Afanasiev, one is not surprised to find several pages devoted to the ministry of the eucharistic president.⁴³² In this section, our attempt would be to briefly summarise the Afanasievan presentation of the ministry of *proéstôs*.

A) Development of the Ministry of Proéstôs

1) Terminology

According to Afanasiev, although the essential service of the leadership has always existed,⁴³³ the terms for designating it were only progressively determined. We find in the New Testament, beside the use of such terms as *proéstôs*, pastor and *hègouménos*, two other terms, viz. presbyter and bishop. These appellations refer to an identical ministerial reality, the one which is assumed by the one who presides at the ‘common fraction of the bread,’⁴³⁴ even though neither the content of this ministry nor the manner of expressing it was uniform.⁴³⁵ Hence, it would be interesting to see in what form the ministries of presbyterate and episcopate existed in the primitive Church and how they are linked to the *proéstôtês* of Churches.

Tracing the origin of the term presbyter, Afanasiev assumes that this denomination is linked to the tradition of the antique world. Following this tradition, members of each local Church were divided into the youngsters and the elders not only on the basis of their age but also on the basis of the time of their entry into the Church. In a community, the elders (*présbytéroï*) possessed a greater authority than the youngsters. As elder members of the community, they occupied the first places in the eucharistic assembly. At this stage, an elder is not identical with the *proéstôs*, but the *proéstôtês* were chosen from among them. Thus the word presbyter initially referred to both elders who were established as *proéstôtês* and who were not. Later, to avoid any confusion, the expression *présbytéroï kathéstaménoi* was used to refer to the presbyters established as *proéstôtês*. At a further stage, the term presbyter came to be used uniquely in reference to the ministry of *proéstôs*. But ever since the particular ministry of episcopate appeared, presbyter designates uniquely the second degree of priesthood and bishop is understood as exercising the ministry of *proéstôs*.

⁴³² In order to retain the force of its original meaning, Afanasiev chose to use the transliteration of the original Greek term (προεστώς), namely *proéstôs*.

⁴³³ Cf. ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, pp. 87, 183, 206; ID, “Ministry of the laity,” p. 256.

⁴³⁴ ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, pp. 206, 214, 229-230, 250.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 102, 161, 223.

In the scriptural use, however, the terms ‘presbyter’ and ‘bishop’ are interchangeably used. This fact is evident in *Acts* 20: 28.30. Addressing the presbyters (presbuterou, designated by Luke) of Ephesus, Paul calls them bishops (episkopouj). In this verse, the close relationship between this ministry and pastorate is very clear. Church is here represented as God’s flock. Paul reminds the assembled presbyters that they are appointed as bishops (egeto episkopouj) in order to pasture the Church of God (poimainein thn ekkhhsian tou/qeou).⁴³⁶ They have to also protect the sheep: this protection is closely bound up with the safeguarding of the orthodox faith entrusted to local Churches.⁴³⁷ It was one of the principal duties of the episcopate. Another text, which conveys a similar idea is *1 Peter* 5: 1-4: “So I exhort the elders (Presbyterous - presbuterouj) among you, as a fellow elder (*sympresbyteros* - sumpresbuterouj) and a witness (*kai martys* - kai.martuj) of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock.” According to the text, the ministry of the presbyter is none other than pastorate. And the pastorate signifies the presidency of the local Church which includes also the presidency of the eucharistic assembly. “If we admit that Peter is the author of the epistle, we must admit that he had presided over a local Church... This Church was *synèklèktè*, the ‘co-elect’ of the Churches to which Peter addresses himself as apostle.”⁴³⁸ When Peter considers himself as a fellow presbyter of the presbyters of these Churches, he has in mind mainly the first presbyters there.

Now, turning to patristic literature, Afanasiev says that we can glean similar ideas in *1 Clement*. Thus, chapter XLIV of this epistle contains allusions suggesting that the bishop and the presbyter designate one and the same ministry. Besides, it is to be noted that while we find the author using a couple of times the term ‘bishop’ along with the term ‘deacon’, the term ‘presbyter’ or ‘*hègouménos*’ is never found together with the term ‘bishop’. We find two other terms designating presbyter, viz. *hègouménoi* and *proègouménoi*. Although making a clear-cut distinction between the two is difficult, Afanasiev thinks, however, that if *hègouménoi* stands for those who have a superior ministry (i.e., presbyters and deacons), then

⁴³⁶ In a similar fashion, Paul asked Titus to “appoint elders in every town (*katasthshj kata polin presbuterouj*).” (*Tit.* 1, 5) Later (v. 7ff.), when describing the qualities of this minister, he refers to him as *episcopus*: “For a bishop (*episkopon*), as God’s steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain...” The qualities of the bishop (*episkophj*) described in *1 Tim* 3: 1-8 are same as those of the presbyters described in the letter to Titus. This permits us to suppose that the ‘bishop’ in Timothy is a synonym of presbyter.

⁴³⁷ “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock,” *Acts*, 20: 29.

⁴³⁸ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 281.

proègouménoi designates specifically the presbyter. On the contrary, if *hègouménoi* stands for the presbyter, then *proègouménoi* must have referred to the *proto presbyter*.

II) Ministry of the Proto Presbyter

Towards the second half of the second century we come across bishops whose ministry is different from that of the presbyters. A local Church of this period has but one bishop. How can we explain this change?

According Afanasiev, as a rule, when changes are imposed on ecclesial life, they are also accompanied by resistance and struggle, as ecclesial tradition does not easily accept any innovation.⁴³⁹ As far as the appearance of the particular ministry of episcopate is concerned, tradition has not left any trace of a struggle between presbyter and bishops. Basing on this indication, Afanasiev concludes that the episcopate attested in the second century should have taken its origin during the preceding period, namely the apostolic period. In order to understand this ministry and its place within the local Church we must situate ourselves within the context which gave rise to it and favoured its development.

Afanasiev's argument is that already during the apostolic times there were many presbyters in a local Church. Among them one—whom he calls 'first-presbyter' (proto-presbyter)—regularly took the leadership role in the eucharistic celebration. As far as his ministry is concerned, the first presbyter did not differ from the other presbyters. However, "being the first among them, he manifested their ministry in its totality, while other presbyters constituted a sort of council around him."⁴⁴⁰ During the course of the eucharistic assembly, the first presbyter becomes the 'one who gives thanks', the 'one who offers gifts.' In fact, offering gifts, offering spiritual gifts was not the prerogative of the presbyters, but it belonged to the entire people of God. In the spiritual temple, the whole people of God serve God as priests; but they do so through the intermediary of the 'one who gives thanks'. Occupying the central place in the eucharistic assembly, he manifested the priestly ministry of the people of God. Thus the officiating ministry of the first presbyter was a function of the place he occupied in the eucharistic assembly. In his quality as the president of the eucharistic assembly, he officiated all other sacramental acts (e.g. the sacrament of aggregation into the local Church, the investiture of prophets, teachers etc.).

As an evidence of the presence of the first-presbyter in the early communities, Afanasiev turns to the witness given by Clement of Rome. His point is that despite our ignorance of what really happened in Corinth, it is clear that the Corinthian crisis had to do with the

⁴³⁹ "Nihil innovetur nisi quod traditum est," Pope Stephen writing to Cyprian; *Epist.* LXXIV, 1, 2.

⁴⁴⁰ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 283.

deposition of legitimate presbyters from their ministry (whether it concerned one or many presbyters is not clear from the text) and this, in the eyes of Clement and the Church of Rome, was a grave matter. Afanasiev argues that it is difficult to account for the seriousness of the matter unless there was among the deposed presbyters also the first presbyter (as deposing of presbyters as such was not uncommon in antiquity). This fact is further suggested by Clement's characterisation of the presbyter as 'one who offers gifts'. Clement distinguishes between 'one who offers gifts' (in reference to him, Clement says that it is a grave sin to deprive from the episcopate those who have piously and blamelessly offered gifts) and other presbyters (with regard to these latter, he says that it is not just to depose those who were established in their ministry by the consent of the whole Church). Thus, *1 Clement* marks an important stage in the development of the ministry of the first *proéstôs*. According to Clement, the first presbyter fulfils a particular function—that of offering gifts to God. He calls this particular function 'episcopal dignity'. It seems that for Clement the 'episcopal dignity' of the first presbyter is different from the '*leitourgia*' of other presbyters.

The position of 'the first-presbyter' was a permanent one. He was the one who regularly presided over the eucharistic assembly and during which, he alone 'gave thanks' and 'offered gifts.'

The places of *proéstôtés* in the eucharistic assembly were permanent; those who occupied them did it in a permanent manner. The eucharistic assembly which established the presbyters in view of the ministry of *proéstôtés*, accomplishing thus the will of God, could not destitute them according to its whims and fancies. God who called them to this ministry, kept them by the gifts of the Spirit, with the exception of those who disavowed their ministry.⁴⁴¹

a) *The Investiture of the First Presbyter*

As no Church could exist without its eucharistic president, the investiture of the *proéstôs* always took place along with the foundation a new Church. He was then the unique *proéstôs* of that Church. When other presbyters were appointed he became the first among them.

Now the question remains as to how a first presbyter was appointed where there were already many presbyters. According to Afanasiev, he was chosen from among the presbyters not for a new ministry but for a particular place. That is to say, by becoming the first presbyter, the candidate does not cease to be a presbyter. His investiture must be considered rather as an ecclesial act by which one person is 'appointed' for a precise place or situation. Since it was not a change of ministry, there wasn't a petition for a particular charism during the investiture ceremony. The investiture of the first presbyter consisted of two stages:

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

election and witness of the Church attesting that the appointment was accomplished in conformity with the will of God.

b) Transformation of the First-Presbyter to Bishop

In the course of history, the ministry of the one who occupied the central place in the eucharistic assembly in a permanent manner (viz. the first-presbyter) became a particular ministry: that of the bishop. According to Afanasiev, Ignatian epistles mark a watershed as far as the transformation of the *proto-presbyters* of the apostolic times into the *monarchical bishops* of the patristic times is concerned.⁴⁴² As he explains: “[t]he word ‘bishop’ loses, in the epistles of Ignatius, its initial imprecision; it would be applied only to the head of a local Church. The proto-presbyter is not any more confused with other presbyters as in the Epistle of Clement; he is separated from them.”⁴⁴³ Thus, “the letters of Ignatius mark the point of departure, at least, the initial stage of the transformation of the first presbyter into bishop.”⁴⁴⁴ Afanasiev would, however, quickly add: “The bishop of Ignatian epistles is not a new personality, having a new ministry: it is the proto-presbyter of the apostolic times, one of whose functions has become a new ministry.”⁴⁴⁵ A transformation in this sense was made possible by the fact that the central place in the eucharistic assembly belonged in a stable manner to the same minister—the first presbyter.

Afanasiev thinks that the proto-presbyter’s position in the eucharistic assembly might have inspired Ignatius to apply to him the priestly dignity of Christ. “The eucharistic assembly manifests, in each local Church, the fullness of the Church of God, while being at once the ‘icon’ of the Last Supper. The place of Christ in the Last Supper is later occupied by Peter and by the one who was at the centre of the eucharistic assembly; for Ignatius, the bishop is therefore the image of the invisible Bishop.”⁴⁴⁶

In Afanasiev’s view, this development was not without risk. As long as this doctrine served to underline the pre-eminence of a local Church’s eucharistic president (προεστώς), it is well

⁴⁴² On this point R. E. Brown is also in agreement with Afanasiev. According to this biblical scholar, during the time of Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 110), “in many communities one bishop had emerged as the head of a college of presbyters,” *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (New York: Paulist Press, 1970), p. 38 [*hereafter cited as R. E. BROWN, Priest and Bishop*]. This development is not without roots in the earlier institutions. Thus, the presbyters used to work under the authority of itinerant Apostle/his delegates. After the exit of the apostle it was only logical that the president instituted by him emerges and the functions collectively exercised by presbyteral college progressively becomes concentrated in a single person.

⁴⁴³ N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 307.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 311. “We do not know whether Ignatius was a first presbyter-become-bishop, but history consecrated him the first bishop. His life, his activity, and especially his death, were the factors more important than this process of transformation,” *ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 307. “L’ancien est devenu nouveau, chez Ignace, du fait d’un éclairage différent,” *ibid.* p. 308.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

and good. But if it led to understanding the eucharistic presidency as stemming from the priesthood, it is not at all a development in the right direction, thinks the Russian ecclesiologist. And, in his opinion, precisely that is what would happen in the post-Ignatian period:

The doctrine of the Church is separated from the Eucharist [...]. The ministry of the high priest is no more dependent on the Eucharist [...]. Only the one who had the charism of the high priest could occupy, in the eucharistic assembly, the place which was that of Christ during the Last Supper and that of Peter in the Church of Jerusalem. As the high priest, the bishop was the *προεστώς* of the local Church.⁴⁴⁷

Earlier, the eucharistic assembly was understood as the starting point and the source of the ministry of the proto-presbyter. Being the manifestation of the Church, the *ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό* created the proto-presbyter, as it could not exist without him. Now, as high priest, the bishop is still established *in* the Church, but he is not any more created *by ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό*. Although the *ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό* depends on the bishop, it can exist *without* him, if it has a *προεστώς* designated by the bishop. As a result, “the limits of the local Church are enlarged to coincide with that of the authority of the bishop, the high priest. The principle of unity of the local Church, which was eucharistic, becomes episcopal.”⁴⁴⁸

B) *Proéstōs* and the Local Church

Of all hierarchical ministries, Afanasiev gives a central role to the ministry of the *Proéstōs*.⁴⁴⁹ According to him, “[t]he ministry of *proéstōs* is a particular ministry because only some members of the people of God are called to it. He thinks that “from an ecclesiological point of view, it is doubtless that the local Churches had at their head, from the outset, one single person.”⁴⁵⁰ This is because from the beginning, the Church is constituted around the table of the Lord; in this celebration one single person ensured the ministry of leadership.⁴⁵¹ In fact, it was the place occupied by Christ during the course of the Last Supper, by Peter during the course of the first eucharistic assembly.

I) *Proéstōs* and the Eucharistic Assembly

As Afanasiev conceives it, the ministry of the *proéstōs* is intimately bound up with the Eucharist. Without the presence of the *proéstōs* the eucharistic celebration was impossible. The *proéstōs*, on his part cannot exist outside the eucharistic assembly. Hence, wherever a new local Church is created, simultaneously there emerges the ministry of the *proéstōs*. “The

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 322-324.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 325. See *supra* our discussion on “Shift from Unique Eucharistic Celebration to Multiplicity of Eucharistic Assemblies.”

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. ID, “Pouvoir de l’Amour,” p. 15; ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 144, 176.

⁴⁵⁰ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 30.

⁴⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 30.

realisation of the local Church merged itself with the realisation of the ministry of the *proéstôs* within it.”⁴⁵² It is the Eucharist which creates the *proéstôs*. His position within his own Church,⁴⁵³ among the members of the community,⁴⁵⁴ and as the first among the presbyters,⁴⁵⁵ and deacons gives him a determinant significance.

Owing to this fact, it must be asserted—says Afanasiev—that it is not the bishop who creates the valid Eucharist out of his proper power over the sacraments and over the Christian people. The episcopal ministry—though central—is derived, as all the ministries, from the universal priesthood of believers.⁴⁵⁶ The bishop is not essentially the administrative head of a ‘diocese,’ who holds the position of the representative of a superior ecclesiastical power (as ecclesiastical ‘prince’),⁴⁵⁷ or of the representative of the people (or delegated official).⁴⁵⁸ According to the perspective of the primitive Church, the ministry of the *proéstôs* was not viewed in terms of the ‘power’ he might possess. He indeed had power—and this power was drawn from the eucharistic assembly⁴⁵⁹—and it must be expressed as the mutual consensus in dialogue between the pastor and the people.⁴⁶⁰

II) *The Eucharistic President and the Local Church*

According to Afanasiev, from the perspective of the primitive Church, the leadership role in the eucharistic assembly is inseparable from the leadership role in the local Church itself.⁴⁶¹ Hence, the one who was at the head of the eucharistic assembly was also at the head of the local Church.⁴⁶² “A eucharistic assembly is impossible without its *proéstôs*, and, consequently, the local Church cannot exist without him either.”⁴⁶³ The ministry of *proéstôs* finds its functional specificity in relation to the assembly, in which it is exercised. The

⁴⁵² ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 338.

⁴⁵³ ID, “Infaillibilité de l’Eglise,” p. 199: cf. ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, pp. 39-40.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 63, 67; ID, “Narod svjatoj,” p. 16; ID, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 14, ID, “Statio Orbis,” p. 67: “D’autre part selon la nature... par Ignance d’Antioche.”

⁴⁵⁵ ID, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, pp. 31-35; ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 178.

⁴⁵⁶ ID, “Narod svjatoj,” pp. 16-17; ID, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 14.

⁴⁵⁷ ID, “Statio Orbis,” p. 72; ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 67

⁴⁵⁸ ID, “Statio Orbis,” pp. 72-73; The system of democratic procedure does not correspond to the organic nature of ecclesial communion: ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 223; ID, “Ministry of the laity,” p. 262: “The people cannot transfer this ministry... to serve Him in the Church.”

⁴⁵⁹ “On ne peut pas en effet, trouver dans l’Eglise d’autre base du pouvoir de l’évêque, si ce n’est l’assemblée eucharistique,” ID, “Pouvoir de l’Amour,” p. 16.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-46, 149, 178; ID, “Ministry of the laity,” pp. 260-261; ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 20; ID, “Narod svjatoj,” pp. 115-116.

⁴⁶¹ Cf. ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” 30.

⁴⁶² Cf. ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 60.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 305-306: “...sans ce ministère, ils ne pouvaient pas édifier les églises locales.” ID, “Apôtre Pierre et évêque de Rome,” p. 632.

apostolic ministry was a particular gift within the community, not an investiture of power over the community.⁴⁶⁴

C) Proéstôtés as Successors of Apostles

According to Afanasiev, the *proéstôtés* as eucharistic presidents occupy the places, initially occupied by the Apostles. This is how he explains it:

The local Church came to being at the moment when the apostle celebrated there the Eucharist together with the first faithful. The establishment of bishops took place during the course of the eucharistic assembly of the local Church. They took there the places which were those of the apostles during the course of the first eucharistic assemblies of the Church of Jerusalem. [...] Consequently, topologically speaking, the ministry of the presbyters, especially that of the first presbyter had been the continuation of the ministry of the apostles.⁴⁶⁵

According to Afanasiev, the apostolic succession must be understood as a topological succession, a succession to the place, once occupied by the Apostles in the original eucharistic assembly. “Dans l’Eglise, le pastoral passe par succession de Pierre et des apôtres sur les présidents des églises, S’il n’y avait pas cette succession apostolique, il ne pourrait pas y avoir de ministère du pastoral, sans lequel ne peuvent pas exister les églises locales.”⁴⁶⁶ Thus, the *proéstôs* inherited from the Apostles a truly apostolic function, although it must be distinguished from the particular ministry of the Apostles. Afanasiev also insists that the apostolic succession of *proéstôs* should not be considered as personal possession. The eucharistic president becomes successor of the Apostles through the Church he presides over: “Comme président de l’église, l’évêque s’insère dans la succession apostolique, mais comme individu il ne l’est pas, car ce n’est pas à lui personnellement qu’appartient la succession. Elle lui revient à travers l’église dont il est le président.”⁴⁶⁷ Since this function of eucharistic presidency was later developed into the episcopal function, we can say that the bishops are heirs of the Apostles’ place in the eucharistic assembly.

D) Features of the Ministry of Proéstôs

I) Administration

Administration was part of the ministry of *proéstôs*: he was supposed to accomplish the will of God. That is to say, he was not a functionary of the local Church. The administration included not only maintenance of the divine structure and order in ecclesial life, but also the guiding of human souls all along its journey towards God. By fulfilling the will of God, he is

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 88, 167

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

⁴⁶⁶ ID, “Apôtre Pierre et évêque de Rome,” p. 632.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 631.

a model and guide to the people of God. That is why administration and pastorate merge together in the Church. The administrators of the household of God are the pastors.⁴⁶⁸

To be a pastor means taking care of the whole people of God and each of its members taken individually so that one and all fulfil the will of God. Pastorate means safeguarding the structure and order of ecclesial life, and, simultaneously safeguarding each member of the Church lest anyone be lost. Thus, the pastorate is administration which merges with the ministry of *proéstôs*.

II) Guardian of Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy

As administrator of the household of God, the *proéstôs* had to be models of faith. To be typos of faith, he had to be orthodox. Hence, the *proéstôs* is the guardian of the true doctrine. He was not alone in this enterprise. The deposit of faith is entrusted to the Church as a whole. That which is entrusted to the Church must be preserved by the Church as a whole. Hence the whole people of God, i.e. the ecclesial assembly together with its *proéstôs* was charged with the safeguarding of the doctrine of true faith. The Seven Angels, referred to in the Book of Revelation, are personifications of the seven local Churches. They are culpable before God for having permitted false prophets spread their false doctrine among God's servants. The ecclesial assembly through the intermediary of its *proéstôs* could have prevented it.

Protector of faith and guardian of orthodoxy, *proéstôs* must be also a model of the charism of love. As the treasure of faith, so also the treasure of love is entrusted to the *proéstôs*. The pastorate is composed of both orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

4.2.7. Concluding Remarks

From what has been detailed above, we take note of the following: Afanasiev is opposed to all individualistic tendencies. According to him, every local Church is a communion of persons and charisms. This communion has a sacramental basis. If baptism is the foundation of this communion, it is further strengthened and nourished by the Eucharist. Thus, the fundamental principle of ecclesial life, according to Afanasievan Eucharistic Ecclesiology, is 'being always together' and 'gathered for the same thing.' This communion is always a structured one. The basis of ecclesial organisation is the eucharistic assembly. As the manifestation of the Church, the eucharistic assembly was the centre of the life of every local Church. All that was vital for a local Church took place during the eucharistic assembly. That is the reason why nothing that concerns the Church could be done without the *proéstôs*, for without him, ἐπὶ τὸ ἅπλοῦς would have become an anarchic group of Christians. The source of

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. 1 Tim 3: 5.

the power of the eucharistic assembly is in the will of God. The eucharistic assembly is the milieu in which God's will is revealed. Once the will of God is identified and its authenticity attested in the eucharistic assembly, the *proéstôs* is charged to realise it. In this charge, he enjoyed 'power'; but this power, unlike the one exercised in secular societies, is a 'power of love.'

Owing to the close relationship between the local Church, the eucharistic celebration and its president, Afanasiev emphatically asserts the fact that not only did the particular ministry of the *proéstôs* exist from the primitive period onwards, but also that without him no Church could have existed. That is why every local Church saw to the continuity of this vital ministry. What distinguished the *proéstôs* from the rest of the people of God was not his sacerdotal charism (which every member of the Church possessed) but the charism of the eucharistic president. In this sense, according to the Russian theologian, the ministry of bishop is not a product of the historical development of ecclesiastical organisation, but rather it is the very basis of the Church.

Eucharistic presidency [...] was the only basis for the on-going role of the bishop as chief pastor and of the local Church as possessing ecclesial fullness but not being complete unless attached, in communion, with the other Churches. In recognizing the essence of the bishop and his ministry in the eucharistic presidency, quite contrary to the criticism of Zizioulas, among others, Afanasiev emphasizes the presence and role of the chief pastor.⁴⁶⁹

This ontological aspect of the ministry of the bishop does not in any way oppose the royal priesthood which the bishop shares with the rest of the people of God. In fact, the royal priesthood is the source of this ontological aspect, for there is no Church without the people of God.

4.3. Local Churches and the Universal Church in the Eucharistic Ecclesiology

4.3.1. Introduction

According to Afanasiev, our concept of the local Church and its relationship to the universal Church changes according to whether we follow the Universal Ecclesiology or the Eucharistic Ecclesiology.

According to the Universal Ecclesiology, the Church of God on earth is a universal organism, embracing all the local Churches which exist on earth. All the attributes of the Church like holiness, unity, catholicity and apostolicity can be fully predicated only with regard to this universal organism. It is divided into many *parts*, viz. local Churches which cannot, on their own, put claim on the attributes of the Church. They are holy, catholic, and

⁴⁶⁹ M. PLEKON, "«Always Everyone and Always Together»," p. 159.

apostolic only insofar as they are *parts* of the unique Church, which is the world-wide universal organism.

In contrast, according to the perspective of the Eucharistic Ecclesiology, the nature of the Church is conditioned by the mystery of the Eucharist. As we have already seen, for Afanasiev, the Church, the Eucharist and Christ are inseparably related mysteries. The presence of one of them presupposes or calls for the presence also of the other two. First of all, “[o]ne cannot separate the Eucharist from the Church,”⁴⁷⁰ because “[w]here there is the Eucharist, there is the Church, and the Eucharist is where the Church is.”⁴⁷¹ Secondly, “[w]here there is Christ, there is the fullness and the unity of His Body....”⁴⁷² And the Church is the Body of Christ in its eucharistic aspect.

4.3.2. The Local Church fully manifests the Church of God

The Church is the Body of Christ, which manifests itself in each eucharistic assembly. It is the gathering of all the members of a local Church “as one whole, in the same place and for only one and the same thing (‘ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό’).”⁴⁷³

Thus each local Church with its Eucharistic assembly is, following the formulation of Paul, ‘the Church of God in Christ’⁴⁷⁴ [...] In virtue of this, each local Church enjoys the whole plenitude of ‘the Church of God in Christ.’⁴⁷⁵

Hence, “[t]he Church realises itself in all its plenitude during the eucharistic assembly.”⁴⁷⁶ This assertion is based on the fact that during the eucharistic celebration of a local Church, “Christ is present in the totality and integrality of his Body in the Eucharist” and the faithful become ‘in Christ’ the Body of Christ by partaking in the eucharistic gifts. “In the eucharistic assembly of the local Church dwells the whole fullness of the Church, just as in Christ ‘dwells the fullness of the divinity’ (Col 2, 9).”⁴⁷⁷ This will imply that Church, which is the Body of Christ, exists always—by its nature—in its fullness.

This eucharistic vision, according to Afanasiev, forbids us to see the local Church as a mere part of the Church of God. Either the Church exists in its fullness or it does not exist at all, “there cannot be a partial existence of the Church, nor, for a stronger reason, vestiges of

⁴⁷⁰ N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 31.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 33; “...le Christ est chaque fois présent dans l’Eucharistie, en la plénitude de son Corps,” ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 29.

⁴⁷³ ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 37. In this sense, ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, now standing for the eucharistic celebration of the local Church, can be seen as the distinctive sign of the local Church.

⁴⁷⁴ According to Afanasiev, when St Paul used the expression, ‘the Church of God which is at...’ Corinth, Ephesus, etc., he meant that the ‘Church of God’ indeed dwelt among the Christians of that particular city.

⁴⁷⁵ N. AFANASIEV, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” pp. 407-408.

⁴⁷⁶ ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 247; cf. ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 33.

⁴⁷⁷ ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 31; cf. p. 453.

the Church.”⁴⁷⁸ The local Church at the eucharistic celebration is not constrained by the limits of time and space. Thus, according to Afanasiev, the eucharistic assembly is not just the assembly of the present members of a local Church, but it is also the gathering of the whole Church and all its members of every time and every place. If the local eucharistic assembly consisted only of the present members of a given local Church, that would mean that the Body of Christ is divided into parts and the local Church forms just one such part. Briefly, the eucharistic assembly of the local Church is one in which the whole people of God participate. “Where Christ is, there is the fullness and the unity of His Body, where there is the fullness and unity of the Church of God, there is the unity, in all its fullness, of the people of God.”⁴⁷⁹

4.3.3. Identity between the Local Church and the Church of God

Can we consider the local Church as identical with the Church of God? This question, although simple, calls for a complex answer. According to Afanasiev, “the relation between the concrete-local Church and the Church of God cannot be defined in empirical terms.”⁴⁸⁰ One must say that the local Church is both identical and non-identical with the Church of God: “identical, because the local Church becomes the Church of God when it gathers ‘ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό’. It is in the Eucharistic assembly that the Church of God can fully manifest itself....”⁴⁸¹ Whereas outside of the eucharistic assembly we cannot see such perfect manifestation of the Church of God; there, the local Church comes only close to the Church of God or it becomes only more or less the Church of God. This is because,

Outside the Eucharistic assembly, the local Church, as the fellowship of Christians, remains completely in the present aeon, while the Church of God breaks the flood of time and, without exiting the present aeon, belongs to the aeon to come. The apparition of the aeon to come takes place during ‘the Table of the Lord’, to which the Lord returns in his glory... The Local Church becomes each time the Church of God when the Eucharistic assembly takes place and it is in permanent ‘becoming’ outside the assembly.⁴⁸²

Thus according to the Afanasievan perspective, the Church, the new creation and the new world⁴⁸³—although remaining in the old world—is transported during the eucharistic celebration to the new aeon. At this moment, the local Church is identical with the Church of God.

⁴⁷⁸ ID, “Una Sancta,” p. 444.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.* ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 33.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 32.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

⁴⁸³ Cf. 2 Cor 5: 17.

4.3.4. The Local Church and the Catholic Character

Afanasiev holds that there is no fundamental difference between a single local Church and all the local Churches taken in their totality. For the sum total of local Churches cannot offer anything more than what is already contained in each of them. So if the Church of God does not exist in its plenitude in each of the local Churches, he cannot see how their sum total could produce it.⁴⁸⁴ Besides, if the fullness and the unity of the Church (catholicity) can be realised only when all the local Churches are added up, then this fullness and unity can never be fully expressed empirically, because at no given time the sum total of local Churches can embrace the whole Church⁴⁸⁵, which exists not only in the present but also in the past and in the future.⁴⁸⁶ In the same way, even if we succeed in reducing the whole multitude of the local Churches into a single unique Church—the universal Church—there too, the unity of the Church will not have an empirical reality, for it is impossible to have a unique eucharistic celebration for the entire Church. Hence, Afanasiev concludes:

L'unité et la plénitude de l'Eglise n'ont pas de caractère quantitative mais elles dépendent de la plénitude et de l'unité du corps du Christ qui est toujours et partout un dans toute sa plénitude, car hier et aujourd'hui et dans les siècles le Christ est le même pour chaque église et pour les églises locales dans leur ensemble. La plénitude et l'unité sont liées [...] à la notion de l'église locale et elles ne s'étalent pas en notion d'Eglise universelle ou de l'Eglise en générale.⁴⁸⁷

He dares draw this conclusion because the plenitude and unity of the Church is founded on the plenitude and unity of the Body of Christ. And Christ is always and everywhere in all his plenitude. He is the same for each and every local Church regardless of time and space.⁴⁸⁸ What is true of Christ is true also of his Body.

4.3.5. Concreteness of the Local Churches versus Abstractness of the Universal Church

We have already seen that, according to Afanasiev, “The local Church is a Church, because there exists in it the Church of God.”⁴⁸⁹ Does that mean that St Paul admitted of a Church in general parallel to the local Churches? Afanasiev thinks that the question itself would not have been posed if one had sufficient knowledge about the primitive Church and its ecclesiology. From the Pauline perspective, the Church is an indivisible reality which is whole

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. ID, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 408.

⁴⁸⁵ “Si la plénitude et l'unité de l'Eglise étaient sous la dépendance de la somme des églises locales, ni l'une ni l'autre ne trouveraient jamais leur expression, parce que la somme empirique varie tout le temps, soit en plus, soit en moins, et parce qu'avec la fluctuation de la somme varieraient la plénitude de l'Eglise ” ID, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 408.

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. ID, “L'Eglise de Dieu,” p. 36.

⁴⁸⁷ N. AFANASIEV, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 408. Cf. ID, “L'Eglise de Dieu,” p. 36-37.

⁴⁸⁸ Cf. ID, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 408.

⁴⁸⁹ ID, “L'Eglise de Dieu,” p. 31.

and unique. St Paul does not speak about a distinctive existence either of the terrestrial and the heavenly Church or of the visible and the invisible Church. According to him, only ‘the Church of God in Christ’ exists; it manifests itself in a visible manner in each eucharistic assembly. If the invisible Church does not exist separated from the visible Church, so goes the reasoning of Afanasiev, then we cannot speak of a general or abstract notion of the Church separated from the concrete notion either.

In the concrete local Church, the whole Church is contained, and, vice versa, the whole Church manifests itself in the local Church. If the local Church exists, it is because it contains within it ‘the Church of God in Christ’. In reality, there does not exist a concrete or abstract notion of the Church: the one is linked to the other, and the one cannot exist without the other. Consequently, the relation between the concrete local Church and the Church of God cannot be defined in empirical terms.⁴⁹⁰

If the Church is discovered primarily as a concrete reality, then, argues Afanasiev, “the belongingness to the Church is something concrete and not abstract, in other words, one cannot belong to the Church in general, but must belong to a definite Church, because the Church of God manifests itself in the empirical reality, in the local Churches.”⁴⁹¹ Because of the close and inseparable relationship between the eucharistic assembly and the local Church, the primitive Church considered one’s belongingness to a particular eucharistic assembly as a determining factor of one’s belongingness to a local Church. For no one can belong to the Church in general, as it is basically an abstract reality. Only eucharistic assemblies of concrete local Churches exist. Those who participate in the same eucharistic assembly, which is a concrete and tangible event, were considered as belonging to the same Church.

Now, if we admit that the fullness of the Church of God exists in the local Church—thinks the Russian ecclesiologist—we cannot then speak of a universal Church existing beside it or parallel to it. Even when there is a multitude of local Churches, nothing of the fullness each of them possesses diminishes.

The number of the local Churches can increase, but the Church of God remains, in all these Churches, in its fullness and its unity. The plurality of the local Churches indicates that there exists a multitude of the manifestations of the Church, and does not indicate that there exists a universal Church. In all the local Churches, just as in each of them separately, there exists only one and the same Church of God. That is why the usage of the term “ἐκκλησία” is justified not only in the singular, but also in the plural.⁴⁹²

The unity of the Church is also not affected by the plurality of the local Churches, because it is based on the eucharistic presence of Christ. Afanasiev’s point is that the numerical strength does not add to or reduce from what essentially belongs to the Church of God.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴⁹¹ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 42.

⁴⁹² ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 33.

However great the plurality of local Churches, their totality does not give anything more than what exists in the each of them. [...] It follows that the sum of local Churches cannot give the Church of God if in each of them the Church of God did not exist in all its fullness. [...] If the fullness and the unity of the Church were dependent on the sum of the local Churches, they would have never found its expression, because their empirical sum constantly changes [...]. If the empirical sum of the local Churches could embrace the whole Church of God which exists at the given moment, it cannot, however, embrace either the past or the future.⁴⁹³

In order to further strengthen his arguments to deny the existence of an abstract universal Church, Afanasiev takes up the idea of indispensability of the eucharistic celebration as the *locus* of the manifestation of the Church of God. He argues as follows:

If the whole multitude of the local Churches had been reduced to one unique Church – the universal Church, whose part would have been the local Churches, the unity and the fullness of the Church would not have found their expression in the empirical reality, because there does not exist a unique eucharistic assembly of the unique universal Church.⁴⁹⁴

He concludes by saying that “the unity and the fullness of the Church of God in Christ is inseparably linked to the notion of the local Church, and does not dissolve itself in the fluid notion of the universal Church or general Church.”⁴⁹⁵

4.3.6. The Local Church as ‘Part’ or ‘Representative’ of the Universal Church

The idea predominating the theological thinking, until quite recently, considered the local Churches as *parts* of the universal Church. Afanasiev notices that in the wake of the re-discovery of the local Church in the theological thinking, a new idea of representation was put forward.⁴⁹⁶ Accordingly, the local Church ‘represents’ the Church of God. The Russian theologian is not very enthusiastic about this idea—given his aversion to law and juridical notions—because the idea of representation is basically a juridical notion. Hence, he thinks that

one must not understand ‘representation’ in the sense that the local Church ‘represents’ the Church of God as one ‘*pars pro toto*’ would do it. If the local Church is a part of the Church, it cannot represent the Church of God, for in ecclesiology ... a part can never represent the whole.... Besides, this idea does not exclude the idea of the general and universal Church. The local Church can be at once a ‘fragment’ (eine Splitter) of the Church and represent it.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁹⁶ Afanasiev here alludes to K. L. SCHMIDT, *Die Kirche des Urchristentums*. Festgabe für A. Deismann, 1927.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5. Here the author refers himself to O. LINTON, *Das Problem der Urkirche in der neuern Forschung*.

Afanasiev thinks that, admitting to a certain degree the idea of representation, the Catholic theology tries to show that all the local Churches exist in and through the universal Church, and hence together compose a single organism.

4.3.7. Balance between Autonomy and Communion

Afanasiev is of opinion that from within the perspective of the Universal Ecclesiology, which holds local Churches merely as *parts* of an overarching universal Church, we cannot speak of their autonomy and independence. For, a reality, to be considered autonomous and independent, must be *whole* and not simply a *part*. As always, here too Afanasiev's attention is focused on the primitive understanding of the Church. According to Afanasiev, "[e]ach local Church, being the Church of God in Christ, is independent and autonomous."⁴⁹⁸ Its autonomy and independence were not at all a casual factor of history. Rather they flowed from the very nature of the Church.⁴⁹⁹ As he puts it, "the local Church is autonomous and independent, for the Church of God in Christ dwells always in its plenitude."⁵⁰⁰ It is *autonomous* because "the Church of God in Christ possesses the fullness of the existence,"⁵⁰¹ or, in other words, "it has all that is necessary for its life."⁵⁰² It is *independent*, because it is impossible to think of a power over the Church, because, argues the Russian theologian, "[t]he power over a local Church would be a power over the eucharistic Assembly, that is to say, over Christ."⁵⁰³ Inversely, if the primitive local Churches were in reality independent and autonomous, then it must be concluded that they were the Church of God in all its plenitude.

He adds that this state of affairs should not be seen as a result of the defects of the primitive ecclesiastical organisation which were later corrected when the organization took better shape and became more clearly defined. In his view, later development of the ecclesial organisation was not occasioned by the need to correct an existing defective system, but was provoked by the change in the self-understanding of the Church.

Autonomy and independence did not reduce the various local Churches into a state of isolation and dispersion. Rather they were united to one another. This union of local Churches was not imposed from outside, but was the result of internal reasons which ensues from the nature of the Church.

⁴⁹⁸ N. AFANASIEV, "Doctrine de la Primauté," p. 409.

⁴⁹⁹ "L'autonomie et l'indépendance des églises locales ne sont pas dues au hasard du processus historique, mais représentent un fait interne de la vie ecclésiale, fait qui découle de la nature même de l'Eglise," ID, "Una Sancta," p. 454.

⁵⁰⁰ ID, "L'Eglise qui préside," p. 28.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰² ID, "Doctrine de la Primauté," p. 409.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 409; "...tout pouvoir sur elle [l'église locale], quel qu'il soit, aurait été un pouvoir sur le Christ et sûr son corps," ID, "L'Eglise qui préside," p. 28.

Each local Church gathered within itself all the local Churches, for it possessed the whole fullness of the Church of God, and all the local Churches are united together, because in all the local Churches dwells the same Church of God.⁵⁰⁴

That is to say, the unity that reigns among the local Churches spread out across the globe is of an altogether novel character. It is not the outcome of the association of the various *parts* of the one Church or even of various *Churches*; it is, in fact, the union of the various *manifestations* of the Church of God in its empirical reality, i.e. the reunion of the Church of God in itself by means of its manifestations.⁵⁰⁵ Thus, in the framework of the Eucharistic Ecclesiology, the principle of the union of the local Churches and the principle of the unity of the Church is situated in the local Church itself. The unity of the Church is not something abstract; it is based on the concretely existing local Churches.

Because each of the local Churches is a full manifestation of the one unique Church of God, hence, united to one another in an internal and ontological manner, no single local Church can close in upon herself. It cannot live in isolation from other Churches. It cannot remain unaffected by what takes place in other Churches, because that which takes place in other Churches takes place within her too, for it takes place in the Church of God. Each local Church aspires for union with other local Churches. Here Afanasiev recalls the Ignatian depiction of the local Church as *ἀγάπη*. A local Church is *ἀγάπη* because, within it all are gathered and united for the same love of Christ and love of one another; this is also because each local Church constitutes for another Church the object of love. Hence, the greater the number of the local Churches, the more numerous would be the objects of love for each Church. This network of love never ceases to extend itself and include into it more and more local Churches. This is because the Church of God is led by the universal mission received from Christ: ‘Go, therefore, and teach all nations.’

4.3.8. The Local Church’s Openness to Communion

A) Fundamental Equality of Local Churches

Afanasiev is keen to insist that the relationship that exists among the Churches is not one of dependency but of mutuality. These are Churches which are essentially and ontologically—i.e. as realisations and manifestations of the Church of God—equal; they are of equal catholic fullness. In his own words,

Chaque église locale a absolument la même valeur qu’une autre église. C’est une égalité de valeur entre l’Eglise de Dieu et elle-même, qui est une et unique et qui est pleinement présente à l’assemblée

⁵⁰⁴ ID, “Una Sancta,” p. 454.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

eucharistique de chaque église locale. Si les églises locales n'étaient pas égales en valeur, cela voudrait dire que l'Eglise de Dieu n'est pas égale en valeur à elle-même.⁵⁰⁶

The fact, that each local Church is a full manifestation and a realisation of the *Una Sancta* in a given place and time, is not without consequence for the understanding of the communion-relationship of a multitude of local Churches throughout the world. As the Church of God incarnated in a place, a local Church is intrinsically universal, because, so thinks Afanasiev, it contains within her all the other local Churches. Consequently, that which takes place in one of these Churches, takes place also in all others as it takes place indeed in the Church of God (for each of them fully manifests the Church of God). This fact, while giving a larger horizon to every local Church, brings with it an obligation too: it obliges her to be open to others. Consequently, within the communion of local Churches, no Church can remain a stranger to what is taking place in other Churches because the multitude of local Churches constitutes the unity of the one and the same Church. This reaching out to other Churches is carried out through the process of reception. A local Church either receives or rejects what is taking place in other Churches.⁵⁰⁷

B) The Eucharist as a Principle of Supra Local Communion

As it is indicated above, it is a local Church's status as the manifestation and the incarnation of God's Church which maintains her in deep communion with her sister-Churches, which are also in their turn manifestations of the Church of God. This status of the local Church is closely bound up with the eucharistic assembly, for according to the primitive vision, it is at the eucharistic assembly that local Church manifested herself fully as the Church of God. According to Afanasiev, the eucharistic assembly of a local Church is not just an empirical assembly of its members; it is the assembly of the Church in its plenitude, which is the assembly of the people of God in Christ. Hence one can even say that "the Church of God is there where there is a eucharistic assembly, and where there is a eucharistic assembly, there is the fullness of the Church of God."⁵⁰⁸ That is to say, to borrow an expression often repeated by our theologian, the Church of God always exists in all its unity and fullness. As part of his critique of the Universal Ecclesiology, Afanasiev asserts that a local Church which is only a 'part' of the Church of God is basically incapable of celebrating the Eucharist. "L'Eucharistie ne serait pas possible dans une église locale qui constituerait une partie de

⁵⁰⁶ N. AFANASIEV, "L'Eglise qui préside," p. 31. cf. ID, "Doctrine de la Primauté," p. 410.

⁵⁰⁷ A separate discussion on reception follows *infra* under the head, "Reception: Differing Perspectives in Universal Ecclesiology and Eucharistic Ecclesiology."

⁵⁰⁸ N. AFANASIEV, "Doctrine de la Primauté," p. 408.

l’Eglise universelle.”⁵⁰⁹ His contention is that the term, ‘part’ is not all ecclesiological. For, as he puts it, “dans l’ecclésiologie ou bien il y a toujours toute l’Eglise, ou bien il n’y en a pas.”⁵¹⁰

It remains to be answered whether or not the plurality of eucharistic assemblies fragment the unity and the uniqueness of the eucharistic assembly. According to Afanasiev, just as the multiplicity of local Churches constitutes but one Church of God, so also the diversity of eucharistic assemblies make up but one unique eucharistic assembly. He explains:

La pluralité de la célébration de l’Eucharistie n’abolit pas son unité, de même que la pluralité des Eglises locales n’abolit pas l’unité de l’Eglise de Dieu.⁵¹¹

Tout comme la multiplicité de l’Eucharistie dans le temps ne divise pas le corps unique du Christ,—car le Christ est le même hier, aujourd’hui et dans les siècles des siècles,—tout autant la multiplicité des assemblées eucharistiques ne détruit point l’unité de l’Eglise de Dieu, assemblée eucharistique restant la même dans le temps et dans l’espace. Dans l’esprit des premiers chrétiens, l’unité de l’Eglise était une unité vécue, et non une affirmation dogmatique sans expression vivante. Malgré l’accroissement du nombre des églises locales, l’unité de l’Eglise locales restait entière, car il n’y avait pas différentes assemblée eucharistique, mais une seule.⁵¹²

It is our membership in a particular eucharistic assembly which opens to us the door to other Churches and permits us to participate in their eucharistic assemblies.

“Quand nous prenons part à une assemblée eucharistique, nous sommes unis avec tous ceux qui en ce moment prennent part à une assemblée eucharistique, [...] car partout et toujours une seule et même Eucharistie est accomplie: le Christ est «le même, hier, aujourd’hui, éternellement»,”⁵¹³

Thus, concludes Afanasiev, the eucharistic assembly and the participation there pave way to the communion of Christians and the Churches they belong to and it is the “manifestation of the unity of these Churches.”⁵¹⁴

C) The Local Bishop as a Bond of Communion

Inspired by Ignatius of Antioch, Afanasiev also highlights the bishop’s role as incarnation of his Church. A bishop is closely bound up with his Church. However, this relationship is not a one way traffic. The Church is indeed embodied in the person of the bishop. At the same time, one must underline the bishop’s need for being in the Church:

En citant la phrase célèbre de Cyprien de Carthage, on oublie que non seulement l’Eglise est dans l’évêque, mais aussi que l’évêque est dans l’Eglise. Ce sont là deux notions corrélatives car on ne peut guère affirmer l’une sans l’autre.⁵¹⁵

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹¹ ID, “L’Eucharistie,” pp. 338-339.

⁵¹² ID, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 29.

⁵¹³ ID, “L’Eucharistie,” p. 339.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

This fact is fundamental for the communion of Churches. If ‘bishop’ and ‘Church’ are co-relative notions, the unity and the communion of the one implies the unity and the communion of the other.⁵¹⁶ Hence, the ministry of the bishop is not tied down to the ‘locality’ of the Church he presides over. “As bishop of a local Church, each bishop is also that of the whole Church of God.”⁵¹⁷ Just as the Church he is serving is catholic,⁵¹⁸ so his ministry is also catholic. Bishops, by their mutual communication and communion manifest as well realise the communion of Churches. As ministers embodying their Churches,⁵¹⁹ which are full manifestation of the Church of God, bishops actively take part in all affairs which concern the Church of God.

4.3.9. Communion of Churches is sustained by a Process of Reception

We have already noted that, according to Afanasiev, no Church can—within the concord in love (*communio* of local Churches)—remain a stranger to what is taking place in other Churches. All Churches used to accept what is taking place in another Church. This acceptance or reception had no juridical character about it.

It was the witness of a local Church, in which dwells the Church of God, on what is accomplished in other Churches in which also dwells the Church of God, that is, the witness of the Church on itself or the witness of the Spirit on the Spirit who dwells in the Church.⁵²⁰

By this witnessing, it attests that that which takes place in another Church or other Churches is according to the will of God and, therefore, takes place within the Church of God. Ideally every ecclesial act of a Church is subjected to the reception by other Churches. But this reception had a clearly empirical character (i.e. practically happened) only when the matter in question is really grave. In other cases, the local Church knew by a special sensibility that that which takes place within her is accepted by others. When there was indeed reception, it limited itself to the principal Churches, especially the Church which had priority among the local Churches. “From an empirical point of view, it means that each local Church accepts and appropriates that which takes place in other Churches and that all the Churches

⁵¹⁵ ID, “Collégialité des évêques,” p. 15.

⁵¹⁶ “Par conséquent, s’il n’y a pas d’unité des églises, il n’y a pas non plus d’unité de l’épiscopat,” *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14-15.

⁵¹⁸ According to Afanasiev, because of the catholic character of the local Church, that which takes place in one of them—since it takes place in the Church of God—takes place in all others, because they too are equally Church of God.

⁵¹⁹ Commenting on IGNATIUS, *Eph.1*, 3 (“Now since I received in God’s name your whole congregation in Onesimus, a man indescribable in love, yet your bishop in the flesh...”) W. R. Schoedel says, that the Ephesians, in the person of their bishop Onesimus, ‘hastened to see’ Ignatius (1,2). Here (1, 3) “the reception of the Ephesian bishop is seen as (in some sense) the reception of the Ephesian Church itself,” *A Commentary of the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, p. 43.

⁵²⁰ N. AFANASIEV, “Una Sancta,” p. 455. cf. ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 31

accept what is taking place in each of them.”⁵²¹ This is because “that which takes place in a Church takes place in all others, for everything takes place in ‘the Church of God in Christ’.”⁵²²

It is by reception that the unity of the local Churches is expressed, the unity which in its turn expresses the unity of the episcopate. Just as there exists, in the empirical reality, a multitude of local Churches, which does not break up the unity of the Church, in the same way, there exists in the very empirical reality a multitude of bishops, which does not break the unity of the episcopate.⁵²³

If acceptance by a local Church of what is taking place in another local Church is an attestation that that which takes place in the latter is according to God’s will, its rejection amounts to a witnessing that such and such an action or event in that Church was not in conformity with the will of God.⁵²⁴ If the refusal achieved its goal, then concord is re-established. If the local Church in question persists in the irregular situation and refuses the fraternal correction, then it would result in the break up of communion between this Church and other Churches.

It is in this perspective that Afanasiev explains the situation of the so-called ‘separation’ between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. He characterises it as “a rupture of communion between Churches and not a rupture between Churches and groups of communities whose ecclesial nature is not recognised, at least fully. For the Eucharistic Ecclesiology, both the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church are Churches, or, to be more exact, each local Church of each of these groups remains a Church, whether it is before or after the ‘separation’”⁵²⁵ He cannot accept the idea of a division of the Church because the Church of God is always one and unique. “The rupture of communion could not provoke the division of the Church which by its nature cannot be divided into parts.”⁵²⁶ Hence, he concludes that we should consider the so-called ‘separation’ between the two Churches as a rupture of communion, as a result of which each of the Churches lived her life turned to herself. As long as both the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church remain Churches, the question of the validity of their sacraments does not arise at all.

⁵²¹ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 31; cf. ID, “Una Sancta,” p. 454.

⁵²² ID, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 411. “...for that which takes place in one local Church, takes place in all the local Churches, because everything takes place within the Church of God. That is why every the local Church accepts all that happens in each one of them as if it had had happened within itself. This acceptance or, to use a more habitual term, this reception does not have a juridical character: it is a witness of Church on herself...” ID, “Collégialité des évêques,” p. 14-15.

⁵²³ ID, “Collégialité des évêques,” p. 14-15.

⁵²⁴ Cf. ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 31.

⁵²⁵ ID, “Una Sancta,” p. 465.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 465.

The notion of reception has relevance only for the Churches in communion; among the Churches which are not in communion, reception automatically loses its importance.⁵²⁷ It is in this way, Afanasiev interprets the so-called non-reception of Catholic doctrines which have received the character of dogma in the Catholic Church. As they got formed after the ‘separation,’ we cannot employ the term non-reception because they were formed during the period when there was no communion between the two Churches.

4.3.10. Reception: Differing Perspectives in the Universal Ecclesiology and the Eucharistic Ecclesiology

According to Afanasiev, the act of reception, which is essential for the life in communion of the local Churches, is differently conceived in the Universal Ecclesiology and the Eucharistic Ecclesiology. In fact, the concept and practice of reception is foreign to the Universal Ecclesiology. The notion of reception has its origin in the more primitive ecclesiological system called the Eucharistic Ecclesiology. In this primitive ecclesiological vision, the act of reception was carried out by local Churches in their capacity as manifestations and realisations of the Church of God.

Now, when we introduce this idea into the universal ecclesiological system, we must first reserve the act of reception, which can be carried out only by a Church, to the Universal Church alone. Because, as Afanasiev sees it, a local Church, within the framework of the Universal Ecclesiology, is just a ‘part’ of the universal Church, and as such, it is incapable of accomplishing an act of the reception, for instance, of the decisions of an ecumenical council.

The universal Church, which holds the right of reception, needs an organ by which this all important ecclesial act can take place empirically. Afanasiev rules out the view according to which the succeeding council/s receive the decisions of the preceding one/s for the simple reason that the decisions of an ecumenical council, in this case, will remain non-obligatory until its reception by the next council. This does not correspond to the historical data. In his view, within the framework of the Universal Ecclesiology, one is obliged to recognise the universal primate—the pope—as the organ of reception. To his mind, the right of reception of the pope was built up on the primacy of the bishop of Rome whose basis is nothing but law. And law, as we have noted, is foreign to the genuine ecclesiology, as far as Afanasiev is concerned.

⁵²⁷ Cf. ID, “Una Sancta,” p. 473.

4.3.11. The Eucharist as the Basis of the Re-establishment of Christian Unity

Christ founded but one Church, but the two thousand years of Church history has produced a multitude of *Churches*, which are not in communion with one another. According to Afanasiev, our judgement of the *ecclesial* quality of these *Churches* is undoubtedly conditioned by our ecclesiological vision, i.e., we would either affirm it or deny it depending on whether we follow the Universal Ecclesiology or the Eucharistic Ecclesiology.

A) Re-establishment of Christian Unity according to the Universal Ecclesiology

As we have seen earlier in this study, according to the foundational thesis of the Universal Ecclesiology, the Church is a universal organism, an organism which is one, unique and undivided. Therefore it is difficult to conceive of the Church as a communion of Churches. It is even more difficult to admit—from the perspective of this ecclesiology, which is based on the system developed by Cyprian⁵²⁸—that the communities across the ecclesial divide, in spite of their division, are not without ecclesiality. In other words, it is impossible to consider them as *Churches*, as Church, by nature, is one and unique and cannot be divided.

Hence, the only solution left is to consider the factual separation, which came about during the course of history, between various Christian communities, as the consequence of the severing away of different heretical and schismatic communities from the true Church. These communities, when separated from the true Church, fall into an ecclesial emptiness. That is to say, they can no more be considered as Churches from within the logic of the Universal Ecclesiology, says Afanasiev.

This manner of judging the ecclesial quality of the Christian communities isolated from one another alters considerably the goal of ecumenism. Since there is but one Church (for beyond the true Church, we have nothing but ecclesial emptiness or non-Church, according to the logic of the Universal Ecclesiology) and not at all Churches to be re-united, the re-union of Churches cannot be considered as the goal of ecumenism. Instead, the whole question of ecumenism is reduced to that of a *return* of the heretical/schismatic groups into the true Church. In that case, the part, which had once gone out of the true Church and had thus become a non-Church, must adopt, while *returning* to the *sheepfold*, the dogmatic teachings of this true Church.

As simple and logical as this solution might appear, in practice it is ridden with difficulties, observes the Russian theologian. The major difficulty confronted concerns the determination of the criteria by which we can identify the true Church in the multiplicity of *Churches*.

⁵²⁸ For Cyprian and his contemporaries unity of the Church excludes all ecclesial existence outside the *una Catholica*.

According to him, it is impossible—sticking to the Universal Ecclesiology—to find an objective empirical sign by which to identify the true Church.⁵²⁹ When the criteria to identify the true Church defaults, then it is impossible to decide which Church should join which.⁵³⁰ In this context, if at all ecumenism should attain its goal, one of the Churches in dialogue must recognise herself as totally in error, and hence, as a *non-Church*. Afanasiev cannot see how any Church would ever opt for such an ecclesiological suicide. For possibly no Church would admit that she led an erroneous existence in the past, misled her adherents, and confess herself as a non-Church.

In this context, Afanasiev is aware of the tendency today which refuses to see merely an ecclesiological emptiness beyond the frontiers of the Church—as Cyprian thought—but an ecclesial existence in a diminished way or ‘vestiges’ of the Church, thanks to which the separated communities still have an ecclesial life, and sacraments continue to be accomplished there. This idea of degrees of ecclesiality is, however, unacceptable to the Russian theologian, as it is incompatible with the nature of the Church. As Afanasiev puts it, “[t]he nature of the Church presupposes that either the Church exists in its fullness or it does not exist at all, but there cannot be a partial existence of the Church, nor, for a stronger reason, vestiges of the Church.”⁵³¹ According to Afanasiev, a heretical community does not become the Church merely by the fact that it has partially preserved the true doctrine and apostolic tradition. The true doctrine can be preserved only by the Church. Therefore, idea of degrees of ecclesiality is not helpful to find a solution to the scandalous division among the Christians.

In short, according to Afanasiev, from within the logic of the Universal Ecclesiology, it is difficult to find a solution to the problem of division among Christians. For in the framework of the Universal Ecclesiology, it is not only impossible to speak of the union of Churches—because the question of union does not at all come up there—, but also of the union of one Church with another by way of return of the one to the other.

⁵²⁹ In this context, he considers the usual argument of the Orthodoxy of being the Church of the seven Councils, meaning it is unwaveringly faithful to the common heritage of the Church before the separation between the East and the West. According to Afanasiev, mere archaism may not be taken as a criterion for true ecclesiality, for in that case, Nestorian and Monophysist communities, who can claim of a more ancient heritage, should be considered as true Churches. In the same way, communities issuing from the Reformation should be also considered as true Churches as they base themselves uniquely on the Bible. This view also obliges one to admit that the development of the dogma stopped with the 7th ecumenical council.

⁵³⁰ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, “Una Sancta,” p. 447.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

B) Re-establishment of Christian Unity according to the Eucharistic Ecclesiology

The scenario described above alters, when we approach the question from the point of view of the Eucharistic Ecclesiology, claims Afanasiev. First, if the Universal Ecclesiology was unable to provide us with an empirical sign by which we can identify the true Church, the Eucharistic Ecclesiology does provide us with one. That distinctive sign of the Church, according to the Eucharistic Ecclesiology, is the eucharistic assembly.

This argument is based on the inseparable relationship between the Church and the Eucharist: where there is Eucharist, there is the Church and where there is the Church, there is also the Eucharist.⁵³² In fact, when we now take part in a eucharistic assembly, we are united with all those who are, at this time and everywhere, participating in eucharistic assemblies, because one and the same Eucharist is celebrated everywhere. Following the logic of this ecclesiological vision, a valid Eucharist is the absolute condition of ecclesiality. That is to say, every community, which actually celebrates the Eucharist, must be deemed as a true Church. To sum up, the position of Afanasiev is that if we accept the eucharistic assembly as the source of unity, then no divergence in the doctrine and structure could be considered as determinant in judging the belongingness or not to the Church.

This vision calls for a renewed interpretation of the so-called divided or separated existence of various Churches. The Universal Ecclesiology considers this situation, as we have seen above, as the falling apart of splinter groups from the true Church; these communities then exist in a sort of ecclesiological vacuum. The Eucharistic ecclesiology, in contrast, views this situation as a ‘cessation of relations’. Because of this situation, there is a cessation of the eucharistic communion between the Churches in question. It may be also accompanied by the refusal from the part of the Churches-in-communion to *receive* what is taking place or done in the Church, which has broken away from the communion. Actually, such situations of rupture of communion were not rare in the primitive times. Such ruptures remain only on the empirical level and do not touch the depths of ecclesial life. That is to say, these did not entail the reduction of the ruptured communities into non-Church or, put it differently, their isolated situation did not deprive them of being the Church of God.

Ideally, when a Church decides to cut her communion with another Church, her decision should correspond to the will of God. But unfortunately, such decisions in the past were often influenced by human sinfulness and motivated by some ecclesiastical, political objectives. In that case, instead of obtaining the usual goal of cessation of communion—i.e. a fuller communion after having put away with divergences—it only led to the separation. Hence,

⁵³² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 453.

Afanasiev insists that in all attempts to re-establish a fraternal relationship between the separated Churches, all considerations of ecclesial politics must vanish before the urgency to follow the will of God, which is the re-establishment of fraternal communion, which was broken by human will. He is aware that a mere renewal of the fraternal relationship between the two Churches will not overcome the dogmatic differences between them. Hence, according to him, it is crucial to know whether or not Churches can be in communion despite their dogmatic divergences.

In this context, he rightly observes that history does not know any period in which the dogmatic harmony was absolute, either before or after the Nicaea. History provides us with examples which show that doctrinal diversity on a particular point can result in two different results at two occasions.⁵³³ That is to say, a non-reception does not automatically lead to the rupture of fraternal communion. A rupture of fraternal communion, on the other hand, signifies the weakening of ‘peace’, union and love between Churches. This will result in (1) the cessation of eucharistic communion, (2) mutual non-reception of acts of the Churches in question. However, no one in the primitive period doubted the validity of the sacraments performed in the Churches which are not in communion. In Afanasiev’s own words:

La nature de la rupture dans la communion fraternelle indique que l’église locale privée de communion avec les autres églises cesse, pour ainsi dire, d’exister pour ces dernières, car il n’existe plus de liens grâce auxquels cette communion se réalise ; mais elle ne cesse pas de rester en soi Eglise de Dieu malgré sa situation isolée.⁵³⁴

That is why, even in the absence of communion, nobody in primitive times questioned the validity of sacraments accomplished in the Church/es outside the communion.⁵³⁵ Here again Afanasiev’s arguments are based on the eucharistic foundation of ecclesiality. Thus, seen from the point of view of Eucharistic Ecclesiology, the rupture of communion does not result in the emptying of the ecclesiality of the Church, which goes out of the communion. It is primarily “a rupture of communion between *Churches* and not a rupture between Churches and groups of communities whose ecclesial nature is not recognised...”⁵³⁶ According to Afanasiev, to deny ecclesiality to a separated community, which celebrates the Eucharist,

⁵³³ Early controversy around the date of Easter is revealing in this regard. The Church of Rome, in the person of Pope Anicet, refused to adopt the practice of the Smyrna. The Church of Smyrna, on her part, through its bishop Polycarp, refused to adopt the Roman practice concerning the celebration of Easter. This refusal at that time did not lead to the rupture of communion. Later, a difference of opinion on the same question between Pope Victor and Polycrate indeed led to the rupture of communion between the Churches of Asia Minor and the West.

⁵³⁴ N. AFANASIEV, “Una Sancta,” pp. 458-459.

⁵³⁵ The first one to question the validity of sacraments in the schismatic communities was St Cyprian, who was also incidentally, observes Afanasiev, the first one to depart from the ancient eucharistic ecclesiological vision of the Church.

⁵³⁶ N. AFANASIEV, “Una Sancta,” p. 465.

amounts to dethroning the eucharistic assembly from being the unique criterion of ecclesiality—a thesis strongly defended by him. According to him, wherever there is the eucharistic assembly—this applies not only to those Churches that form part of the multitude-of-Churches-related-by-love, but also to those who are separated from this communion—, there also the true Church of God presents itself in all its fullness. Otherwise, the eucharistic assembly would lose its absolute value and would not be anything more than a relative sign of the Church.⁵³⁷ When the eucharistic assembly ceases to be the distinctive sign of the Church, the Eucharist itself ceases to be what it should be in the separated Churches so that these latter can no more be considered as Churches, because the Church is where the Eucharist is. On the contrary, when we give to the Eucharist the place it deserves, then the rupture of communion between Churches may be seen as not destroying the basic unity of the Church:

La cessation de la communion fraternelle avec une ou plusieurs église locales, tout en étant très douloureuse et tout en témoignant d'une situation irrégulière de ces dernières, n'est cependant pas une rupture de l'unité de l'Eglise de Dieu, parce que cette unité se manifeste [...] dans chaque église locale. C'est l'unité de l'église elle-même, et non pas l'unité de ses manifestations dans la vie empirique.⁵³⁸

If separation exists, it exists only on the surface of ecclesial communion, and not in its depths. Reviewing the situation of the Catholic-Orthodox relationship Afanasiev says,

Our canonical division, provoked by dogmatic divergences—a division, in its turn, provoked still more dogmatic differences—did not, however, definitively break our eucharistic unity. However, this unity does not find its expression for reasons of canonical order, for we cannot transform the reality of our ecclesiological 'κοινωνία'. It is sad to note that because of our division certain differences have appeared in the doctrine on the Eucharist and in the liturgical practice.⁵³⁹

Afanasiev insists that the re-establishment of communion between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, based on the eucharistic unity, should not be seen as a negation of the existing dogmatic divergences. Rather it should be seen as a victory of this division by the power of Love.

When Love has again become the foundation of life in all the Churches, then the dogmatic divergences which seem to be insurmountable actually will be lifted in the light of this Love. The Christian people have placed knowledge above Love, because they have forgotten that 'our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is

⁵³⁷ "Si nous pensons qu'une telle église locale n'est plus l'Eglise, nous renonçons par cela même au seul signe distinctif d'après lequel nous pouvons juger de l'existence d'une Eglise : là où est une assemblée eucharistique, là demeure le Christ et là est l'Eglise de Dieu en Christ. Ce signe est applicable non seulement aux églises qui font partie de la multitude-des-églises-liées-par-l'Amour et de la concorde, mais aussi à celle qui s'en sont séparée. Si ce signe ne servait d'indice qu'à l'intérieur de l'entente-liée-par-Amour, l'assemblée eucharistique aurait perdu sa valeur absolue et ne serait qu'un signe distinctif relatif : dans certain cas, l'assemblée eucharistique serait un signe de l'Eglise, et dans d'autres elle ne le serait pas," *ibid.*, p. 459. Cf. ID, "L'Eucharistie," p. 338.

⁵³⁸ ID, "Una Sancta," p. 459.

⁵³⁹ ID, "L'Eucharistie," p. 339.

imperfect' (1 Cor 13, 9). When Love is placed higher than knowledge, then this latter will also become more perfect.⁵⁴⁰

In short, thanks to an effort of Love and despite the divergences, the communion between Churches can be renewed; the reunion between the Catholic and Orthodox Church is possible. To arrive at that “a great effort of Love, a great sacrifice, a kind of renouncement of the self”⁵⁴¹ is needed.

4.3.12. The Church of Rome in the Communion of Churches

In the context of the Afanasievan interpretation of the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church, it is interesting to explore his views on the position and role of the Church of Rome and its bishop in the communion of Churches. But before that, we must be familiar with two preliminary notions, which help us comprehend Afanasiev's view on the subject.

A) Preliminary Notions

1) Primacy versus Priority

With respect to the relationship of the various local Churches and their bishops among themselves, Afanasiev makes a distinction between primacy and priority (which he sometimes designates also as pre-eminence).⁵⁴² His basic thesis is that every local Church, which is the manifestation of the fullness of the Church, is directed by its leader, the bishop. If the local Church is the fullness of the Church—the Body of Christ—, then one cannot think of any person or even any Church above the Body of Christ. Absolutely speaking, every local Church has the same value and therefore cannot possibly be subordinated to another. Nevertheless, Afanasiev recognises a certain priority (and not primacy) to one of these local Churches. “L'une d'entre elles occupe une place tout à fait spéciale et se trouve ainsi à la tête des autres églises. Pour désigner un tel état de choses je préfère utiliser le terme «priorité», et non pas celui de «primauté».”⁵⁴³ The reason for preferring priority to primacy is that “[l]a doctrine du primat s'est développée dans l'ecclésiologie universelle.”⁵⁴⁴ In his view, although

⁵⁴⁰ ID, “Una Sancta,” 474.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 470.

⁵⁴² “Son insistance sur l'ecclésiologie eucharistique sur l'ecclésiologie de «communion», l'avait orienté vers l'idée d'une primauté d'amour dans l'Eglise... Cette primauté transcendante, sortant des cadres juridiques et à laquelle il se ralliait intérieurement avec une certaine nostalgie, il l'a développée par contraste en plusieurs de ses ouvrages,” O. ROUSSEAU, “In memoriam,” p. 295.

⁵⁴³ N. AFANASIEV, “L'Eglise qui préside,” p. 34.

⁵⁴⁴ ID, “Apôtre Pierre et évêque de Rome,” p. 640.

the differentiation between primacy and priority may seem artificial, it is ecclesiology justifiable for the reason that these notions refer to two entirely different realities.⁵⁴⁵

First, the content of these notions are different:

La prééminence et le primat appartiennent à des plans différents: le premier avait un caractère de grâce, le second est basé sur le droit. [...] L'idée du droit, sur laquelle est construite la doctrine actuelle du primat, pénètre avec une force irrésistible dans la conscience ecclésiale, lorsque l'église devient église d'Etat. L'empire Romain a, dans une grande mesure, favorisé la consolidation de la doctrine du primat, qui dans une de ses formes n'est autre chose que l'expression, à l'échelle de l'Eglise, de la notion romaine de l'Empire.⁵⁴⁶

Second, in the level of the subject also there is a difference:

La priorité, selon l'ecclésiologie eucharistique, appartient à l'une des églises locales, tandis que le concept de la primauté, tel qu'il s'est fixé dans l'histoire, présuppose que primauté appartienne à l'un des évêques, qui dirige toute l'Eglise sur la base du droit. Il s'ensuit que la primauté est un terme juridique, tandis que la priorité est basée sur l'autorité du témoignage qui est un don de Dieu accordé à l'église qui a la priorité⁵⁴⁷

Thus, primacy—based on law and favoured by the Empire—is a notion that came from outside of the Church. As such, it is incompatible with the true doctrine of the Church. If we were to adopt this notion into ecclesiology, then we would also have to interpret the unity of the Church as the unity of an over-arching monolithic universal Church. This is in sharp opposition to what really existed in the primitive Church. At that time, thinks the Russian theologian, the relationship among the various local Churches and their heads was not governed by the category of power and law-based primacy, but the category of priority which is based on love.

When we perceive the inter-ecclesial relationship through the category of priority instead of primacy, it gives due importance to the local Church. For, according to this approach, the unity of the Church is not the unity of a monolithic entity but that of the local Churches, each of which is endowed with individuality and subjectivity. In the early phase of Church history, local Churches were, in fact, autonomous and independent. This situation got changed from the time of Cyprian, and ever since the Constantinian freedom, the idea of a unique direction of the Church under the aegis of the Great Church has got the upper hand. This perception, which sees the Church primarily as a universal reality, calls for primacy, for the Universal Ecclesiology cannot exist without it.

⁵⁴⁵ “ C’est là une différenciation terminologique qui peut sembler bien artificielle; mais elle est justifiée par la différence entre les concepts de primauté et priorité, différence si grande que l’un des concepts est presque exclu par l’autre,” ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 34.

⁵⁴⁶ ID, “Apôtre Pierre et évêque de Rome,” p. 640.

⁵⁴⁷ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” pp. 34-35.

It is not difficult to see, from what we have presented above, that the irreconcilable opposition between the law-based primacy and love-based priority⁵⁴⁸ is only a corollary to Afanasiev's oft-repeated axiom, according to which the Universal Ecclesiology and the Eucharistic Ecclesiology exclude each other. Afanasiev thinks that we are actually before a somewhat difficult dilemma in which we have to choose between the priority according to the Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the primacy according to the Universal Ecclesiology. Either we choose the first and reject the second, or choose the second and reject the first; we cannot have both at the same time as they mutually exclude. We may also note that, Afanasiev's downplaying of 'primacy' in favour of 'priority' is part of his attempt to re-instate local Churches in their due stature. When he denounces the category of primacy, he is thereby rejecting law as a structuring category of the Church. He insists that local Churches during the primitive period were not joined together by law, but by concord and love.

Afanasiev also notes that the ecclesiological development of both the East and the West ends up in a tragedy. The Orthodoxy has, in the process of its polemic against Catholic Church, lost the idea of priority. The Catholic Church, on its part, had lost it even much earlier in the course of its struggle to put in place a unique direction of the Church, by which it had transformed priority into primacy. In this condition, thinks Afanasiev, we have only a very meagre chance of finding a solution to the question of primacy. Within the Orthodoxy, we can speak of the unity of faith, but often the unity of love is lacking there. Between the Orthodoxy and the Catholic Church there is neither the unity of faith nor the unity of love.

II) Hierarchy among the Local Churches

Equal in nature, all local Churches are—without exception—capable of exercising both reception and rejection. Yet, as far as the witnessing authority is concerned, not all local Churches are equal. According to Afanasiev,

The Church of God dwells always in its total fullness and in its total unity, but each local Church manifests it in a different manner and degree. Just as there aren't two persons absolutely identical, so too there aren't two local Churches absolutely identical [...] All the Churches have the same value, but not their authority.⁵⁴⁹

Hence, the greater the realisation of the presence of the Church of God in a particular Church, the higher the authority of its witness. Consequently, the more the authority of a

⁵⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that in May 1953, in a conference given at Saulchoir, the author willingly used the term 'primacy' (cf. ID, "Doctrines de la Primauté," published in 1957, p. 410). Some 7 years later, when wrote "L'Eglise qui préside," he has reservations in employing 'primacy', instead he opts for 'priority'.

⁵⁴⁹ ID, "Doctrines de la Primauté," p. 410.

Church, the more considerable will be the value of its witness in the form of reception or rejection.⁵⁵⁰

En principe, chaque église locale et, par conséquent, son évêque prend part à la réception, mais habituellement la réception se manifeste dans des églises plus importantes, suivies par d'autres églises, d'une région déterminée. La valeur de la réception des églises locales dépendait entièrement du degré d'autorité des églises.⁵⁵¹

Other empirical reasons may also have contributed towards the witnessing and receiving authority of a Church. As M.E. Hussey says summarising Afanasiev's views on this point:

One local Church comes to a position of priority for a variety of reasons: the importance of its city, the antiquity of its Church, the fact that other Churches have consulted its witness, the wisdom of its theologians, the performance of extraordinary works of charity toward other communities, the number of its martyrs, etc. But these reasons are not in themselves sufficient, Afanasiev affirms, since several local Churches may well possess quite similar advantages. It must be admitted that priority is ultimately a gift of God, and so an election by God.⁵⁵²

Since, in the matter of witnessing authority, Churches differ from one another, Afanasiev thinks that we can also speak of a hierarchy among them.⁵⁵³ According to him, "from the beginning, within this concord in love of local Churches, there existed a hierarchy. [...] If there is a hierarchy of Churches, there is, therefore, a Church which possesses a greater authority in the concord in love of Churches."⁵⁵⁴ And this Church was considered as Church-in-priority.

The priority in question, Afanasiev warns us, was not a *priority of honour* for the simple reason that "in antiquity, the concept of honour was associated with that of power."⁵⁵⁵ Equally, the priority enjoyed by the Church-in-priority should not either be relegated to a simple honorific title in the modern sense of the term. Rather, according to the Russian theologian, one must consider the priority primarily as "a service rendered by the Church-in-priority towards other Churches."⁵⁵⁶ The mission of the Church-in-priority was to come to the aid of Churches in need, especially when they go astray.

However, having priority with respect to other Churches does not mean having power over them. During the primitive period and also during the period of the ecumenical councils, the

⁵⁵⁰ It may be noted that Afanasiev, who willingly uses the notion of degree when he speaks about the witnessing and receiving authority of various Churches, refuses to use it when he would speak about ecclesiality. There, he follows an *either or* policy.

⁵⁵¹ N. AFANASIEV, "Collégialité des évêques," p. 15.

⁵⁵² M. HUSSEY, "Afanassiev's eucharistic ecclesiology," p. 239. Cf. N. AFANASIEV, "Doctrine de la Primauté," p. 411.

⁵⁵³ "...les églises locales ne sont pas cependant égales en autorité : cette différence d'autorité crée entre elles une hiérarchie," ID, "L'Eglise qui préside," p. 32.

⁵⁵⁴ ID, "Doctrine de la Primauté," p. 410.

⁵⁵⁵ ID, "L'Eglise qui préside," p. 32.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

idea of the power of a Church over another or that of a number of Churches over others did not exist at all.⁵⁵⁷ The Church-in-priority “never possessed and never could possess the power, because it would then imply that it has power over the body of Christ.”⁵⁵⁸ For every local Church, like the Church-in-priority, is the body of Christ and, hence, the Church of God in Christ. That which united the various Churches was not the law, but love and concord. Only within the concord in love of local Churches—neither outside nor above it—can priority manifest itself. Therefore, the Church, which had priority among Churches, was the one that possessed the highest degree of authority and love: it was always ready to come to the aid of other Churches in need of help. Hence, it is neither power nor honour, which is at the root of priority, but the authority stemming from love and manifesting itself in love. In other words, it is, first of all, a gift of grace, “a gift to speak with the greatest authority in the name of the Church.”⁵⁵⁹

The word of a Church-in-priority does not have an absolute value. Its value is dependent on whether it is revelatory of the will of God—a revelation which is freely accepted by other Churches, who in their turn also witness to the will of God. “If one of the Churches did not recognise a doctrine as the manifestation of the will of God, it could not be forced to accept it.”⁵⁶⁰ Thus, the authority of the witnessing of Church-in-priority comes from the fact that it reveals God’s will. Having the first place in the communion of Church is, therefore, not an insurance against error.⁵⁶¹ The Church-in-priority is also in need of witness and attestation from other Churches, to give her the assurance that she reveals the will of God. What counts finally is the fulfilment of the will of God; only His will has a definitive value in the Church. The Church, which has priority, can go wrong especially when she wants to assert her will or when she wants to position herself above other Churches. Now if a Church, even if she is the Church-in-priority, tries to impose her own will instead of God’s, she cannot anymore be considered as Church-in-priority, for she has chosen to renounce love. For the priority of the first Church is manifested and exercised only within the concord-in-love of local Churches. When a Church is trying to put herself over and above other Churches she is, in fact, on the

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Besides, power is a category unknown to the primitive Church, says Afanasiev. According to him this notion is closely associated with the Universal Ecclesiology: “La doctrine de l’Eglise universelle contient [...] l’idée du pouvoir. L’ecclesiologie eucharistique exclut une telle idée, car dans l’ordre d’idée de cette ecclesiologie, un tel pouvoir voudrait dire que sur l’Eglise de Dieu il existe un pouvoir plus haut que celui du Christ,” ID, “Doctrines de la Primauté,” p. 410.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁰ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 32.

⁵⁶¹ “Primauté ne veut pas dire qu’on ne peut pas faillir. L’Eglise qui a la primauté peut se tromper tout comme les autres églises...,” ID, “Doctrines de la Primauté,” p. 411.

way out of the communion of the Churches; she is moving towards an ecclesiological vacuum zone.⁵⁶² In other words, priority always presupposes the existence of a multitude of local Churches, within which every Church is Church of God as good as the Church which has the priority.

So, if we understand the Church-in-priority in terms of love and not law, then it is not difficult to see that this particular local Church is not a Tribunal, where definitive juridical decisions are issued. The purpose of the vocation of the Church-in-priority is to permit the voice of the Church to be heard. When one of the Churches appeals to the Church-in-priority, it seeks to listen to the voice of the Church which dwells in it. In addition, the priority of the Church, which has the highest authority, does not rule out the priority of other Churches in a more limited circle. For, in both cases, priority is a gift of God.

To conclude this discussion, we may notice the keenness with which Afanasiev tries to ensure the freedom and individuality of the local Churches although in their witnessing authority they differ from one another. He underscores the fact that every local Church had the freedom to accept or not to accept the witness of another Church, even if the Church in question is 'Church-in-priority'. A 'Church-in-priority' cannot impose its decisions, but can only give a witness which must be ratified by other Churches. It is itself in need of the witness of other Churches. So when a local Church calls upon the 'Church-in-priority', instead of applying to a higher court of appeal, it is trying to discover itself through the witness of the other Church.

B) The Church of Rome as Church-in-Priority

Unlike some of his contemporaries on the Orthodox side, Afanasiev made an effort to maintain an irenic attitude vis-à-vis the role of the Roman Church in the communion of Churches. In the previous section we have seen that he admits of a hierarchy among the fundamentally equal local Churches. Now it is necessary to identify the Church which has priority in the communion of Churches. Basing ourselves on the history of the primitive Church, we can say that "Au sommet de cette; hiérarchie des églises, fondée sur leur autorité, se trouvait l'église romaine."⁵⁶³

I) *The Jerusalem Church in the Communion of Churches*

Before the Church of Rome started to play a special pre-eminent role in the communion of Churches, it was the prerogative of the Mother Church of Jerusalem to be the Church in priority. And this with reasons:

⁵⁶² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 411-412.

⁵⁶³ ID, "Collégialité des évêques," p. 15

...it was at Jerusalem, during the Pentecost, that the Church of God in Christ actualised itself for the first time, it was from there that the edification of the local Churches began; it was there that Christ died and was risen; it was there that, for a certain period, his return was awaited and it was there that the apostles resided.⁵⁶⁴

One can, surely, affirm that no other Church could have the same authority as that of Jerusalem, because whatever was given to Jerusalem was unique and could not be repeated.⁵⁶⁵

This gave a special authority to the Church of Jerusalem so much so that “[e]very disagreement with it would almost mean that one is deviated from the true faith.”⁵⁶⁶ St Paul himself was convinced of this authority of Jerusalem. That is why he went up to Jerusalem in order to present before the Church there and her leaders the gospel he was preaching to the Gentiles. Afanasiev does not, however, esteem that St Paul was here appealing to a higher ecclesiastical instance which held, as it were, the power either to licence or to prohibit his missionary enterprise. Rather, he requested ‘the Church which possessed the greatest authority’ to bear witness to the authenticity and truth of his missionary preaching. According to Afanasiev, none of our sources permits us to conclude that St. Paul’s recognition of the authority of the Jerusalem Church was inspired by a sentiment of dependence on it. Similarly also, we do not have any evidence to affirm that the Jerusalem Church, on her part, pretended to exercise such power on Paul in person and on the Churches founded by him.

It is now commonly agreed that, after the eclipse of the importance of Jerusalem, the Church of Rome inherited its highest witnessing authority. This conviction is based on several witnesses from the early centuries.

II) Pre-eminence of the Church of Rome in the Communion of Churches: Early Witnesses

a) Epistle of Clement of Rome

This epistle, written by a certain Clement in the name of his Church, contains hints which reveal the stature of the Church of Rome at the end of the 1st century. In writing to Corinth, the Roman Church is conscious of “the decisive value that its witness on the events in Corinth ought to have for the Church of Corinth.”⁵⁶⁷ Hence, it is clear that early on, at least from the end of the 1st century, the Roman Church had “a clear awareness of its priority in the matter of witnessing to what is taking place in other Churches.”⁵⁶⁸ Yet one cannot say that Rome considered herself a superior, placed over other Churches. If such were the case the epistle

⁵⁶⁴ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 39.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

would have been written in a quite different style, remarks Afanasiev.⁵⁶⁹ The epistle opens by calling the Church of Rome as well as that of Corinth as ‘Church of God’, meaning that both are basically equal.

Then, how do we explain the Roman intervention in the affairs of the Corinthian Church? According to Afanasiev, it is a typical case of the authoritative witness of a local Church (that of Rome) regarding what had taken place in another local Church (that of Corinth). Informed about the irregular removal of the proto-presbyter⁵⁷⁰ of the Church of Corinth, the Roman Church chose not to *receive* what had taken place there. This non-reception is not at all a juridical act but an act of witnessing. And the witnessing rendered by Rome, given her priority in the communion of Churches, carried weight.

b) Ignatius of Antioch

According to Afanasiev, we find the first clear allusion regarding the priority of the Church of Rome in Ignatius of Antioch who twice used the expression ‘Church which presides’ with regard to the Roman Church:⁵⁷¹ (1) ‘The Church of Rome which presides *in the region of the Romans*’ (προκάθεται ἐν τόπῳ χωρίου Ῥωμαίων).⁵⁷² (2) ‘Ignatius... to the Church that presides over love (προχθημένη τῆς ἀγάπης).’⁵⁷³

This is how Afanasiev interprets these expressions. First, he takes up the expression, ‘the Church of Rome which presides in the region of the Romans’ (προκάθεται ἐν τόπῳ χωρίου Ῥωμαίων).⁵⁷⁴ Afanasiev thinks that Ignatius must have been alluding to the presidency of the Church of Rome among the local Churches of the region. According to him, “the words of Ignatius allows us to think that there existed in Italy a sort of local union of many local Churches, among which the Church of Rome possessed the priority.”⁵⁷⁵ If this view is tenable,

⁵⁶⁹ “This epistle does not even contain the allusion to any pretension from the part of the Church of Rome to the exercise of a power over the Church of Corinth,” ID, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 412. J.McCue also shares this view: According to him, the author of I Clement does not present his writing as “commandement ou témoignage, ou exhortation des presbytres de Rome [...] mais elle est plutôt une déclaration de l’Eglise de Rome.” Of course the author is conscious of the responsibility of the Roman Church with regard to the Church of Corinth. This must be seen as stemming from the “prééminence de Rome, de la vraisemblance de communications assez fréquente entre ces deux églises, de la tradition partagée d’une fondation commune par Pierre et Paul, et des désordres de Corinthe,” J. MCCUE, “The Roman Primacy in the Second Century and the problems of the Development of Dogma,” *TS*, 25 (1964), p. 33, *hereafter* cites as J. MCCUE, “The Roman Primacy.”

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, *Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, p. 276.

⁵⁷¹ Cf. ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 46.

⁵⁷² IGNATIUS, *Rom*, Greetings.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁴ It may be recalled that Ignatius usually makes use of the verb προκαθεται in reference to the bishop who presides over his Church.

⁵⁷⁵ N. AFANASIEV, “Doctrine de la Primauté,” p. 48. A similar opinion is expressed also by James McCue (cf. “Primauté romaine”). According to this author, although Ignatius had great reverence and esteem for the Church of Rome, his words cannot be interpreted as admitting a Roman primacy. Rather Ignatius must be taken

then, concludes Afanasiev, there must have existed during the time of Ignatius—besides the fellowship of all the local Churches—more limited fellowships of Churches, gathered around a Church that had the greatest authority in the midst of that group of Churches. That is to say, the authority of the Church in priority did not rule out the authority of other Churches, exercised in their own circles. If only one Church possessed authority, then there would not be a hierarchy of Churches, and there would not be a priority.⁵⁷⁶

In the interpretation of the second expression, viz. “the Church that presides over love” (προϋθιμένη τῆς ἀγάπης), we must keep in mind that, for Ignatius, ἀγάπη stands for the local ἐκκλησία in its eucharistic aspect.⁵⁷⁷ So if the local Church is ἀγάπη, then, logically, it is legitimate to hold that the concord of Churches-in-love is also ἀγάπη. So, according to Ignatius, the Church of Rome *presides* in love, i.e., in the concord based on the love of all the local Churches.⁵⁷⁸ Afanasiev interprets this as follows:

La nature d’une église locale étant identique à celle de la concorde dans l’amour de toutes les églises, une image s’est tout naturellement formée dans l’esprit d’Ignace: il a vu les églises locales former une sorte de l’assemblée à laquelle chaque église occupe une place spéciale, et l’église de Rome préside, c’est-à-dire occupe la première place. Donc selon Ignace, c’est à l’église de Rome qu’appartient la priorité au milieu de la multitude des églises unies par la concorde.⁵⁷⁹

This exegesis finds its confirmation in the words of Ignatius, in which he addresses himself to the Roman Church: “My spirit salutes you, and the love of the Churches (ἀγάπη τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν) that have received me in the name of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁸⁰ This expression draws our attention not only to the alliance of Churches in love, but also to the character of the

as the first witness regarding the regional organisation of local Churches: “Alors que la communauté locale restera pour un long temps, la réalité dominante, il s’instaure déjà une sorte de structuration régionale de l’Eglise,” p. 34. Thus, according to McCue, it is in the context of the regional organisation of the Church that one must consider the pre-eminent role Ignatius attributes to Rome.

⁵⁷⁶ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, “Doctrines de la Primauté,” p. 48.

⁵⁷⁷ He employs the term in this sense in reference to the Church of Ephesus.

⁵⁷⁸ A similar interpretation is given, from the Catholic side, by Jean Colson: “Ce terme d’agapè a un sens très particulier chez saint Ignace d’Antioche. La charité, l’amour, *agapè*, est tellement pour lui l’atmosphère qui caractérise une communauté chrétienne, unie autour de son évêque, que le terme *d’agapè* en vient désigner, *en quelque manière*, l’Eglise elle-même où se réalise cet amour. [...] Une Eglise est essentiellement fraternité, charité. Elle n’est une Eglise que dans la mesure où elle est unifiée par cette charité qui fait des ses membres, autour de l’évêque, une fraternité; dans la mesure également où elle participe à l’Amour qui lie dans l’unité les différentes communautés de l’église universelle. C’est cette théologie ignatienne de l’unité par la charité qu’il faut avoir présente à l’esprit quand nous lisons dans la salutation à l’Eglise de Rome que cette Eglise préside à la «charité», à l’*agapè*. C’est équivalentement dire qu’elle *préside à l’unité de l’Eglise dont cette charité est le lien*.... Or, pour Ignace, c’est essentiellement l’union des âmes autour de l’évêque, par quoi une Eglise existe et participe à la catholicité. C’est là une notion fondamentale de la théologie d’Ignace.” J. COLSON, *L’Episcopat catholique. Collégialité et primauté dans les trois premiers siècles de l’Eglise*, «UnSa – 43» (Paris: Cerf, 1963), p. 45-46, hereafter cited as J. COLSON, *L’Episcopat catholique*.

⁵⁷⁹ N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 46-47.

⁵⁸⁰ IGNATIUS, *Rom IX*, 2.

presidency exercised by the Church of Rome. Nevertheless, underlines Afanasiev, nothing in Ignatius' letter to Rome indicates that Rome possessed a power over other Churches.

Pour lui [Ignace] la priorité n'était pas l'expression de l'idée du pouvoir. La nature de la priorité doit, tout naturellement, correspondre à celle des églises locales. Si l'amour est le fondement de la vie de chaque église et de toute l'union des églises locales, la priorité elle aussi doit découler de l'amour, doit être une manifestation de l'autorité de l'amour.⁵⁸¹

Thus, the primacy exercised by Rome was a primacy in authority, but based on love. "The primacy of authority in the love cannot be but a primacy of witness."⁵⁸² Thus, Afanasiev clearly recognises—basing himself on the texts of Ignatius—that the Church of Rome indeed exercised a primacy of authority, when she spoke in the name of the Church—in the form of reception or rejection—of what was taking place in other Churches. This witness of Rome—being the Church which has primacy—had a decisive value.

c) *Irenaeus of Lyon*

As far as Irenaeus is concerned, the pre-eminence of Rome consists above all in its twofold apostolic foundation.⁵⁸³ According to him, "ad hanc enim ecclesiam, propter potentiorem principalitatem, necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam."⁵⁸⁴ In Afanasiev's view, a correct grasp of this sentence is crucial for our understanding of the Irenaeus perception of the Roman primacy. First of all, he examines the translation given by Fr Sagnard:⁵⁸⁵ "c'est avec cette Eglise (de Rome), en raison de sa plus puissante autorité de fondation, que doit nécessairement s'accorder toute église..."⁵⁸⁶

Afanasiev's thinks that *potentior principalitas* in this sentence should be understood as referring principally to the Roman Church's 'priority' among other Churches. He then adds that, if we were to accept the translation of Fr Sagnard, then it would mean the Church of Rome was in a position to issue norms in the area of faith. Such an exegesis corresponds neither to the context of the text nor to what we know about the primitive Church of Rome, for the pre-Nicene Rome never took initiative in the matter of faith. Hence, he thinks that, from the context of the passage, *convenire* should mean *to have recourse to*. Accordingly, the meaning of the passage would be as follows: each local Church, in the event of contentious questions, must appeal to Rome. "Rome was indeed the centre towards which converged

⁵⁸¹ N. AFANASIEV, "L'Eglise qui préside," p. 47. Cf. ID, "Doctrines de la Primauté," p. 413.

⁵⁸² ID, "Doctrines de la Primauté," p. 413.

⁵⁸³ This assertion of Irenaeus, however, must be nuanced, says Afanasiev, because even before the arrival of Peter and Paul in Rome there was Christian community there.

⁵⁸⁴ IRENEE DE LYON, *Ad. Haer.* III, 3, «Sources chrétiennes - 54», F. SAGNARD (Paris: Cerf, 1952), p. 102.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

those who wanted their doctrine to be accepted by the conscience of the Church.”⁵⁸⁷ In other words, the vocation proper to the Church of Rome was arbitration in case of litigious issues. Because the witness of the Church of Rome had such weight, it influenced the attitude of other Churches. When Irenaeus says that in litigious issues local Churches should (*necesse*) have recourse to the Church of Rome, the word *necesse* does not carry a juridical character (i.e. other local Churches are juridically obliged to have recourse to the Church which has the *potentior principalitas*).⁵⁸⁸ The necessity of which Irenaeus speaks is the necessity of interior duty, responding to the very nature of the Church, to address to the Church which possesses the greatest authority. The witness of this latter did not have an obligatory character. The other Churches were free to accept this witness or not. Yet the witness of the Roman Church was no less valuable and authoritative than any juridical act. According to Afanasiev, “[s]i, dans l’histoire de l’église, il y a vraiment eu une époque où la formule *Roma locuta, causa finita* répondait à la réalité, c’est bien au temps où l’église romaine ne possédait aucun pouvoir juridique.”⁵⁸⁹

Thus, we see that ideas of Irenaeus join those of Ignatius of Antioch (‘the presidency in Love’ corresponds to *potentior principalitas*). Both these witnesses accord with the witness of the Church of Rome as it is enshrined in *I Clement*: that the Church of Rome had a priority of the authority of witness, or the priority of ‘reception’.

d) *Cyprian of Carthage*

St Cyprian recognised that among the various local Churches, that of Rome had special importance, for it was the principal Church from which sacerdotal unity arose: ‘Ecclesia principalis unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est’⁵⁹⁰ It was also the root and matrix of the Catholic Church.⁵⁹¹ Despite this awareness he did not draw the definitive conclusion concerning the Church of Rome and its bishop, for “his intuition about the meaning of the Church did not allow him to make the bishop of Rome the head of the episcopate.” In other words, thinks Afanasiev, he did not attribute to the Roman Church of his time a special importance in the sense of a primacy of jurisdiction. The reason was that a Church which wants to put herself over and above other Churches is on the way out of the communion of the Churches.

⁵⁸⁷ N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 53.

⁵⁸⁸ As a matter of fact, just as they have recourse to the witness of the Church of Rome, they can have recourse also to other Churches which have the *principalitas* (like those of Corinth, Ephesus, Smyrna, etc.).

⁵⁸⁹ N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 54.

⁵⁹⁰ Ep. 59, c.14.

⁵⁹¹ Ep. XLVIII, III, 1.

Nevertheless, this does not prevent Afanasiev from considering Cyprian as the one who laid down the most basic principle⁵⁹² of “a universal theory of the Church which would later be worked out into a more fully developed ecclesiology.”⁵⁹³ Cyprian’s hesitation to attribute primacy to Rome proved to be a weak point of his ecclesiological system. For towards the end of his life he himself had to admit that the *concors numerositas*, which he defended so enthusiastically earlier, was but an ideal. In practical life, one comes across quite often *numerositas* without the concord. The reason is that without *concors numerositas* always calls for a head. In other words, the Universal Ecclesiology, to which he laid the foundation stones, called for a universal primate⁵⁹⁴, a role he was unwilling to attribute to the bishop of Rome.

III) Primacy of the Church of Rome

The patristic witness, presented above, agrees unanimously that the Church of Rome occupied a special position in the communion of Churches and this carried with it a certain authority. It was, as we have noted above, an authority to speak in the name of the Church of God—in the form of reception or rejection—of what is taking place in other Churches. She was also aware of the decisive value of her witness as the Church-in-priority. Rome never ceased to exercise this authority in the communion of Churches. This was an authority which was based on love. Moved by this love, she was always ready to come to the aid of other Churches in need of help.⁵⁹⁵

This pre-eminence of Rome which was universally accepted in the early Church, a fact that no historian can possibly deny, is acceptable also to Afanasiev. But that is not the case with the current catholic doctrine on the Roman primacy. The reason is the following: “[I]a prééminence qui appartenait à l’église de Rome durant toute la période prénicéenne n’est pas de la même nature que le primat actuel qui est réalisé par Rome dans le monde catholique.”⁵⁹⁶

The special place enjoyed by Rome in the primitive times did not signify a ‘power’ over other Churches and their bishops. For ‘power’ is a category foreign to the Church of God, as understood by the Eucharistic Ecclesiology.⁵⁹⁷ Instead of power, what Rome possessed was a pre-eminence, a pre-eminence of witnessing. This authoritative witnessing of Rome “suivit

⁵⁹² It is the principle according to which many local Churches belong to one universal Church as parts in a whole.

⁵⁹³ M. HUSSEY, “Afanassiev’s eucharistic ecclesiology,” p. 236.

⁵⁹⁴ “The Universal Ecclesiology, according to which the whole empirical Church forms an unique organism, carries within it the doctrine of a unipersonal head of the Church,” N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 24.

⁵⁹⁵ Cf. Reference to the Church of Rome by Denys of Corinth, Cf. EUSEBIUS, *Eccl. Hist.*, IV, XXIII, 10.

⁵⁹⁶ N. AFANASIEV, “Apôtre Pierre et évêque de Rome,” p. 640.

⁵⁹⁷ “Dans l’ecclésiologie eucharistique un tel pouvoir signifierait pouvoir sur le Christ et sur Son corps,” *ibid.*, p. 639.

dans la liberté et dans l'amour par les autres églises, comme si c'était leur église directrice."⁵⁹⁸
This was not a one-way traffic. If other Churches needed the authoritative witness of Rome, she on her part also needed the witness of other Churches.⁵⁹⁹ Further, Rome was not a solitary figure as the Church-in-priority. Like Rome, but in a more limited range there also other Churches-in-priority, whose witnessing authority was sought after by other sister-Churches.⁶⁰⁰ Admitting such varying degrees of pre-eminence is a necessary condition for the existence of the pre-eminence of the Church of Rome.

S'il n'y avait pas un tel genre de prééminence, il n'y aurait pas de prééminence de l'église de Rome, car alors il n'y aurait pas de hiérarchie des églises d'où découle sa prééminence, et tout aurait été absorbé par la seule église de Rome.⁶⁰¹

C) Bishop of Rome and Communion of Churches

I) *Papal Primacy: a Bone of Contention*

According to Afanasiev, to admit that the Church of Rome is the Church-in-priority and, therefore, possesses the authority that goes with this position is also to admit that the bishop of this Church also possesses a proportionate authority in the communion of Churches and fellow-bishops. This point remains however a divisive matter between the various Churches. Afanasiev esteems that the Catholic and Orthodox position with regard to the papal primacy is clearly defined: while we cannot think of a Catholic Church without the papal primacy, this doctrine is totally unacceptable for the Orthodox. "La théologie orthodoxe oppose à la doctrine du pouvoir de l'évêque de Rome sur toute l'Eglise la notion des conciles œcuménique, porteurs du pouvoir suprême dans l'Eglise,"⁶⁰²

In this contentious issue, what is more crucial, in his opinion, is the proper understanding of the notion of power in the Church and not so much the interpretation given to Mt 16: 18.⁶⁰³ Examining the history of the question, Afanasiev notes that, at least from the 4th century, we observe a tendency to counterbalance the power of pope with that of the patriarch of Constantinople, who claimed a power similar to that of the bishop of Rome. If we may consider this as an attempt to share the supreme power in the Church between two persons,

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁹ "Mais cette dernière avait besoin à son tour de témoignage des églises locales, à la tête desquelles elle était," *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁰ "Conjointement à cette prééminence de l'église de Rome, n'était pas exclue la prééminence des autres églises, basée aussi sur leur autorité dans un cadre plus restreint d'églises locales," *Ibid.*

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰² ID, "Doctrines de la Primauté," p. 401.

⁶⁰³ "Si nous nous demandons autour de quoi dans le domaine de la primauté, tourne principalement la discussion entre catholique est orthodoxe, nous devons constater que la question de l'exégèse de Mt. XVI, 18, joue un rôle bien secondaire, surtout pour ce qui est des Orthodoxes. La discussion porte surtout sur la notion du pouvoir dans l'Eglise," *Ibid.*

then the theory of Pentarchy, developed later, wanted to have it shared among five leading patriarchs. Still later, the doctrine of κηδεμονία πάντοως, which appeared during the dying period of the Byzantine history and, for that reason, left less impact in history, wanted to make of the patriarch of Constantinople the pope of the East.

Afanasiev esteems that the question of power in the Church is still a debated issue. The East and the West hold on to positions, which seem to exclude each other. Beneath these apparent differences, there is an agreement on both sides that there indeed exists power in the Church.⁶⁰⁴ What divide them are the modalities of distributing this power and the question of who should hold and exercise it. In Afanasiev's view, what is fundamental here is the recognition that power exists in Church. Whether it is held by a council or by a single person is of secondary importance. It is in this perspective that he examines the Catholic and Orthodox teachings on primacy.

According to the Catholic teaching, as Afanasiev understands it, Christ placed Peter at the head of the Church and this Petrine power is today exercised by the bishop of Rome. This doctrine is based on the exegesis of Mt 16: 18. According to the Orthodox understanding, Afanasiev thinks, the words of Jesus, *Tu es Petrus*, do not permit us to conclude that the Saviour gave Peter the power over the whole Church. However, he admits that the doctrine of power in the Church can be deduced from Mt 16: 18, not from the words, *Tu es Petrus*, but from the notion of the Church this text conveys.

Today when we read the Greek word ἐκκλησία in the text, we cannot and probably we may never know what exactly Christ was talking about. But the fact remains that when the first Christians heard this word of Christ or read it, they had a clear idea about what it stood for: "c'était une chose concrète et définie au plus haut point, dans laquelle ils vivaient; et ceci nous est bien connu."⁶⁰⁵ The author is convinced that here Christ was not speaking about the universal Church, but about the Church which is the Body of Christ, which is manifested in the eucharistic assembly of any local Church.⁶⁰⁶ Hence, it is clear for Afanasiev that "[e]n promettant que cette Eglise serait édifiée sur Pierre, le Christ ne l'instituait pas comme Son fondé de pouvoir sur toute Son Eglise...."⁶⁰⁷ Rather, what is possible for us to conclude, from

⁶⁰⁴ "Des deux côtés on est bien d'accord que le pouvoir sur toute l'Eglise existe," *Ibid.*, p. 402.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

⁶⁰⁶ "Dans Mt. XVI, 18 le Christ ne parlait pas de l'Eglise universelle mais de l'Eglise qui est Son corps, se manifestant à l'assemblée eucharistique de chaque église locale," Id, "Apôtre Pierre et évêque de Rome," p. 475.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

the perspective of the Eucharistic Ecclesiology, is that “le Christ a fait de Pierre un chef à l’intérieur d’une église locale, mais il ne l’a pas placé à la tête des églises locales.”⁶⁰⁸

Thus, Afanasiev contends that proofs for Peter’s power over the whole Church is lacking not only in the biblical texts, but also in the history of the primitive Church. If Christ had indeed made Peter the head of the universal Church, it should have been manifested in the primitive Church. But as far as the primitive Christians were concerned, Christ alone was the head of the Church and the Church

...n’avait pas l’idée que le Christ ait pu instituer quelqu’un temporairement ou définitivement comme son fondé de pouvoir. [...] En outre, les premiers chrétiens ne sentaient pas la nécessité d’avoir un chef visible de l’Eglise, qui avait un Chef invisible, —c’est le langage de notre époque—, car pour eux le Christ était présent à chaque assemblée eucharistique.⁶⁰⁹

Having said that, Afanasiev admits, it is clear that Peter had among the Apostles a place apart, that he had a unique ministry, which was not repeatable. Peter remains ever the Rock, the foundation stone of the Church, until the Second Coming of the Lord.⁶¹⁰

II) Statio Orbis and Primacy of Pope

An article entitled “*Corpus mysticum*,”⁶¹¹ which appeared in connection with the 1960 Eucharistic Congress of Munich, gave Afanasiev an occasion to drop a critical eye on the contemporary Catholic view on the Roman primacy. In this article J. A. Jungmann characterised the Eucharistic Congress as the *Statio Orbis*, as the eucharistic assembly of the Universal Church (*Gesamtkirche*). This he did by an analogy between the *Statio Orbis* and the *Statio Urbis* of the ancient Roman Church.⁶¹² To the mind of Afanasiev, this interpretation of Jungmann amounts to a misrepresentation of facts. For according to him, when we move from *Statio Urbis* to the *Statio Orbis* we are, in fact, moving from a concrete realm to a conditional one. First of all, it must be noted that *Statio Urbis* was the eucharistic assembly of all the members of the Church of Rome, presided over by its bishop. As against this, a universal eucharistic assembly, in which all the faithful can participate, is unthinkable and totally impossible. Being aware of it, Jungmann made use of the category of representation: A *Statio Orbis* could be presided over, if need be, by a papal legate; also if all the members of the Church cannot be physically present at the universal eucharistic assembly, they can be

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁰ Cf. ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” 41.

⁶¹¹ *StZ* 164 (September 1959), 12.

⁶¹² It was the assembly of the whole Roman Church, which was held at different periods and in different parts of Rome and personally presided over by the bishop of that Church. “On a commence à célébrer la *statio Urbis* lorsque, à côté du centre liturgique principal, le centre episcopal, se formèrent, dans les limites de l’Eglise de Rome, des centres complémentaires, dans lesquels la célébration de la liturgie avait été confiée à des presbytres,” N. AFANASIEV, “*Statio Orbis*,” p. 65.

represented by those who are really there. This idea of representation, employed by Jungmann, is unacceptable to Afanasiev for the simple reason it was inexistent in the primitive Church. In short, the idea of a universal eucharistic assembly, evoked by *Statio Orbis*, is both unrealistic and unrealisable: “Il n’y a pas eu et il n’y a pas d’assemblée eucharistique de l’Eglise universelle. La statio Orbis n’est pas autre chose qu’une certaine convention. La transition de la statio Urbis à la statio Orbis est irréalisable.”⁶¹³

However, Afanasiev judges that the idea of *Statio Orbis* is significant from an ecclesiological perspective. It is yet another step in the ecclesiological evolution that has been taking place in the West. According to him, the decline of the conciliar principle in the West led to the consolidation of the pontifical power. The pope is considered as superior to the council, which is now relegated to the role of a consultative organ of the Supreme Pontiff. The pope—who is not juridically bound by the decisions of the council and is placed above it—becomes a super-bishop, the one who is in charge of the entire universal Church.⁶¹⁴ Everything in the Church is dependent on him: the universal Church is reduced to a single super-diocese in which the role of the bishops is not any better than that of parish priests or that of just administrative organs.

Et vraiment, l’évêque de nos jours, nommé par le pouvoir suprême, n’est à strictement parler nullement lié avec son diocèse.... Nommé par le pouvoir suprême, il est responsable devant ce dernier, et il en est le représentant.⁶¹⁵

How do we then understand primacy in the framework of this ecclesiology? Afanasiev thinks that this question has no relevance, because now that the bishops are reduced to mere delegates of the Supreme Pontiff and administrative organs, the very need of primacy disappears, for primacy always presupposes the multiplicity of bishops among whom the primate can hold the primacy.

III) Universo-Pontifical Ecclesiology

According to Afanasiev, the idea of *Statio Orbis* seeks to consecrate the state of affairs described above. He considers this as an attempt to introduce eucharistic principle into the Universal Ecclesiology.⁶¹⁶ That is, the eucharistic assembly, which is the concrete manifestation of a local Church, is proposed as the concrete and tangible manifestation of the universal Church as well. But Afanasiev’s view is that “l’adaptation du principe eucharistique à l’ecclésiologie universelle y provoque des changements si profonds qu’ils changent les

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁶¹⁴ ID, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 22.

⁶¹⁵ ID, “*Statio Orbis*,” p. 72.

⁶¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 66.

bases même de ce type d'ecclésiologie."⁶¹⁷ It brings in a new type of ecclesiology which Afanasiev defines as 'universo-pontifical' as against the one which had existed so far viz. 'universo-episcopal'. This new variant of the Universal Ecclesiology differs from the earlier version in that it affirms that there is only one bishop in the universal Church. For in the traditional Universal Ecclesiology, the pope is only one of the bishops.

Thus, following the logic of *Statio Orbis*, if we admit that a universal eucharistic assembly is possible, then we must also postulate the existence of a 'bishop of the Universal Church'. That is to say, the application of the eucharistic principle to the universal Church compels us to postulate the unicity of the bishop in the universal Church.⁶¹⁸ In an ideal plan, there can be just one eucharistic assembly in the Church, with a unique bishop at its head, although, in an empirical plan, we have a multitude of assemblies.

If the pope (or someone else) is the unique bishop of the universal Church, then other bishops, ceasing to be bishops, would occupy a position similar to that of the presbyters of the primitive period, who formed a presbyterium around the unique bishop. The only factor that would differentiate these bishops would be that they have received special administrative charges. A change in this direction has already taken place, according to the judgement of Afanasiev, especially within the Catholic Church. For the present bishops do not enjoy the position and power of the ancient bishops.

Le diocèse n'est pas l'Eglise locale des anciens temps, Eglise qui ne dépendait pas d'une autre Eglise locale ou d'un évêque d'une autre Eglise : c'est vraiment une partie de l'Eglise universelle, subordonnée au chef de l'Eglise universelle. Si, du point de vue dogmatique, le ministère de l'évêque reste ce qu'il a été pendant la première période de l'histoire de l'Eglise, il a en fait changé de façon essentielle.⁶¹⁹

In the primitive ecclesiology the guiding principle was the unicity of the bishop per Church. Within the Universal Ecclesiology this principle is transformed into quite an opposite thesis: there are many bishops in the Church, and each of them is at the head of a part of it.

According to Jungmann, arguing from the Catholic perspective, the pope is that universal bishop. This theory is based on a perception of Peter's role in the primitive Church. Peter was at the head of the very first eucharistic assembly held in Jerusalem. The local Church of Jerusalem was, at that time, the unique Church. Hence, it could be considered the universal Church. As such, Peter is seen to be at the head of the universal Church, or to use a posterior

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁶¹⁸ "Si l'on accepte la doctrine de l'évêque unique, doctrine qui résulterait de la reconnaissance de l'existence d'une assemblée eucharistique universelle, on ne ferait que fixer ainsi ce qui existe déjà en fait," *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

terminology ‘Bishop of the Universal Church’. In this way the bishop of Rome, as the successor of Peter, became the Bishop of the Universal Church.

As far as Afanasiev is concerned, this Catholic theory lacks a solid ecclesiological foundation for the simple reason that the universal eucharistic assembly on which this theory is based is unrealistic and unrealisable. As he formulates it, “[c]omment pouvons-nous trouver une base ecclésiologique à l’assertion que le pape est l’évêque de l’Eglise universelle, s’il n’y a pas d’assemblée de l’Eglise universelle ?”⁶²⁰

IV) Pope and Episcopate at Vatican II

After the conclusion of Vatican II, Afanasiev returns to the question of primacy. In his view, although *Lumen Gentium* clearly expresses that the pope forms part of the college of bishops as its head, he still retains—according to the explanatory note—his charge of the Vicar of Christ and the Pastor of the universal Church. This implies that the college cannot act without the head, but the head, on his part, can act independently of the college, whenever he judges it necessary for the good of the Church. It would also mean that an ecumenical council—the most concrete expression of the collegiality of bishops—cannot take place unless it is assembled by the pope. This means that the supreme power which the episcopal college is supposed to possess depends on the pope. So, in Afanasiev’s judgement, if establishing an equilibrium between papacy and episcopate was one of the goals the Council set for itself, one must say that it failed to reach this goal. Instead it came up with an unstable equilibrium which swings in favour of the papal power. First of all, the convocation of the Council – an extraordinary event as it is – totally depends on the pope. Secondly, there is no way in which the sovereign and full power of the episcopate can manifest itself during the interval between two councils.

On the contrary, the pope as the supreme Pastor of the Church can always exercise his power at his will. If such is the case, how can one speak of a supreme and full power of the episcopate?

4.3.13. Concluding Remarks

In the above discussion, we have seen how Afanasiev understands and interprets the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church in the perspective of the Eucharistic Ecclesiology. In this perspective—since Christ and the Church are closely bound together and also since the Church of God is fully realised and manifested in every eucharistic assembly thanks to the full presence of Christ—no local Church can be considered as a *part*

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

of an overarching universal Church. As we have seen, since every local Church fully manifests the Church of God and is, therefore, fully catholic, one cannot think of a universal Church which might exist apart from the local manifestations of the Church of God in Christ. This Church of God always remains full and identical to itself regardless of the number of its local manifestations. In this perspective, each local Church must be said to be *autonomous*—as it possesses all that is needed for being a manifestation of the Church of God in a given place—and *independent*—as we cannot think of a power over it. If such power did exist, it would be a power over Christ himself, whose full presence makes of a local eucharistic assembly what it is—the Body of Christ.

But the autonomy and independence of the local Church is not a licence to lead a solitary life. Because every local Church is the manifestation of the Church of God, it is intrinsically universal, for that which takes place in any of the local manifestations of the Church of God must be considered as taking place in every one of them. This fact widens the horizon of each local Church; it brings with it an obligation too: the obligation to be in communion with other similar local Churches. This communion is, basically, founded on the Eucharist; it is realised through the process of reception. According to Afanasiev, in the perspective of the Eucharistic Ecclesiology, the unique subject of ecclesial reception is the local Church. But from within the perspective of the Universal Ecclesiology, the local Church loses its role as the subject of reception and this role must be attributed—so thinks Afanasiev—to the universal Primate, the pope.

Unlike many of his fellow theologians from Orthodoxy, Afanasiev is moved by an irenic attitude towards the role of the Church of Rome and its bishop in the communion of Churches. In his interpretation, he keeps out all words which have some juridical connotation: thus, he prefers priority to primacy, authority to power. Thus, the priority Rome (hence, also its bishop) enjoys must be seen as an authority of witnessing. The goal of this authority is service—to come to the aid of other sister-Churches, to oversee the communion of Churches. Only in the context of love and concord can this authority exist. That is why he said, “[s]i, dans l’histoire de l’église, il y a vraiment eu une époque où la formule *Roma locuta, causa finita* répondait à la réalité, c’est bien au temps où l’église romaine ne possédait aucun pouvoir juridique.”⁶²¹ All Churches, in their life of communion—realised through the process of reception (or non-reception)—must ultimately seek the will of God. Only in relation to the divine will for his Church can we gauge the witnessing authority of any Church; the Church-

⁶²¹ N. AFANASIEV, “L’Eglise qui préside,” p. 54.

in-priority is not an exception to this general rule. In short, Afanasiev acknowledges the special role and authority of the Church of Rome in the communion of Churches; but he refuses to give any juridical colouring to it. If the Roman Church possesses an authority, it is in view of the communion of Churches; the same is true of the authority of the bishop of Rome. On this point, Afanasiev is quite close to Tillard.⁶²²

Having thus summarily stated Afanasievan view on the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church, we must now turn to a major drawback usually attributed to Afanasiev, viz. his hyper localism. As M. Plekon formulates it, it is “an exaggerated view of the self-sufficiency of the local Church which diminishes not only the larger Church of God but also the place and work of the bishop.”⁶²³ We may recall that, in his above elaboration, he ignores totally the existence of the universal Church. What really exist are local Churches in communion—a communion sustained by mutual reception. In this context, J. Zizioulas is particularly sharp in his critique. Although he admits that thanks to the contributions of Afanasiev the idea of the local Church is very common in the Orthodox Ecclesiology today, he accuses that the Afanasievan Eucharistic Ecclesiology is not justified in pneumatological terms. As he put it, “due to the lack of a correct synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology in the Orthodox theology, there is often an excessive tendency to admit that the Eucharistic Ecclesiology leads to the priority of the local Church over the Universal Church.”⁶²⁴ His view is that the very nature of the Eucharist leads not to the priority of the local Church over the Universal Church, but to the simultaneity of the local and the Universal Church. There is but one Eucharist offered in the name of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. The dilemma between the local and the Universal, between Christology and Pneumatology is solved in the Eucharist.

The Afanasievan position, according to which the Eucharist is the absolute and unique condition of ecclesiality of a community, is not either endorsed by other theologians, neither Catholic nor Orthodox. The reason is that the Eucharist—important as it is—is not the unique criterion of ecclesiality. Here it is clear that, in his hastiness to find a solution to the problem of Christian disunity from within his ecclesiological system, Afanasiev failed to give due regard to the doctrinal orthodoxy as a criterion of ecclesiality. For when faith defaults, it is

⁶²² See our discussion in Chapter 5: “Pope is a Servant of Communion.”

⁶²³ M. PLEKON, “«Always Everyone and Always Together»,” p. 159.

⁶²⁴ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Christologie, Pneumatologie et institutions ecclesiologiques. Un point de vue orthodoxe,” in: G. ALBERIGO (ed.), *Les Eglise après Vatican II: dynamisme et prospective: actes du colloques international de Bologne 1980*, «Theologie historique, 61» (Paris: Beauchesne, 1981), p. 140, hereafter cited as J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Christologie, Pneumatologie et institutions eccl....”

difficult to see how a community can be considered as the realisation of the Church of God even when there is a eucharistic celebration presided over by a bishop.

One of the debated issues in today's ecclesiology and canonistics is the status of the parish. Afanasiev considers the development of parish as a semi-independent part of the Church, with its priest as liturgical president, as one of the serious detours from the Church's ancient vision and practice. According to him, "The Church was most intensely herself when laity and clergy gathered around the bishop as the sole presider at the Eucharist."⁶²⁵ But the situation of today's Church is not the same as that of the primitive Churches. Parishes are a part of today's ecclesial life and play the most vital role in the building up of the Church of God. Hence, the primitive principle of one eucharistic assembly per local (episcopal) Church is neither feasible nor desirable today. There are two solutions to this problem: we consider parishes either as extensions of the episcopal diocese or as local Churches. As M. Plekon has noted recently, the parish as the 'extension' of the bishop's eucharistic gathering has become the model not only of the Orthodox Church but also of the Roman Catholic Church and other Churches of catholic tradition.⁶²⁶ Afanasiev seems to have opted for the other solution, which considers the parish not as an *extension* of the episcopal Church, but as a local Church itself. Then the parish priest would be like a quasi-bishop. The diocese then would be like a district of local Churches.⁶²⁷

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to discover how Afanasiev interprets the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church. In this endeavour we have examined the Afanasievan interpretation of the biblical and patristic material. He did it in view of unearthing the original vision of the Church, which is in harmony with the nature of the Church. The roots of this ecclesiology, which he characterises as eucharistic, goes back to St Paul's doctrine of the Body of Christ, according to which—as Afanasiev interprets it—every eucharistic assembly, presided over by the *proéstôs* is the Body of Christ, where Christ is fully present. Hence, every local Church is fully the Church of God; consequently, according to him, all attributes applicable to the Church of God can be predicated to the local Church as well. As the full realisation and the manifestation of the Church of God in a place, a local Church must be considered as autonomous and independent. But this should not lead to

⁶²⁵ M. PLEKON, "«Always Everyone and Always Together»," p. 159; Cf. N. AFANASIEV, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 33-57.

⁶²⁶ Cf. M. PLEKON, "«Always Everyone and Always Together»," p. 159.

⁶²⁷ Cf. N. AFANASIEV, *Trapeza Gospodnja*, p. 85.

isolation. Instead, the eucharistic foundation of the local Church obliges it to be in communion with the other local Churches. Among these various local Churches, which are basically equal, there exists a hierarchy, which is based on the authority of witnessing. This authority varies from Church to Church. The Church which has the highest authority is the Church of Rome. It has to make use of this authority at the service of communion.

One question remains: in all these, where do we find the universal Church? According to Afanasiev, the universal Church is not a subsistent reality apart from and parallel to the concretely existing local Churches. In his ecclesiological system, there is only one reality: the Church of God in Christ. It is fully manifested in every eucharistic community; the addition or reduction of the manifestations of the Church of God neither adds nor reduces the reality of the Church of God. As he has clearly expressed it, “[t]he number of the local Churches can increase, but the Church of God remains, in all these Churches, in its fullness and unity. The plurality of the local Churches indicates that there exists a multitude of manifestations of the Church, and does not indicate that there exists a universal Church. In all the local Churches, just as in each of them separately, there exists only one and the same Church of God.”⁶²⁸ If that is the case, from the perspective of the Afanasievan ecclesiology, we cannot speak of a relationship between a local Church and a universal Church which is distinct from it or standing above it in an over-arching manner; rather we can only speak of the relationship among various empirical manifestations of the unique Church of God in Christ, with due respect to the Church that presides in love—the Church of Rome—and its bishop.

⁶²⁸ ID, “L’Eglise de Dieu,” p. 33.

CHAPTER THREE:

LOCAL CHURCHES AND SYNODALITY OF CHURCHES IN THE CONTEMPORARY ORTHODOX ECCLESIOLOGY

1. Introduction

In this chapter, our attempt will be to examine the writings of some of the contemporary Orthodox theologians, who are, in one way or another, connected with Nicholas Afanasiev. Our goal is to see to what extent they are close to or distant from the positions held by Afanasiev. Given the comparative nature of the present study, we are selective in the choice of these theologians. They are selected in function of their relevance for the comprehension of the Orthodox understanding of the relationship between the local Church and the Church universal. The various subjects treated in this chapter are arranged in a structure parallel to the preceding chapter so that the proximity and distance between these theologians and Afanasiev may be highlighted. The first section is devoted to the conception of the local Church, in which not only the eucharistic and Christic rootage of the local Church will be brought to the fore, but also its catholic nature and its inseparable bond with the bishop. It will be followed by a section on the communion of local Churches. In the last section, which occupies a major part of this chapter, we will present how the contemporary Orthodox ecclesiology conceives the relationship between the local Church and the Church universal in the perspective of synodality which pervades every aspect and every level of ecclesial life.

2. Conceiving the Local Church

2.1. Introduction

Traditionally—wrote Zizioulas—“the term ‘Church’ had a strictly geographical character: the “Church of this or that city.”¹ That is to say, the Church is primarily a local Church. The

¹ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Uniformity, Diversity and the Unity of the Church,” *IKZ*, 190 (2001), p. 52, *hereafter cited as* J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Uniformity, Diversity....”

expression local Church carries two inseparable aspects, corresponding to the terms of the expression, viz. *ecclesiality* and *locality*.

It must be, however, borne in mind that not every gathering of Christians is automatically ‘Church’ and not every ‘Church’ is necessarily ‘local.’ What is it that makes a Church really ‘local’ and what is it that makes a local organism really ‘Church’? According to J. D. Zizioulas, “[t]he Church is local when the reality of the salvation of Christ is rooted in a particular local situation with its entire natural, social, cultural and other characteristics which constitute the life and thinking of the people living in that place.”² If a Church is to be really local, “it must assimilate and use all the characteristics of a given local situation and not to impose a foreign culture.”³ Thus, a Church is local when it is actualised in a particular portion of humanity. Church is then a community with particular traits, historical situation and characteristic way of living and expressing faith. A Christian community, which is *local* by means of assimilation as described above, need not be necessarily *Church*. This is because the reality of Christic salvation does not come simply to affirm the human culture but also to critically evaluate it. What are the elements of culture which should not be assimilated and used by the local Church? The answer to this question depends on our theology and our priorities concerning what is essential and what is not essential in the Christian faith. As far as Zizioulas is concerned, from the perspective of the Eucharistic Ecclesiology, a local community may be deemed ecclesial only when it becomes the reflection of the eschatological community of Christ, an image of the Trinitarian life of God. From an existential point of view, it overcomes all divisions (natural or social). “If the Church in its localisation does not succeed in presenting in this regard an image of the Kingdom, it is not a Church. In the same way, if the eucharistic assembly does not constitute such an image, it is not the Eucharist in its true sense.”⁴

2.2. Christ, the Eucharist and the Church

2.2.1. The Christological Foundation of the Local Church

A) The Church as the Body of Christ and His Plenitude

The Orthodox theologians we are studying in this chapter insist a lot on the inseparable relationship between Christ and the Church. On this point they are quite close to Afanasiev. They all insist that through the image of the *Body of Christ*, which is a résumé of St Paul’s

² ID, “L’Eglise locale dans une perspective eucharistique,” in: ID., *L’Etre ecclésial*. «Perspective orthodoxe - 3» (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1981), p. 188, *hereafter cited as* J. D. ZIZIoulas, *Eglise locale... perspective eucharistique*.”

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 189.

faith and experience,⁵ the Apostle wanted to convey the fact that the Christians are intimately united to the Lord: they are truly ἐν Χριστῷ.

According to Florovsky, the relationship between the Church and Christ is such⁶ that he goes on to say: “The theology of the Church is but a chapter, an important chapter of Christology. Without this chapter Christology itself will not be complete.”⁷ In his view, Church is not only the Body of Christ, but is also his plenitude (πλήρωμα)⁸: “the Church is the body of Christ and His ‘fullness.’ Body and fullness (*to soma* and *to pleroma*) — these two terms are correlative and closely linked together in St Paul’s mind, one explaining the other [...]. The Church is the Body of Christ because it is His compliment.”⁹ The Church is an organism in which Christ’s glorified life is extended and continued. However, according to Florovsky, when we apply the notion of organism to the Church, it must be done in a qualified manner. This is because the Church is composed of human persons who are in direct communion with the triune God; they should not be, therefore, reduced to simple cells or parts of a whole. Hence, he suggests that “the idea of organism must be completed by that of the symphony of persons, and this is the heart of the Orthodox conception of Catholicity.”¹⁰

B) Pneumatological Presuppositions of the Relationship between Christ and the Church

According to Zizioulas, the question of the relationship between the Church, which is a *symphony of persons*, and Christ is intimately related to another question viz. the relationship between Christology and Pneumatology or even between History and Eschatology. He starts by saying that the Church does not have a hypostasis of its own; it can be understood only in its relationship to Christ. Analogically, the same can be said about Christ. As he explains, it is possible to establish, based on the indications from the New Testament, a pneumatological conditionality of Christology. In other words, Christ may be seen as constituted by the Spirit as a *corporate personality*. This entails that the person of Christ is automatically linked to a community. His identity is conditioned by the Church, for the *one* (Christ) “cannot exist without the *many*”¹¹ (the Church). “The body of Christ is not first the body of an individual

⁵ “It is highly probable that the term itself was suggested by the eucharistic experience (cf. Cor 10: 17) and was deliberately used to accentuate this sacramental connotation,” G. FLOROVSKY, “Corps du Christ vivant,” p. 20.

⁶ “...the Church is Christ himself, the whole Christ, *totu Christus*,” *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ “The Church is the complement of the Christ in the same manner as the head completes the body and the body is completed by the head. [...] the head will be completed only when the body is rendered perfect, when we will be all together, co-united and bound together,” J. CHRYSOSTOM, *In Ephes.* Hom. III, M.G. LXII, c. 29.

⁹ G. FLOROVSKY, “Church: Her Nature...,” p. 64.

¹⁰ ID, “Corps du Christ vivant,” p. 20.

¹¹ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “The Mystery of the Church in Orthodox Tradition,” *OiC*, 24 (1988), p. 303, *hereafter cited as* J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Mystery of the Church.”

Christ and then a community of ‘many’, but simultaneously both together. Thus you cannot have the body of the individual Christ (the One) without having simultaneously the community of the Church (the Many).”¹²

When we consider Christology as conditioned by Pneumatology, we can see that “the Mystery of Christ is in essence nothing other than the Mystery of the Church.”¹³ In his view, when we remain unaccustomed to this ‘relational ontology’ “we shall never be capable of understanding the Mystery of the Church.”¹⁴ We know that the Spirit is the Spirit of communion and it is his work which renders the reality relational. Therefore, Christ who is born of the Spirit cannot be conceived simply as an individual; he is above all a relational being.

But a relational being draws its identity, its personhood, from its relation with others. One person is no person. The spiritual character of God’s own being lies in nothing else but in the relational nature of his existence: there is no Father unless there is a Son and the Spirit. And since the one God is the Father and not the one divine nature or *ousia*, the very identity of God depends on the Father’s relationship with persons other than himself. There is no ‘one’ whose identity is not conditioned by the ‘many’. And if this applies to the being of God, it must be made equally to apply also to Christ.¹⁵

Now, since the hypostasis of the Church is rooted in that of Christ, we can say that the mystery of the Church is basically “the mystery of the ‘one’ who is ‘many’ — not of the ‘one’ who is first one and then, in the *eschata*, becomes ‘many’, but of the ‘one’ who is ‘one’ i.e. unique, and ‘other’ precisely because he relates with the ‘many’.”¹⁶ From this, it is clear that a Christology without Ecclesiology is inconceivable. What is at stake is the very identity of Christ. A Christ, seen merely as individual is no pneumatic Christ; he cannot be the first-born of the many.¹⁷

The existence of the body is a necessary condition for the head to be head. A bodiless head is no head at all.

If Christ does not draw his identity from his relation with the Church, then he is either an individual of demonic isolationism, or he should be understood only in terms of his relationship with the Father.¹⁸

But through the Incarnation, the Son has introduced into his eternal relationship with the Father another element: us, the many, the Church. In the absence of Church, he will be no more Christ, although he will still remain eternal Son.

¹² J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “The ecclesiological presuppositions of the Holy Eucharist,” *Nicol*, 10 (1982), p. 342, hereafter cited as J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Ecclesiological presuppositions.”

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ “The ‘one’ without the ‘many’ is an individual not touched by the Spirit. He cannot be the Christ of our faith,” *ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

C) Christ, the Church and the Eucharistic Celebration

According to Zizioulas,¹⁹ the primitive Church was strongly aware of the fact that during the eucharistic celebration, the ‘multitude’ was united into *one Body*, the Body of Christ. Thus, in the ancient liturgical prayers, found in *First Clement*, we see the idea of the Servant of God—a corporate personality—used in connection with the Eucharist.²⁰ Similarly, in the 6th chapter of St John’s Gospel, the eating of the ‘true bread from heaven’ is understood as eating the flesh of the Son of Man, who is again a corporate personality. According to St Paul, “because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”²¹ “All these—according to J. Zizioulas—show the early and deep connection of the idea of the unity of the ‘many’ in the ‘One’ with the eucharistic experience of the Church.”²²

The relationship between Christ and the Church, as expressed in the eucharistic celebration, is not one of dialectics²³ but one of identification. “Unless the two are identified the eucharistic prayer will lose its meaning as a prayer of the Church addressed to the Father by the Son.”²⁴ Traditionally “the Eucharist was always understood as the act or event in which the identification of the Church with Christ would reach its fullest realisation, and it is for this reason that in the ancient Church only the eucharistic prayer would be addressed to the Father, and only the eucharistic communities would be ‘Churches’ in the fullest sense.”²⁵

At the same time it must be borne in mind that there isn’t a total identity between Christ and the Church. Christ is not only the one who prays with the Church, but also the one who receives her prayers, sitting next to the Father. “This suggests that the Eucharist does not remove entirely the dialectic Christ-Church.”²⁶ The Church is both divine and human at the same time and as such resembles the Chalcedonian Christ.

2.2.2. The Eucharist and the Church

We have seen above that the Church does not have a hypostasis of its own; it can be understood only in its relationship to Christ. That is to say, the foundational principle of a local Church is Christ’s presence within it. This presence of Christ in the fullness of his reality becomes an event when the local Church celebrates the Eucharist. In the words of Zizioulas,

¹⁹ Cf. J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Eucharistic Community and the Catholicity of the Church,” *OiC*, 6 (1970), p. 318, hereafter cited as J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Eucharistic Community... Catholicity.”

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 317.

²¹ 1 *Cor* 10: 17. Cf. 1 *CLEMENT* 59: 2-4; *DIDACHE*, 9: 4; 10: 2; 9: 2.

²² Cf. J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Eucharistic Community... Catholicity,” p. 318.

²³ The actual dialectic is between Church plus Christ and the Father. “Thus, the intra-trinitarian dialectic removes ecclesiology from the dialectic Christ-Church, and leads to an identification of Christ with the Church...,” *Id*, “Mystery of the Church,” p. 297.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 297-98.

²⁶ *IBID.*, p. 298.

C'est parce qu'elle était liée à la conscience qu'en Christ «la multitude» s'unit dans l'Unique, que l'Eucharistie a pu apparaître comme la plus haute forme d'expression de l'Eglise en tant que corps du Christ. C'est pourquoi dans les plus anciens textes historiques que sont les Epîtres de Paul, la synaxe eucharistique est identifiée directement à l'Eglise de Dieu, celle qui se trouve dans une ville donnée.²⁷

The Eucharist is thus the event through which Church is realised. The relation between the two is such that we can say that the Eucharist exists because the Church exists and *inversely*, the Church exists because the Eucharist exists.²⁸ Eucharist is the moment in which the union between Christ and the faithful becomes a concrete reality.

As far as the primitive Church is concerned, one's entry into the Church took place through three stages: baptism, chrismal anointing and the Eucharist. The Eucharist which completes this gradual initiation is not simply *one* sacrament among others, but the *Sacrament of sacraments*,²⁹ it is the sacrament of the Church par excellence, a sacrament in which the Church recognizes itself, is perpetuated, as the place and time of the gathering of the people of God, as the gift and consecration of the people of God, as the Body of Christ by the descent of the Holy Spirit, and finally as the point of departure of the witnessing and missionary and apostolic expansion of the entire Church. That is the reason why the primitive Church did not tolerate the arbitrary abstention from the eucharistic communion. According to the thinking of the time, such an attitude is symptomatic of not belonging to the Church.³⁰ "It is when all the clergy and faithful, with their diverse gifts, are gathered under the presidency of the one bishop that the Church becomes truly herself, the very icon of the Kingdom which is to come."³¹

A) Mutual Co-extensiveness of the Church and the Eucharist

Initially the term Ἐκκλησία and the terms describing the Eucharist, such as *Lord's Supper* (κυριακὸν δεῖπνον), *coming together in the same place* (συνέρχεσθαι ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό), denoted the same reality. The Church is above all a concrete community—a concrete community of a city gathered ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό for the eucharistic celebration. A local community of Christians realises itself as 'Church of God' when it gathers to celebrate the Eucharist. Eucharist is thus the very

²⁷ ID, *Eucharistie, évêque et Eglise*, p. 82.

²⁸ "Le principe ecclésiologique fondamental sur lequel repose la notion d'église locale dans la tradition orthodoxe est celui qui permet d'identifier l'Eglise avec la communauté eucharistique. L'ecclésiologie orthodoxe est fondée sur l'idée que là où il y a l'Eucharistie là est l'Eglise en sa plénitude comme Corps du Christ," ID, *Eglise locale... perspective eucharistique*, p. 181.

²⁹ ST DENYS, *La hiérarchie ecclésiastique*, Ch. III, col. 424 C.

³⁰ 11th Canon of the *Council of Sardique*, the 80th canon of the *Council In Trullo* and the 21st canon of the *Council of Elvira* prescribed excommunication to those who did not take part in the eucharistic communion during three Sundays. According to the 2nd canon of the *Council of Antioch* those who come only to hear the Word of God and did not receive communion transgresses the order and must be excommunicated.

³¹ J. H. ERICKSON, "The Local Church and Catholicity: An Orthodox Perspective," *Jurist*, 52(1992), p. 495, *hereafter cited as* J. H. ERICKSON, "Local Church and Catholicity."

basis of the Church's life.³² At the eucharistic celebration, according to B. Bobrinsky, "l'Eglise est coextensive à l'Eucharistie, et vice-versa, c'est dans l'Eucharistie que l'Eglise se manifeste dans sa vérité ultime."³³ Perceiving thus the intimate relationship between the Church and the Eucharist has implications for the understanding of the status of the local Church. According A. Schmemmann,

...de même que l'Eucharistie n'est pas une partie du Corps du Christ mais le Christ tout entier, de même l'Eglise qui se « réalise » dans l'Eucharistie, n'est pas une partie ou un membre du tout, mais l'Eglise de Dieu tout entière et indivisible, qui est et se manifeste en tout lieu. Là où est l'Eucharistie, là est toute l'Eglise, inversement, l'Eucharistie est seulement là où est toute l'Eglise, c'est-à-dire tout le peuple de Dieu réuni dans son Evêque.³⁴

Thus, the Church which is realized at the eucharistic assembly is not simply a member of a vaster 'local' or 'universal' organism: it is the Church. As the Body of Christ, the Church is always identical to herself in time and space, because in each local Church, in the unity of the bishop and the people, the plenitude of the gifts is given, the entire truth is proclaimed and Christ in his mystical fullness is present.

B) Disjunction between the Eucharist and the Church

Zizioulas is keen to account for the disjunction between the Eucharist and the Church which took place in the course of history. The inseparable and intimate relationship between the Church and the Eucharist was the common tradition of the Church throughout the first millennium. Things started changing with the development of Scholasticism. The Scholastic theologians of the 13th century and after worked out subtle distinctions between the terms 'body of Christ', 'body of the Church' and the 'body of the Eucharist' which made them distinct from one another.³⁵ This development, coupled with the emergence of a sacramental theology independent of both Christology and Ecclesiology, led to a disjunction between the Eucharist and Ecclesiology and to a conception of the Eucharist as *one sacrament among many*. As Zizioulas formulates it, "the Eucharist was no longer identified with the Church; it became a 'means of grace' something assisting the faithful in their spiritual life, which was no longer regarded as manifesting *the total body of the Church*."³⁶ This perspective continued during the later centuries. The Eucharist "remained a sacrament *produced by the Church* and not *constitutive* of her being. The Eucharist was understood in close association with a 'valid'

³² "Le renouveau théologique de notre époque trouve sa source dans la redécouverte de la centralité de l'Eucharistie, tant dans la vie du croyant que dans celle de l'Eglise toute entière," B. BOBRINSKOY, "Communion trinitaire..." p. 175.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ A. SCHMEMMANN, "La notion de primauté," p. 129.

³⁵ Cf. H. DE LUBAC, *Corpus Mysticum. L'Eucharistie et l'Eglise au Moyen Age* (1949), pp. 89ff.

³⁶ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "Ecclesiological presuppositions," p. 337.

ministry through ordination which bestowed a ‘*character indebilis*’ and ‘*potestas*’ to perform the sacraments, regardless of the presence of community or orthodox faith or other such factors.”³⁷

C) Pneumatological Conditioning of the Relationship between Church and the Eucharist

We have already noted above that, according to the Orthodox view, both the Eucharist and the Church are co-extensive. Here again, as in the case of the relationship between Christ and the Church, the roots of this coincidence and interdependence between the Church and the Eucharist must be sought in the relationship between Christology and Pneumatology. According to Zizioulas, behind the thesis that *Church precedes the Eucharist*, there is another thesis which holds that Christology precedes Pneumatology. Accordingly, the Church as the Body of Christ is *first* instituted in itself as a historical entity, which then produces the ‘means of grace’ called sacraments, in which is included the Eucharist. Within this structure, it must also be said that the ministry precedes the sacraments including the Eucharist which is tantamount to saying that it is the priest who *makes* the Eucharist.

As we have seen above, from the point of view of a Christology conditioned by Pneumatology, Christ is *one*, in whom the *many* are also included. In this perspective, the Eucharist is the unique occasion in which Christ (*one*) and the Community (*many*) coincide. In this setting, ‘Body of Christ’ means both the Body of Jesus and the Body of the Church and they cannot be separated: “*Therefore, the ecclesiological presuppositions of the Eucharist cannot be found outside the Eucharist itself.* It is by studying the nature of the Eucharist that we can understand the nature of the Church which conditions the Eucharist.”³⁸ A study of the Eucharist will reveal that the Body of Christ (which is at once the eucharistic Body and the ecclesial Body) is indeed the Body of the Risen Lord, the eschatological Christ. Hence, we must seek the ecclesiological presupposition of the Eucharist in the eschatological Christ and eschatological community. Eschatological community, in its ecclesial and eucharistic form, is above all synaxis *epi to auto* of the dispersed people of God.³⁹ In this way, we can say that a fundamental ecclesiological presupposition of the Eucharist is the gathering of the people in a place.⁴⁰ In other words, the *Amen* of the community is an indispensable part of the celebration of the Eucharist.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 338

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 342.

³⁹ In Paul and Ignatius, συνέρχεσθαι ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό means both Eucharist and Church.

⁴⁰ According to A. Schmemmann, Eucharist is “la seule source véritable de la compréhension par l’Eglise de sa nature et vocation eschatologique,” A. SCHMEMMANN, “Théologie liturgique: remarques méthodologiques,” in: *Le chemin historique de l’Orthodoxie*, «L’Echelle de Jacob» (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1995), p. 302, hereafter cited as A. SCHMEMMANN, “Théologie liturgique: remarques.”

D) The Eucharist as an Event of communion

As the early Christian saw it, the Eucharist was a spiritual event par excellence, which “brought together the dispersed people of God “in the same place” (*epi to auto*) not only to celebrate but also to constitute the eschatological messianic community here and now.”⁴¹ The people thus brought together acquired the right to call God as Father, and the other members of the community as “brethren” who share a single eternal destiny.

The Eucharist offered positively what baptism meant negatively: the death of the old, biological identity was replaced by the birth of the new identity, which was given in the eucharistic community. [This new identity which is] based on free and undying relationships [...]—gives eternal life. [...] Belonging to the community of the Eucharist is, therefore, tantamount to acquiring eternal life. [...] it is, above all, identical with overcoming death through the acquisition of a new identity based on new relationships which are identical with the Father-Son relationship of the Holy Trinity.⁴²

E) The Eucharist Structures the Church

According to Zizioulas, the *epi to auto*, which is the eucharistic form of the eschatological messianic community, provided the early Church with the basic concept and framework of her structure and the context for the perpetuation of this structure in history.⁴³ In his view, this eucharistic basis of the Church structure “led to a real synthesis between the historical and the eschatological dimensions of the Church’s existence without the danger of ‘institutionalization.’ For the Eucharist is perhaps the only reality in the Church which is at once an institution and an event; it is the uniquely privileged moment of the Church’s existence in which the Kingdom comes epiclestically, i.e. without emerging as an expression of the historical process, although it is manifested through historical forms.”⁴⁴ The Eucharistic event reveals the apostolic rootage (past) and eschatological conditioning (future) of the Church structure. In the last count, the structure of the Church is determined by her nature: “Only those institutional aspects—and such aspects do exist—which stem from her existence as an event relate to her true identity. Such structures and institutions are those involved in the event of the eucharistic community and whatever stems from this event. [...] If we understand the Church in this way, as an eschatological community existing in history, [...] then all the

⁴¹ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Apostolic continuity and Orthodox Theology: Towards a Synthesis of Two Perspectives,” *SVTQ*, 19 (1975), p. 29, *hereafter cited as* J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Apostolic continuity and Orthodox Theology.”

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ A similar view is maintained also by J. Meyendorff: “En tant que manifestation de l’unité et de l’intégralité de l’Eglise, l’eucharistie servait aussi de norme théologique suprême pour la structure ecclésiale,” J. MEYENDORFF, *Initiation à la Théologie byzantine*, trad. de l’anglais (*Byzantine Theology, Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*) par Anne SANGLADE avec la collaboration de Constantin ADRONIKOF (Paris: Edition du Cerf, 1975), p. 279, *hereafter cited as* J. MEYENDORFF, *Initiation à la Théologie byzantine*.

⁴⁴ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Apostolic continuity and Orthodox Theology,” pp. 107-108.

institutions which result from this form part of its true identity and its Mystery.”⁴⁵ To these belong the institutions of episcopacy, the structure of the eucharistic community, conciliarity and the distinction between laity, priests and bishops.

The New Testament and the Fathers show that the ministers of the Church were determined by their functions within the local eucharistic assembly. Of the various ministries, that of the eucharistic president occupied the most important and decisive position as far as the existence of the local Church was concerned. As J. Meyendorff formulates it, “Il ne peut ... y avoir aucun ministère plus haut ni plus décisif que celui qui préside à l’eucharistie. [...] il ne peut y avoir aucune autorité «de droit divin» sur l’eucharistie et l’évêque qui préside l’assemblée eucharistique.”⁴⁶ Thus, under the presidency of the bishop (*episcopus*, overseer), the presbyter (elder) and the deacon (*diakonoi*, servants entrusted with social functions) become permanent ministries necessary for each Christian community. It is not difficult to perceive that this view of ministry is based on the central importance of the eucharistic celebration for the life of the Church.

F) The Eucharist does not exhaust the whole Reality of the Church

Although it is true that the Eucharist incarnates and expresses the nature of the Church, we have to also underline that it does not exhaust the whole reality of the Church. This is a point on which most of the contemporary Orthodox theologians differ from the position of Afanasiev. As Zizioulas has formulated it,

La signification de l’Eglise et de son unité ne se limite cependant pas totalement à une unité eucharistique qui ne serait assortie d’aucun préalable. L’Eglise s’est également ressentie depuis l’origine comme unie *dans la foi, dans l’amour, dans l’unique baptême, dans la sainteté de vie, etc.*⁴⁷

But Afanasiev tended to minimise the dogmatic divergence. According to him, ecclesiality should be acknowledged to a community which celebrates the Eucharist. But he does not sufficiently insist on the fact that if the Eucharist is to constitute the Church as the Body of Christ, it must be a valid Eucharist. And, as I. Bria has pointed out, “la validité de l’eucharistie doit donc être envisagée en liaison avec la doctrine intégrale du salut.”⁴⁸ For the Eucharist, by its very nature, should correspond to the profession of faith and ecclesial communion. In other words, the eucharistic communion is to be seen as the expression of the communion of faith, the communion of the faithful and the means which lead to it. In brief, the eucharistic communion presupposes the communion also of other fundamental elements

⁴⁵ ID, “Mystery of the Church,” p. 301.

⁴⁶ J. MEYENDORFF, *Initiation à la Théologie byzantine*, p. 279.

⁴⁷ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Eucharistie, évêque et Eglise*, p. 27.

⁴⁸ I. BRIA, “La Koinonia comme communauté canonique: Perspectives actuelles,” *Ist.*, 10 (1975), p. 118, hereafter cited as I. BRIA, “Koinonia comme communauté canonique.”

such as faith and love. No local Church can be *catholic* Church if it separates itself from other Churches.

2.2.3. Concluding Remarks

It is not too difficult to notice, after the above discussion on the relationship between the realities of Christ, the Eucharist and the Church, the convergence between the Afanasievan position and that of the theologians we have examined. It is a common trait of the Orthodox ecclesiology to hold inseparably together the realities of Christ, the Eucharist and the Church. Florovsky underscores the close relationship between Christ and the Church by saying that Ecclesiology is an indispensable chapter of Christology. The Church is, according to him, the fullness and compliment of Christ. This idea is further developed by Zizioulas by underlying the pneumatological and, therefore, eschatological character of the relationship between Christ and the Church. From a pneumatological point of view, the *One* (Christ) can be properly understood only in relation to the *Many* (the community of the faithful). That is to say, the Church, the Body of Christ is simultaneously one and many. This mystery becomes an event during the eucharistic celebration, when the multitude is united into one Body. The Eucharist reveals the real nature of the Church. At the eucharistic celebration, the relationship between the *One* (the eucharistic Body of Christ) and the *Many* (the ecclesial Body of Christ) is manifested as a relationship between the eschatological Christ and the eschatological messianic community. In all these points, the positions of Zizioulas, Florovsky and Schmemmann coincide with that of Afanasiev.

But there is a point on which they seem to disagree, viz. the Afanasievan thesis that the Eucharist is the absolute criterion of ecclesiality. Here both Zizioulas and Bria beg to differ from the Russian ecclesiologist. According to them, while recognising the importance of the Eucharist for the ecclesiality of a community, we must not ignore the importance of the true doctrine, because the very validity of the Eucharist depends on it. For the communion generated by the Eucharist must be seen as an expression of the communion of faith.

2.3. The Bishop and the Eucharistic Community

2.3.1. Patristic View on the Relationship between Bishop and the Community

In order to bring out the relationship between the bishop and the community, Zizioulas makes a survey of the data in the patristic literature. According to him, Ignatius of Antioch's presentation of the ministry of *episkopos* is often characterised as radically new in comparison not only to the New Testament writings but also to other patristic writings such as *First Clement* or *Didache*. Zizioulas' view is that this characterisation need not be taken in its face

value because the difference between Ignatius and *Clement* or *Didache* does not concern the essential aspects of the episcopal function but only the manner of highlighting it.

What is radically new during the post-apostolic times is not so much the Ignatian view of Bishop but the new situation created by the departure of the apostolic generation. Early on we can observe two ways interpreting this new situation. Clement of Rome, for instance, speaks of a historical linear transmission of ministry which, originating in God, passes through Christ and the Apostles, before it reaches up to the *episkopoi kai diakonai*.⁴⁹

Ignatius, who had an eschatological conception of the Church, situated ministry in the eschatological community of the eucharistic celebration. According to this martyr bishop of Antioch⁵⁰—who, living still in an age marked by the presence and activity of the great Apostles not long dead, refuses to compare himself with an Apostle⁵¹—“there exists an inseparable relationship between the bishop and the Eucharist. Unity with the bishop and unity with each other in the one bread within the altar is precisely one identical reality.”⁵² Ignatian admonitions like “*Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop*” or “*It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate an agape*” may not be understood “if it were not presupposed that in the thought and experience of St. Ignatius each liturgical centre necessitated the existence of a bishop.”⁵³ However, for both Clement and Ignatius, *episcopo* is the ministry through which the post-apostolic community enters into communion with the apostolic community.

The author of *Didache* is also concerned with the question of transition from the apostolic to the post-apostolic generation through the ordination of *episkopoi kai diakonai*. These ministers are introduced not simply to replace the existing doctors and prophets; instead they become the central ministry of this transition at the cost of the itinerant ministers who do not any more constitute the link between the apostolic Church and the post-apostolic Church. Here it is important to note that

⁴⁹ 1 CLEMENT, Ch. 42.

⁵⁰ “Take heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup unto unity of His blood, one altar, as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery, and deacons, my fellow-servants, so that whatever you do, you may do it according to God,” IGNATIUS, *Phil.* 4.

⁵¹ “Shall I, when permitted to write on this point, reach such a height of self-esteem, that though being a condemned man, I should issue commands to you as if I were an apostle?” IGNATIUS, *Tral.* 3. “I do not, as Peter and Paul, issue commandments unto you. They were apostles; I am but a condemned man; they were free, while I am even until now a servant,” IGNATIUS, *Rom.* 4. Commenting on this, J. S. Romanides says: “The origin of the episcopate cannot be understood when one compares bishops with apostles and tries to prove that they differ only in name. On the contrary, the source and basis for the episcopate is to be found in the liturgical practice of the Church and in the doctrine of the Church as defined in this same liturgical life...,” J. S. ROMANIDES, “Ecclesiology of St Ignatius of Antioch.”

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

...la transition de l'Église apostolique à l'Église post-apostolique ne s'est pas faite par une série de délégués missionnaires, mais par la voie des communautés locales. C'est en faisant de chaque Église locale une Église complète et catholique, capable de juger tout ministère «universel», que les chrétiens de cette époque sont passés à une condition d'existence où les apôtres n'étaient plus présents.⁵⁴

This entails that the centrality of the ministry of the bishop can be meaningfully understood in the context of two other factors, viz. the conception of the local Church as 'catholic' and the eucharistic ministry (*leitourgia*) of the bishops.

From the middle of the 2nd century onwards, we see an increasing insistence on the teaching authority of the bishop, in reaction to the rise of heresies.⁵⁵ In the face of heresies, especially Gnosticism, the primitive Church made use of the list of the apostolic succession, which showed the connection of a local bishop to the Apostles, to prove her apostolic character based on the ministry of *episcopus*. According to Zizioulas, the fact that the Church tried to prove her possibility of accessing the apostolic teaching not through the doctors and theologians—whose main ministry was to teach—but through the bishops, i.e. the eucharistic presidents—whose principal function was not teaching—shows that the ministry of *episcopos* was tightly tied up with the Ecclesiology of the local Church and its eucharistic character.

According to the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, the bishop is ordained for the celebration of the Eucharist and for the giving of ordination. A presbyter, on the other hand, is ordained neither for the eucharistic celebration nor for ordaining; they are ordained to teach, administer and to judge the community. Thus, in Hippolytus too, the image of the bishop as the eucharistic president, who occupies the place of God, comes to the fore, while *presbyterium* is envisaged as '*synedrion*'—a court pronouncing judgement, occupying the place of the Twelve. According to him, the bishop is for the community both *alter Christus* and *alter apostolus*. We have here a first attempt to synthesise two images, one Ignatian (eschatological, Christological) and the other Clementine (linear-historical, apostolic). Hippolytus may be considered as a witness of a period in which *episcopos* exercises at once the Christological function⁵⁶ as well as the apostolic function.

Cyprian, during the 3rd century, represented the next step in the development of the history of the concept of episcopate. He contributed to the removal of the christological connotation from the notion of episcopate and associated it more closely with the apostolic function. Thus the episcopate is defined essentially as a continuation of the apostolic ministry: "...il est clair

⁵⁴ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "Episcopos et episkopos dans l'Église primitive. Bref inventaire de la documentation," *Iren.*, 56 (1983), p. 487, *hereafter cited as* J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "Episcopos et episkopos."

⁵⁵ Cf. Martyrdom of Polycarp, Justin, Hegesippus, Irenaeus, etc.

⁵⁶ That of giving Spirit (ordination) and of feeding the people as the eucharistic president.

que son image de l'épiscopat n'est plus centrée sur le Christ comme c'était le cas pour Ignace, la Didascalie syriaque, Hippolyte, etc., et devient centrée sur Pierre."⁵⁷ Up until the time of Cyprian, the bishop was the unique presider (sovereign priest) of the eucharistic community, surrounded by the *presbyterium* and deacons. From the 4th century onwards we find an inversion of roles between the bishop and the presbyters. According to the writings of the 4th century, including the 4th century versions of the 2nd and 3rd century writings, the eucharistic celebration is no more the prerogative of the bishop; the presbyter, who earlier was not a minister of Eucharist, is now considered its minister. Thus, there is no difference between the bishop and the presbyter from the point of the eucharistic function.

The fact that presbyters began to offer the Eucharist more or less *ipso iure* progressively signified that the essence of the episcopate is no more to be sought in his eucharistic presidency, but in his function as administrator and teacher—a typical presbyteral function in the earlier period. When the bishop became primarily an administrator and teacher, abandoning the christological aspect of his *episkopè*, the presbyter took the role that was the bishop's and the Church lost her presbyter. Soon, it would be held that bishops and presbyters were not necessarily bound up with the community, they formed a caste apart.

2.3.2. Bishop as an Icon of Christ

According to Ignatius of Antioch, the unity of the faithful with the bishop is a living image of the unity in Christ.⁵⁸ This Ignatian view is evidently based on the liturgical practice of the Church of his time. In the regular eucharistic assemblies of the early Christians someone must have indeed occupied the place which the Lord occupied during the Last Supper. At least from the 2nd century, as we know from Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus, this presider was the bishop. In fact, the identification between Christ and the bishop is based on the identification between Christ and the Church (Head and Body) which is acquired at the moment when the Head (Christ) brings to the Father the prayers of the community.

At that moment the president of the community would be seen as the image of Christ by virtue of the fact that he would visibly do what the Head - Christ - does invisibly, i.e. bring the prayers of the community, and the community itself, to the Father. This president would thus himself acquire prerogatives belonging to Christ.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "Episkopè et épiskopos," p. 492.

⁵⁸ "It is manifest, therefore, that we should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord Himself," IGNATIUS, *Eph.* 6. "For when you are subject to the bishop as to Jesus Christ you appear to me to live not after the manner of men but according to Jesus Christ [...] let all reverence [...] the bishop as Jesus Christ," IGNATIUS, *Tral.* 2-3.

⁵⁹ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "Mystery of the Church," p. 298.

According to J. Zizioulas, “[w]e are right at the causal roots of the theology of episcopacy, a theology which becomes inevitable once the Church is identified with Christ in this manner.”⁶⁰

2.3.3. Salvation and Communion with the Local Church and its Head

Zizioulas touches here an Ignatian doctrine according to which salvation is realised and experienced through faithful communion in the eucharistic Body of Christ. The eucharistic body is formed in the synaxis, when the faithful are gathered under the leadership of the bishop, surrounded by the college of the presbyters and assisted by the deacons. However, it must be seen that the Eucharist as such does not have anything magical about it. It is “primarily and basically an event of communion, a synaxis (gathering together) in the same sense in which the Bible understood it in connection with the earliest eschatological expectations of the gathering of the dispersed people of God in the parousia.”⁶¹ According to the Ignatian view, relationship to God is possible only when there is constant participation in the eucharistic community and, hence, there is obedience to its head, the bishop.

For Ignatius eternal and true life is an eschatological reality and is granted only through participation in the eschatological community, which is prefigured and manifested in the eucharistic community. In accordance with fundamental biblical ideas he maintained that salvation is not a matter of the individual but of belonging to the community of the people of God.⁶²

Hence, those who deliberately cut themselves from the eucharistic community and its head, cut themselves automatically from communion with God and eternal life. The crucial importance of the bishop in this vertical communion of the faithful lies in his being the head of the eucharistic community.

Like the Eucharist itself, the episcopacy is a relational ministry: both of these are crucial for spiritual life because they are crucial for the presence of the eschatological community here and now in history. [...] No one can participate in eternal life without passing through the Eucharist and the bishop. This idea led to the axiom “No salvation outside the Church” (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*)...⁶³

According to Zizioulas, the *ecclesia* in question must be understood in the Pauline sense of the term, viz. as the eucharistic assembly. Hence, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* must be paraphrased as ‘without participation in the eucharistic communion there is no salvation.’

2.3.4. Apostolic Succession and the Local Church

The bishops are universally considered as the successors of the Apostles. But how do we understand the apostolic succession? Can we conceive it as a chain of episcopal ordinations

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁶¹ ID, “Early Christian Community,” p. 32.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

going back to the apostolic times and in which the communities where these ordinations take place have no role to play? According to Zizioulas, to speak of apostolic succession in this way would amount to sanctioning ministry *in absoluto*,⁶⁴ something prohibited by the canonical tradition. What is crucial here, according to him, is the approach we take. There are two possible approaches: a historical one and an eschatological one.

According to the historical approach, “the bishop can be singled out from the Church as an individual possessing the plenitude of apostolicity which he then transmits to others through ordination.”⁶⁵ The Apostles are conceived in this approach “as persons entrusted with a *mission* to fulfil. As such they are *sent* and thus *dispersed* in the world.”⁶⁶ They are seen as the essential link between Christ and the Church, and as such, have a normative character.

The eschatological approach, on the contrary, attributes to the Apostles an eschatological function. If, according to the historical approach, apostolicity comes from the side of the past, according to the eschatological approach, apostolicity comes from the side of the future. “It is the anticipation of the end, the final nature of the Church that reveals her apostolic character. [...] This anticipation [...] is] a real *presence* of the eschata here and now.”⁶⁷ In this approach, “instead of being understood as individuals dispersed throughout the world for mission, the Apostles are understood as a *college*.”⁶⁸ The distinction between the two approaches corresponds to the distinction between mission and eschatology. Just as mission involves *sending* and eschata implies *convocation*, the Apostles, in their eschatological function, can be conceived only as a college. The Apostles are seen as persons who surround Jesus. This college of Apostles is succeeded, during the post-apostolic times, by the college of presbyters surrounding the bishop who is the image of Christ.⁶⁹ According to this perspective, we may consider “episcopal succession as a continuity of the Church not with an individual Apostle but with the apostolic college as a whole and the community of the Church in its eschatological setting.”⁷⁰ It takes place “in and through the convocation of the Church in one

⁶⁴ “To speak of apostolic succession as a chain of episcopal ordinations going back to the apostolic times, without implying the indispensable bond of these ordinations with the community in whose eucharistic synaxis they have taken place, would amount to a conception of the ministry *in absoluto*,” ID, “Eucharistic Community... Catholicity,” pp. 334-335. According to Meyendorff, the primitive Church “never knew ‘bishops in general,’ but only bishops of concrete, stable communities,” J. MEYENDORFF, “Catholicity of the Church: An Introduction,” *SVTQ*, 17 (1973), p. 9, *hereafter cited as* J. MEYENDORFF, “Catholicity... An Introduction.”

⁶⁵ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Apostolic continuity and Orthodox Theology,” p. 96.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁶⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 80.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

place, i.e. through *its eucharistic structure*. It is a *continuity of communities* and *Churches*....”⁷¹ From what has been said so far it is clear that

Apostolic succession through episcopacy is essentially a succession of Church structure. The concrete implications of this are clear: in adhering to episcopal succession the Church does not isolate episcopacy from the rest of the Church orders (including the laity) but, on the contrary, she makes it absolutely dependent on them, just as they are absolutely dependent on it.⁷²

The fact that the bishop is part of the structure of the community, and not simply an individual, is conveyed by the way in which his consecration and his power of jurisdiction are conditioned liturgically and canonically in the East.⁷³ The necessary bond between the bishop and his Church is also the reason behind the canonical provision according to which only bishops who are heads of actual communities can participate in a council. This shows that in episcopal succession we have essentially succession of Churches.

If apostolic succession was only a matter of transmission of apostolic doctrine, “the natural thing would have been to see this transmission through the presbyters, who were in fact charged precisely with the task of teaching the faith at that time.”⁷⁴ Hence, according to Zizioulas, “[i]t is only when apostolic continuity is understood as a continuity of *structure* and as a succession of *communities* that the episcopal character of apostolic succession acquires its uniqueness.”⁷⁵ Every charismatic manifestations of the Church, every ministry in the Church must pass through the bishop—“in whom the entire structure converges”⁷⁶—if it must avoid being manifestations of individualism.

2.3.5. Bishop as Ecclesiological Presupposition of the Eucharist and the Eucharistic Community

Earlier we have noted that, according to Zizioulas, the fundamental ecclesiological presupposition of the Eucharist is the gathering of the people in a place. But this gathering to take place, the presence of the bishop is a must. Hence, as J. Zizioulas observes, bishop can be considered “the ecclesiological presupposition par excellence of the Eucharist.”⁷⁷ Here, he returns to the key category of ‘one and many’ to clarify not only the relationship between Christ and the Church but also the reality of the communion between the bishop and the community. Just as Christ (*one*) cannot be conceived without the Church (*many*), neither can the bishop (*one*) be conceived without his community (*many*). As far as a local Church is

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

⁷³ Cf. The discussion *infra* on the relationship between bishop and the local Church.

⁷⁴ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Apostolic continuity and Orthodox Theology,” p. 100.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁷⁷ ID, “Ecclesiological presuppositions,” p. 345.

concerned, the communion—the intimate relationship between the ‘one’ and the ‘many’—is ontologically constitutive.

Accordingly, the fundamental function of a local bishop *vis-à-vis* his community is to express in himself the ‘multitude’ of the faithful in his locality. He is the one “through whose hands the whole community would have to pass in its being offered up to God in Christ, i.e. in the highest moment of the Church’s unity.”⁷⁸ Hence, the pre-eminence of the bishop has its foundation within the eucharistic community. Not only the multiplicity of the people but also the multiplicity of the Orders became united and one in the bishop. The ‘one’ (bishop) cannot exist without the ‘many’ (the community) nor can the ‘many’ exist without the ‘one’. This principle is canonically expressed as follows:

First, the bishop needs the community, i.e. the ‘one’ cannot exist without the ‘many’.

- There is no ordination to the episcopate outside the community. “To condition the ordination of the bishop by the presence of the community is to make the community *constitutive* of the Church. There is no Church without the community, as there is no Christ without the Body, or the ‘one’ without the ‘many’.”⁷⁹
- There is no bishop without a community attached to him. In the Orthodox Church, there is no *missio canonica* or a distinction between *potestas ordinis* and *potestas iurisdictionis*. The name of the community is mentioned in the prayer of ordination of the bishop. In other words, no bishop can be ordained *in absoluto*.⁸⁰ It means that *the community forms part of the ontology of episcopacy*. There is no bishop who is not conditioned by the community.

The community is also dependent on the bishop, i.e., the ‘many’ cannot exist without the ‘one.’

- There is no baptism, which is the constitutive act of the community, i.e. the ontological basis of the laity, without the bishop. That is to say, the ‘many’ cannot be ‘many’ without the ‘one.’

⁷⁸ ID, “Eucharistic Community... Catholicity,” 323.

⁷⁹ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* [2nd Print] (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), p. 137, *hereafter cited as* J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion*.

⁸⁰ “The existence of titular bishops in the Orthodox Churches points to a grave anomaly. If a bishop is ordained for a certain community, he must be free to exercise fully his ministry in this community. Only if he is separated from his flock because of historical circumstances can he be regarded as a canonical bishop in spite of his absence from his community. But the ordination of bishops with the intention of using them as bishops with a dependent authority (assistant bishops etc.) is a violation of basic ecclesiological principles under the influence of a false notion of sacramentalism as a transmission of episcopacy from one individual to another,” ID, “Apostolic continuity and Orthodox Theology,” p. 96.

- There is no ordination of any kind without the bishop; the bishop is the condition for the existence of the community and its charismatic life.

If the Church is, thus, conditioned by communion, then all pyramidal notions of the Church will disappear. The ‘one’ and the ‘many’ would co-exist as two aspects of the one and the same being. This means that neither one bishop nor the episcopate as a whole are above the Church, or can act and teach *ex sese et non ex consensu Ecclesiae*. It is rather the bishop’s complete identification with and his total obedience to the *consensus Ecclesiae*, to her teaching, life, and holiness, as well as his organic unity with the people of God that makes the bishop the teacher and the guardian of the truth.⁸¹

We can distinguish two aspects in the role of the bishop: he has to represent both the community and Christ. This paradoxical position is akin to that of Christ, who not only offers the Eucharist as the first-born of the brethren, as *part* of the community but also addresses the community by giving the Spirit (charisms), thereby standing above the community. Bishop too, on his part, not only offers the Eucharist as part of the community and as its head, but he is also the sole ordainer, who gives Spirit to the community. “In this sense he is addressing the community; he constitutes it, as the ecclesial presupposition par excellence. The Bishop thus becomes also the ecclesiological presupposition par excellence of the Eucharist.”⁸²

2.3.6. The Bishop and the Presbyterium

Many of the recent studies on early Ecclesiology rightly stress the central role of the bishop in the Church. But according to Schmemmann the trend to defend a ‘monarchical’ episcopate is an overstatement as it may give a distorted picture of the early episcopate. In his view,

All available evidence points to the very real importance of the *presbyterium* in the local Church, the college of presbyters or elders being precisely the *council* of the bishop and an essential organ of Church government. Long before their transformation into heads of separate communities the members of the ‘second order’ existed as a necessary collective complement of the bishop’s power, and early rites of ordination point to the ‘gift of government’ as the principal charism of the presbyters.⁸³

The presbyters are not simply advisors of the bishops; they have received the real charism of government. Yet they can do nothing without the bishop, i.e. without his recognition of all their acts as acts of the Church. Thus, the Church government is truly hierarchical and

⁸¹ Cf. A. SCHMEMMANN, “Ecclesiological Notes,” *SVTQ*, 11 (1967), 35-39, *hereafter cited as* A. SCHMEMMANN, “Ecclesiological Notes.”

⁸² J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Ecclesiological presuppositions,” p. 345.

⁸³ A. SCHMEMMANN, “Towards a theology of Councils,” in: *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1979), p. 168, *hereafter cited as* A. SCHMEMMANN, “Towards a theology of Councils.”

conciliar. The government of the presbyters is conciliar “because in their plurality they can express the whole reality of the concrete community, the variety of its needs and aspirations. But this plurality is transformed into, and sealed as, *oneness* by the bishop, whose specific charism is to “fulfil” the Church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic.”⁸⁴ If the presbyters were mere subordinates of the bishop, the latter would not have anything to transform, anything to fulfil; the Church would then cease to be council, a hierarchy. It would be instead characterised by a relationship of ‘power’ and ‘subordination’.

But unfortunately this is what happened in the course of history. When the presbyter-member of the bishop’s council was transformed into the hierarchical head of a separate community, the idea of the Church government also got transformed.

The bishop, on the one hand, was deprived of his ‘council,’ and his power became indeed ‘monarchical.’ The priest, on the other hand, became a simple subordinate of this monarchical power, and from ‘conciliar’ the bishop-priest relationship became a relationship of subordination and ‘delegation of power.’⁸⁵

This transformation negatively affected the conciliar structure of Church government. Just as the episcopal Church lost the conciliar structure of government with the disintegration of the *presbyterium*, so also the parish lost for several centuries even the rudimentary forms of conciliar life. “It was thus forced, first, into a purely passive understanding of the *laos* as completely subordinated to the hierarchy, and then, the progress of democratic ideas helping, into a lay rebellion *against* the hierarchy.”⁸⁶

2.3.7. Concluding Remarks

In the elaboration of the relationship between the bishop and his Church too, we can identify areas of agreement between Afanasiev and his fellow Orthodox theologians. When Zizioulas says that the ministry of the episcopate is tightly tied up with the ecclesiology of the local Church and its eucharistic character, he is totally in agreement with Afanasiev. Yet, we find a marked difference between the two Orthodox theologians. In the Afanasievan system, a eucharistic president is enough for a local Church to exist, because what is crucial is the eucharistic celebration. In this respect, even a parish can be seen as a local Church. Zizioulas does not agree with that. According to him, both the Eucharist and the bishop are constitutive of a local Church. Zizioulas underlines the crucial importance of the bishop not only for the organisation of the eucharistic community but also for the faith and salvation of the faithful. The Afanasievan bishop is primarily a eucharistic president, only in this capacity he can become the leader of the local community. By showing that apostolic succession is basically a

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 169-170

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

continuity of the Church with the apostolic college and the community of the Church in its eschatological setting, Zizioulas explains another dimension of the inseparable relationship between the bishop and the local Church. Using the category of one and many, he also shows the parallelism between the Christ-Church and Bishop-Church relationships. Just as Christ (one) cannot be understood without the Church (many), neither can Bishop (one) be properly understood without his community (many). In Afanasiev, the language is more eucharistic. According to him, the *proéstôs* cannot exist outside the eucharistic assembly.

2.4. Eschatological Conditionality of the Local Church and Its Institutions

Our discussion so far has for purpose to situate the local Church and its institutions in the context of a synthesis between ‘one’ and ‘many.’ But according to Zizioulas, in an Ecclesiology which is conditioned by Pneumatology, this synthesis alone does not suffice. It must be accompanied by an eschatological dimension, which is also—alongside the communion—a gift of the Spirit. In his view, the eschatological characteristic of Ecclesiology is manifested by the condition which requires that both baptism and episcopal ordination should take place in the context of the Eucharist.

According to the Orthodox understanding, the Eucharist—which sets the scene for the convocation of the dispersed people of God from the ends of the earth in one place, uniting the ‘many’ in ‘one,’—is an eschatological moment par excellence. It is also a moment of ‘tradition’ (παράδοσις) and ‘remembrance’ (ἀνάμνησις); as such it awakens historical consciousness. Thus, we can say that, at the eucharistic celebration, the Church unites the two dimensions—past and future—simultaneously as one indivisible reality. It is a moment in which “the Church realises that her roots are to be found simultaneously in the past and in the future, in history and in the *eschata*.”⁸⁷

Thus, whenever a local community gathers round its bishop to celebrate the Eucharist, the eschatological community is present in its plenitude. Here not only do the ‘one’ and the ‘many’ co-exist and mutually condition; but something more is also indicated: *the ecclesial institutions are reflections of the Kingdom of God and their nature is iconic*. That is to say their ontology does not exist in themselves, but in their relation to something else – to God, to Christ. Every ecclesial institution has its justification in reference to something ultimate, not simply in its historical utility. History is not a sufficient justification for any given ecclesial institution. Ecclesial institutions conditioned by eschatology become sacramental in the sense that they are placed within the dialectics between history and eschatology, between the

⁸⁷ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Apostolic continuity and Orthodox Theology,” p. 91.

‘already’ and the ‘not yet’. On their own, ecclesial institutions are not sufficient, they need to lead an ‘epicleptic life,’ i.e., they always depend for their efficacy on the prayer of the community. For it is not in history these institutions find their surety, but in the constant dependence on the Spirit. That is why ecclesial institutions are called sacramental.

2.5. An Orthodox Appraisal on the Principle of One Bishop per City

In this section an attempt is made to bring together the views of the Orthodox theologians under consideration on the principle of *one bishop per city*.

2.5.1. Arguments from Tradition

A) Unicity of the Eucharistic Celebration per Church in the Ancient Church

In general Zizioulas is quite close to Afanasiev in his analysis of the question, although he differs from him in details, particularly in the analysis of one or other biblical text. According to the Greek prelate, “it was a fundamental assumption throughout the early Church that only one Eucharist and only one bishop could exist in the same place.”⁸⁸ This assumption was based on the principle that the bishop is what he is because he is the head of the eucharistic community and the eucharistic celebration is not simply a sacrament, but the very manifestation of the ‘eschatological community in its totality.’ Therefore, having more than one bishop and more than one Eucharist in the same place would signify more than one Church in that place. The existing fragmentary liturgical evidence of the first centuries permits us to see that the ‘whole Church’⁸⁹ ‘dwelling in a certain city’⁹⁰ would ‘come together,’⁹¹ mainly on a Sunday, to ‘break the bread.’⁹² The fact that the ‘whole Church’ of a particular place comes together for synaxis suggests that there was but one synaxis in that place/city.

Christianity, which appeared as a city religion, began spreading, by the end of the 1st century or at least by the beginning of the 2nd century, to the surrounding rural areas. Initially the rural areas were attached to the Christian community of the nearby city: together they formed a unique ecclesial community. We have a clear information about the situation in Rome from St Justin who spoke of the *epi to auto* (assembly of all in the same place) in which Christians from the town and the surrounding rural areas participated.⁹³ If that was the case in

⁸⁸ ID, “Early Christian Community,” p. 34.

⁸⁹ *Rm* 16: 23.

⁹⁰ 1 *Cor* 1: 2; 2 *Cor* 1:1; 1 *Thes* 1:1; *Acts* 11: 22, etc.

⁹¹ 1 *Cor* 11: 20, 33, 34; cf. IGNATIUS, *Eph.*, 5, 2-3.

⁹² *Acts* 2: 46; 20: 7.

⁹³ “Le jour que l’on appelle le jour du soleil, a lieu une réunion de tous ensemble (*épi to auto*) qu’ils habitent dans les villes où à la campagne,” ST. JUSTIN, *Ire Apologie*, 67.

Rome—as vast and heterogeneous as it was—it must be assumed that the situation would not have been different in other cities where Churches were founded.

B) Multiplication of eucharistic Communities

According to Zizioulas, separate eucharistic assemblies for urban and rural Christians must have had their beginning from the middle of the 2nd century.⁹⁴ The rise of separate eucharistic communities in the rural area coincided with a quick expansion of Christianity in number which made it practically impossible for the urban community to take care of the communities in the adjoining rural areas. This must have led to the institution of the *chorbishop* (rural bishop). After an attentive study of the canonical sources, Zizioulas concludes that chorbishops were “à l’origine de véritables Evêques.”⁹⁵ In that case, it is also possible to conclude that “les chrétiens des campagnes se séparent de l’unité ecclésiastique de la ville pour constituer les Eglise propres sous des évêques propres et avec une Eucharistie propre. La séparation des chrétiens de villages d’avec l’Eglise de la ville n’a donc pas posé la question d’une rupture de l’unité de chaque Eglise dans l’Eucharistie.”⁹⁶

The growth of the Christian population within the cities also necessitated adaptations. Alexandria opted for the multiplication episcopal liturgical centres.⁹⁷ Rome refused to install bishops in the newly-created liturgical centres within the city; instead there came up eucharistic centres under the care of presbyters. Their link to the central liturgical assembly presided over by the bishop of Rome was enforced by the practice of *fermentum*, according to which a portion of consecrated host from the episcopal liturgy was added to the chalice of the Eucharist celebrated by the presbyter.

C) Canonical Tradition on the Unicity of Ecclesiastical Structure

According to Meyendorff, “[n]o canonical regulation has been affirmed by the Tradition of the Church with more firmness than the rule which forbids the existence of separate ecclesiastical structures in the same place.”⁹⁸ Thus, the Council of Nicaea, dealing with the readmission of Novatian bishops back to the Church, stipulated that

...where there is a bishop or presbyter belonging to the catholic Church, it is evident that the bishop of the Church will hold the bishop’s dignity, and that the one given the title and name of bishop among the so-called Cathars will have the rank of presbyter, unless the bishop thinks fit to let him share in the honour of

⁹⁴ “Toute recherche visant à distinguer les chrétiens ruraux de ceux des villes par la création d’une synaxe eucharistique particulière doit donc commencer à partir du milieu du II^e siècle,” J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Eucharistie, évêque et Eglise*, p. 99.

⁹⁵ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Eucharistie, évêque et Eglise*, p. 101.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 102. We may recall that a similar view is held by Afanasiev. See *supra* our discussion Chapter Two on “Shift from Unique Eucharistic Celebration to Multiplicity of Eucharistic assemblies.”

⁹⁷ Cf. J. S. ROMANIDES, “Ecclesiology of St Ignatius of Antioch.”

⁹⁸ J. MEYENDORFF, *Orthodoxie et Catholicité*, p. 99.

the title. But if this does not meet with his approval, the bishop will provide for him a place as *chorepiscopus* or presbyter, so as to make his ordinary clerical status evident and so prevent there being two bishops in the city.⁹⁹

It was easy for the council to give an honorific episcopal title to these Novatian bishops or they could be transferred to one of the vacant sees or they could even be left at the head of their Churches, thus establishing two parallel jurisdictions in the same place. But the Council decided to maintain the territorial unity of the Church. Similarly, the Council of Constantinople prohibits the bishops from interfering with the affairs of the neighbouring dioceses: “Diocesan bishops are not to intrude in Churches beyond their own boundaries nor are they to confuse the Churches. [...] Unless invited bishops are not to go outside their diocese to perform an ordination or any other ecclesiastical business.”¹⁰⁰ According to the Council *in Trullo*, “It shall not be lawful for a bishop to teach publicly in any city which does not belong to him. If any shall have been observed doing this, let him cease from his episcopate, but let him discharge the office of a presbyter.”¹⁰¹

2.5.2. Analysis on the Basis of the Orthodox Diaspora in West

Just as Afanasiev, most of the contemporary Orthodox theologians are also marked by the diaspora Orthodoxy. In presenting the life and work of Afanasiev, we had examined how far the jurisdictional conflicts that plagued the Western Orthodoxy had deeply affected the ecclesiology of the father of Eucharistic Ecclesiology. The same can be said about Meyendorff, Schmemmann and Zizioulas. So it was only natural that they found in the time-honoured principle of the unicity of jurisdiction per place a possible solution to the malaise affecting the contemporary Orthodoxy.

A) Territorial principle is an essential Condition for the Church’s Freedom

The Church is “simultaneously at home and in exile everywhere.” According to Schmemmann, only in the background of this principle can we have a clear grasp of the meaning of the territorial principle, held in high esteem in the Tradition. It is known to everyone that during the first three centuries, the Church remained an urban phenomenon. As he puts it,

If in the early and essential tradition the territorial principle of the Church’s organization (one Church, one bishop in one place) was so central and so important, it is because it was indeed the essential condition for the Church’s freedom from “this world,” from everything temporary, accidental and non-essential.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ First Council of Nicaea Canon 8.

¹⁰⁰ First Council of Constantinople, Canon 2.

¹⁰¹ Canon 20.

¹⁰² A. SCHMEMMANN, “A Meaningful Storm: Some Reflections on Autocephaly, Tradition and Ecclesiology,” *SVTQ*, 15 (1971),” p. 17, *hereafter cited as* A. SCHMEMMANN, “A Meaningful Storm.”

When the Church rejects this principle, as it happened in the Orthodox Diaspora, it leads to “a progressive enslavement of the Church to, and her identification with, that which is precisely accidental—be it politics or nationalism.”¹⁰³ But, despite this, the fact remains: “Dans la conscience orthodoxe, qui est celle de l’Eglise indivise du premier millénaire, la dimension territoriale de l’Eglise prévaut sur la dimension nationale.”¹⁰⁴ In certain settings and ecclesiological contexts, the national principle can be a principle of unity of the Church and a valid form of the Church’s self fulfilment (“one Church in one place”). It can keep together the faithful of a given national territory. But the same principle can become, as the experience of the Orthodox in diaspora shows, a principle of division, an “expression of the Church’s subordination to the divisions of ‘this world.’ If in the past the Church united and even made a nation, here nationalism divided the Church and became thus a real denial, a caricature of its own initial function. [...] each ‘national’ Church claimed now a *de facto* universal jurisdiction on the basis of national ‘belonging.’”¹⁰⁵

B) Jurisdictional Unity and Catholicity of the Church

The principle of territoriality is called for by the catholic nature of the local Church. Meyendorff is very clear on this point:

...the catholicity of the local Church implies in particular that it encompasses all Orthodox Christians in each place. This is not only a “canonical” but a doctrinal requirement as well, and a necessary implication of catholicity which becomes obvious as soon as one recognizes Christ as the ultimate criterion of Church structure. [...] Church of Christ is the gathering of those who not only love each other as neighbours, but are also fellow citizens of Christ’s Kingdom and recognize together the full significance of love as expressed by their only Head, their only Lord, their only Master—Christ.¹⁰⁶

This unity, realised in Christ is manifested and realised in the local eucharistic synaxis presided over by the bishop. In the words of Zizioulas,

...the Eucharist is the place where all divisions, whether of a natural or a social kind, are transcended in the unity of Christ, in whose kingdom such divisions amounting to death will disappear. [...] In the Eucharist one must learn to accept all other human beings as belonging to the same body and sharing the same ultimate destiny. It is this profound “horizontal” dimension that the principle “one Eucharist, one bishop, one Church” seeks to keep alive...¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁴ M. SOLLOGOUB, “Les chrétiens orthodoxes d’Europe occidentale en marche vers l’église locale,” Communication at the 11th Congès orthodoxe d’Europe occidentale (Saint-Laurent-Sèvre, Vendée, 31 octobre — 3 novembre 2002), *SOP Document 273.B, supplément au SOP no. 273, déc. 2002, p. 7, hereafter cited as M. SOLLOGOUB, “Chrétiens orthodoxes d’Europe occidentale.”*

¹⁰⁵ A. SCHMEMANN, “A Meaningful Storm,” p. 17.

¹⁰⁶ J. MEYENDORFF, “Catholicity... An Introduction,” p. 8.

¹⁰⁷ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Early Christian Community,” p. 34.

But unfortunately, this rallying power of the Eucharist is ignored and other national, cultural elements are given upper hand in the actual situations. Thus, the contemporary Orthodox theologians deplore time and again the mutual estrangement of Orthodox hierarchies and communities in the West.¹⁰⁸ Needless to say that it is against the spirit of the Gospel. In such situations, we “obscure the meaning of eucharistic unity, and ignore the catholicity of the Church.”¹⁰⁹ In principle, the unity realised at the Eucharist must be reflected in Church structure, and should provide “the Christ-centred pattern on which the entire life of the Church as such is based.”¹¹⁰

2.5.3. Concluding Remarks

The above arguments in support of a jurisdictional unity per place must be gauged in its context. No one can deny that this principle existed and was respected during the early centuries. The canonical legislation, referred to in this context, was conditioned by the widespread undue interventions of bishops in the affairs of the neighbouring Churches. Hence, it may not be equally applicable in every contemporary situation in which various Churches co-exist in the same place.

Besides, we must also take into account the fact that all the theologians under consideration belong to the Byzantine Tradition, and their national Churches have in common the same theological, liturgical, canonical and spiritual traditions. Unifying the faithful of these national Churches, living in Diaspora, according to the principle of territoriality may be helpful in preventing the national or ethnical principle taking an upper hand in the life and organization of the Church. But I seriously doubt whether they will argue with the same enthusiasm—in the event of a reunion with the Catholic Church—for a Church structure based uniquely on the principle of territoriality.¹¹¹ For, in all these arguments, what should prime is the good of the faithful. It is clear that jurisdictional conflicts within the same ecclesial tradition is not for the good of the faithful. But it is not a reason for sacralising the

¹⁰⁸ M. Sollogoub deplores the situation of the Orthodox Christians in the West in the following words: “L’orthodoxie n’est pas la dimension religieuse d’une appartenance nationale, fût-elle russe, ou grecque, ou que sais-je encore? Tant que nous nous limitons à notre entourage ecclésiastique national dans nos conditions d’existence ici, en Europe occidentale, nous agissons contre l’esprit de l’Évangile et nous desservons notre Eglise. Or, nous en sommes arrivés à des situations où des hiérarchies et des communautés s’ignorent. Et nous trouvons cela normal ! [...] Il y a des situations où, en province, deux communautés orthodoxes partagent la même église, mais ne se rencontrent pas...,” M. SOLLOGOUB, “Chrétiens orthodoxes d’Europe occidentale,” p. 10.

¹⁰⁹ J. MEYENDORFF, “Catholicity... An Introduction,” p. 8.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 8.

¹¹¹ Cf. Our discussion *infra* on “Synodality in the Universal Level.”

principle of territoriality. It should be adopted only where the good of the faithful is ensured.¹¹²

2.6. The Catholic Character of the Local Church

2.6.1. Introduction

As J. Erickson has remarked, the question of the relationship between the local Church and catholicity is differently understood from time to time. If catholicity of the local Church might appear to many of our contemporaries as challenge to be faced or an agenda for the future, for the Christians of the patristic period, it was a self-evident fact. They could not think of local Church which was not catholic.¹¹³ It was Ignatius of Antioch who for the first time employed the expression, *Catholic Church*, that too in a eucharistic context: “Let that be deemed a valid Eucharist, which is under the leadership of the bishop or one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop appears, let there the multitude [of the people] be, just as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there [is] the Catholic Church.”¹¹⁴ Catholicity here designates the ‘wholeness’ and ‘fullness’ and the ‘totality’ of the Church, as it is portrayed in the eucharistic community of the local Church. Hence, in the words of Bishop Kallistos Ware, “When we speak of the “Catholic Church,” we should think first of all of the local Church, celebrating the Eucharist.”¹¹⁵

2.6.2. Christological Foundation of Catholicity

We have noted that catholicity designates wholeness of the Church as it is realised in a eucharistic assembly. The wholeness in question is the wholeness of Christ himself who is present at every eucharistic gathering. It is the eucharistic presence of Christ in every local Church that makes it Church Catholic. In the eucharistic assembly, which is the icon of the Eschatological gathering, “it is the whole Christ that is present, not just a part of him: the full eschatological gathering of all in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹¹⁶ So if Christ in his fullness is present in every local Church, then it cannot be but the Church in full; it must be Church Catholic. Almost all of the Orthodox theologians insist on this point.

¹¹² For details on this question see our discussion *chapter six* on the “Place of Catholic Oriental Churches within the Catholic Communion of Churches.”

¹¹³ Cf. J. H. ERICKSON, “Local Church and Catholicity,” p. 490.

¹¹⁴ IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Smyrn.* 8.

¹¹⁵ T. WARE, “Communion and Intercommunion,” *Sob.*, 7 (1978) no. 7, p. 554, *hereafter cited as* T. WARE, “Communion and Intercommunion.”

¹¹⁶ J. H. ERICKSON, “Local Church and Catholicity,” p. 496.

Thus, according G. Florovsky, “Church is catholic, because it is the one Body of Christ; it is union in Christ...”¹¹⁷ On a similar vein, Zizioulas also holds that the Orthodox Ecclesiology is founded on the idea that the Eucharist is there where the Church in its fullness as Body of Christ is present.¹¹⁸ According to him, Catholicity is basically a Christological reality: the Church is catholic because it is the Body of Christ. Since the whole Christ is linked to the Church by the divine Eucharist, the Church in its plenitude or catholicity (ἡ καθόλου ἡ καθολικὴ Ἐκκλησία) is present where the Eucharist and the bishop are present. “It is Christ’s unity and it is ‘his’ catholicity that the Church reveals in her being catholic.”¹¹⁹ J. Meyendorff also maintains a similar view:

Orthodox ecclesiology is based on the notion that a local Christian community, gathered in the name of Christ, presided over by the bishop, and celebrating the eucharistic meal, is indeed the “catholic Church” and the Body of Christ—not a “fragment” of the Church, or only a part of the Body. This is so because the Church is “catholic” through Christ, not through its human membership.¹²⁰

2.6.3. Catholicity is an Interior quality

Insistence on the qualitative aspect of ecclesial catholicity is an identifiable hallmark of the Russian Theologians starting from Khomiakov through Florovsky and Bulgakov up to Afanasiev.¹²¹ According to them, the Church is a communion of love, prayer, which is faithful to the apostolic confession and patristic heritage. As G. Florovsky has formulated it, catholicity of the Church is neither a quantitative nor a geographical conception; it does not at all depend on the world-wide dispersion of the faithful. According to him,

...the true catholicity is the catholicity of the interior, an intrinsic quality of the Church, of which the external catholicity is only a manifestation. The essential catholicity is not at all a topographical or geographical conception. The Church of Christ was not less catholic the very day of the Pentecost, when it was entirely shut up in a small room in Jerusalem, or later when the Christian communities were still just dispersed islands and almost lost in the ocean of unbelief and pagan superstition.¹²²

The Church will still be catholic, if by chance, it will be reduced to a ‘small flock’ as a result of ‘falling away.’¹²³ In his view, the term *Catholic* is not a collective name either. That

¹¹⁷ G. FLOROVSKY, “Catholicity of Church,” p. 41.

¹¹⁸ “L’ecclésiologie orthodoxe est fondée sur l’idée que là où il y a l’Eucharistie là est l’Eglise en sa plénitude comme Corps du Christ,” J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Eglise locale... perspective eucharistique*,” p. 181.

¹¹⁹ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Eucharistic Community... Catholicity,” p. 329.

¹²⁰ J. MEYENDORFF, “Catholicity... An Introduction,” p. 7-8.

¹²¹ “A partir d’Alexis Khomiakoff à Serge Boulgakoff, Georges Florovsky et Nicolas Afanassieff, une certaine théologie russe a insisté sur l’aspect qualitatif de la catholicité ecclésiale, mettant sur un plan secondaire l’universalité visible, surtout le caractère structuré et organisé des Eglises locales, la configuration culturelle très diverse du monde orthodoxe,” I. BRIA, “La mission des églises locales dans l’Eglise universelle,” in: *Eglise locale et Eglise universelle*, «Etudes théologique de Chambésy» (Chambésy: Les éditions du centre orthodoxe, 1981), p.330, *hereafter cited as* I. BRIA, “La mission des églises locales.”

¹²² G. FLOROVSKY, “Corps du Christ vivant,” p. 26.

¹²³ Cf. ID, “Catholicity of Church,”p. 40.

is, the Church is catholic not only as a communion of Churches, but is catholic in all its elements, in all its activities and at every moment of its life. His view is that the true catholic unity of the Church is experienced in the liturgical celebrations, especially in the Eucharist. “For at that time it enters into the order of the eternal; it is the image of ‘divine eternity in Christ’.”¹²⁴ For the unity of humanity attained in Christ manifests itself in a majestic way in the eucharistic liturgy.

It is not simply such and such local community of believers that gather together around the altar, but it is really the catholic Church wholly and all together which is present during each celebration of august sacrament of unity. For Christ is never separated from his body. In this sublime sense, the Eucharist is always, and every time, a majestic revelation of the total Christ. In the eucharistic experience, so to say, time even stops in a mystic and mysterious manner.¹²⁵

According to J. Meyendorff, all local Churches are *catholic* because it is the same Church of God which is realised in each of them. As he put it, “The entire Orthodox insistence on the ontological equality of all bishops among themselves is based on the principle that each one of them presides over the same catholic Church in a given place, and that no local Church can be more “catholic” than another.”¹²⁶

2.6.4. Catholicity and Diversity

We have already seen that the catholicity of the Church has its source and foundation in Christ. Church is catholic because—before her—Christ himself, her head, is catholic. And, therefore, the core of catholicity, according to Zizioulas, lies in the transcendence of all divisions in Christ. As observed above, it was customary for the ‘whole Church,’¹²⁷ ‘dwelling in a certain city’¹²⁸ to come together to ‘break the bread.’¹²⁹ As a matter of fact such fraternal gatherings, known as *collegia*, were not uncommon in the early centuries,¹³⁰ and, as such, the Christian gatherings were not at all a novelty. Yet, the Christian gatherings had a distinctive mark, viz. their catholic character. In the community of the Christians, ‘there is neither Jew or Greek,’ ‘male or female,’¹³¹ adult or child¹³², rich or poor,¹³³ master or slave,¹³⁴ etc. among

¹²⁴ ID, “Corps du Christ vivant,” p. 30.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29-30.

¹²⁶ J. MEYENDORFF, “Catholicity... An Introduction,” p. 9.

¹²⁷ *Rm* 16: 23.

¹²⁸ *1 Cor* 1: 2; *2 Cor* 1:1; *1 Thes* 1: 1; *Acts* 11: 22, etc.

¹²⁹ *Acts* 2: 46; 20: 7.

¹³⁰ In the Roman Empire it was customary to form such groups, called *collegia* either on racial grounds or on the ground of profession.

¹³¹ *Gal* 2: 28.

¹³² *Mt* 19: 13.

¹³³ *James* 2, 2-7.

¹³⁴ *1 Cor* 12: 13.

them. Christians are a ‘non-racial race’. This fact was portrayed and realised in the eucharistic community par excellence.

The eucharistic community was in its composition a ‘catholic community’ in the sense that it transcended not only social but also natural divisions just as will happen in the Kingdom of God of which this community was a revelation and a real sign.¹³⁵

The world outside, in which Church is historically situated, is filled with divisions of all kinds. These must be transcended in Christ, and eucharistic celebration was always considered an event in which this transcendence effectively took place.

2.6.5. Catholicity is a Gift and a Task

Another point, which the Orthodox theologians emphasise, is the fact that Catholicity is both a gift and a task. Objectively speaking, the catholicity of the Church is already given in Christ and in communion with the Spirit. Yet, it calls for a subjective realisation both on the individual and the communitarian level. Subjectively, the catholicity implies that the Church is a unity of life, a brotherhood or communion, a union of love, ‘a life in common.’ According to Florovsky, Christian life is fundamentally a communion—a spiritual accord, a symphony of persons; hence all isolation of persons must be overcome. For a catholic whole cannot be constructed out of non-symphonic elements.¹³⁶ Realisation of the symphony of persons calls for efforts and constant vigilance to realise and to maintain. Not only Church, but every one of her members has received the vocation to be catholic. “The Church is catholic in every one of its members, because a catholic whole cannot be built up or composed otherwise than through the catholicity of its members.”¹³⁷

Meyendorff, in this context, draws our attention to the fact that the diversity, made possible by the catholic character of the Church, is always in need of balancing with the unity. According to him, we admit “cultural, liturgical, and theological diversity in the one Church of Christ,”¹³⁸ provided we bear in mind that “[d]iversity is not an end in itself: it is legitimate only when it is at the same time overcome and transcended by unity in the fullness of Christ’s truth.”¹³⁹ It is a quality which permits the Church to be open to all manifestation of God’s creating and redeeming power everywhere. In this sense “to be ‘catholic’ means precisely to recognize everywhere that which is God-made and therefore basically ‘good,’ and to be ready

¹³⁵ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Eucharistic Community... Catholicity,” p. 322.

¹³⁶ In *Pastor of Hermas*, where the Church is represented as a tower under construction, it is said that cubical stones were easily chosen to fit into the tower whereas spherical ones were left out to be trimmed. For their circular form—symbolic of self-sufficiency and isolation—made them unfit to be integrated into the construction. Cf. G. FLOROVSKY, “Corps du Christ vivant,” p. 33.

¹³⁷ G. FLOROVSKY, “Catholicity of Church,” p. 42.

¹³⁸ J. MEYENDORFF, “Catholicity... An Introduction,” p. 11.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

to assume it as one's own. Catholicity rejects only that which is evil, or erroneous. [...] We betray the 'catholicity' of the Church whenever we lose either the faculty of seeing that which is erroneous, or [...] Christian faculty of rejoicing in that which is right and good."¹⁴⁰

Schmemmann, on his part, underlines the fact that the early local Churches which were almost exclusively urban phenomena, "did not correspond to, or express, a *natural* community as an organic and pre-existing society, but was the *ecclesia*, the gathering of people belonging to a great variety of backgrounds, social positions, etc."¹⁴¹ This means that the Church did not identify itself with any class, group or way of life. Rather, "the early 'local Church' had a natural 'catholicity,' an all-embracing quality, so that being absolutely free from any 'organic' connections with 'this world,' she could truly represent the whole of it, be open to all."¹⁴²

This situation changed with the conversion of the empire. From this point in time, we observe a progressive identification of the local Church with the natural community. A natural local community is not truly 'catholic', because it is essentially self-centred and limited in its own interests and needs. The Church was called to be *in Rome* but not *of Rome*. But when they increasingly *naturalised* themselves, they ran the risk of losing their natural catholicity.

The only way to counteract this danger was to keep the 'local Churches' within a wider ecclesiastical framework, thus preventing them from being completely identified with 'local life' with all its inescapable limitations and self-centeredness. The acceptance by the Church of the diocesan structure [...] was thus not a compromise with the imperial administrative structure, but, on the contrary, a reaction of the ecclesiastical organism to the danger of being 'absorbed' by natural society.¹⁴³

A diocesan structure always beckons a local community (a parish) "to transcend itself as a self-centred and self-sufficient community, to identify itself not only with its own 'people' and their 'religious needs,' but with the Church and her eternal 'needs'."¹⁴⁴ It is a call to become truly catholic,¹⁴⁵ for catholicity is *identity of each Church with the Church of God*. If a local community is to be truly catholic, it must be *accorded with the whole*. This is a perspective which opens itself to horizons of the Kingdom of God.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁴¹ A. SCHMEMMANN, "Towards a theology of Councils," p. 174

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ "A parish has neither the resources nor the inner impetus for a full catholicity. It can have it only together with other similar communities, which all together transcend their natural limitations, and they have it within a "catholic structure" which transcends each one of them separately and yet is their life as oneness, communion and unity of purpose." *Ibid.* p. 176.

And the bearer, the organ and the minister of catholicity is the bishop. It is his charism and duty to give the Church direction and purpose, to call each parish and all of them together to fulfil themselves as movement, as pilgrimage towards the Kingdom, to edify the Church.¹⁴⁶

2.6.6. The Catholic Character of the Structure of the Local Church

The catholic character of the local Church is reflected also in its structure. When Christians of a locality came together for the eucharistic assembly, they gathered around the bishop. The primitive Church restricted ordinations to the eucharistic assembly and made it the exclusive right of the bishop—not as an individual but as the head of this eucharistic community. In doing so it saved the catholic character of its entire structure. Zizioulas thinks that “en optant pour une personne unique qui, dans la communauté, assume le ministère de *l'épiskopè* précisément sous la forme de la présidence eucharistique, l'Eglise primitive a ouvert la voie au service des besoins de la catholicité au niveau local.”¹⁴⁷

2.6.7. Concluding Remarks

From the above discussion it is clear that there is a general agreement among the Orthodox theologians on the question of the Catholicity of the local Church. According to them, including Afanasiev, this attribute of the Church of God is applicable to each of its realisations in time and space. It does not stand for a geographical extension, but for an interior quality, a wholeness which is verifiable even in the smallest of ecclesial communities and is rooted in Christ himself. Because Catholicity is basically a Christological reality, it is fully manifested in the eucharistic celebration, where—as Florovsky has said—“a majestic revelation of the total Christ’ takes place. Catholicity of the Church is also a call to transcend all natural divisions; unlike other groupings of men and women, the Christian community is unity in diversity. The character of the Christian people as a ‘non-racial race’ finds its full manifestation in the eucharistic community which is a catholic community par excellence.

3. Communion among Local Churches

3.1. Trinitarian Basis of Koinonia

It has been recently remarked by B. Bobrinsky that the analogy between the unfathomable mystery of the Trinity and the mystery of the Church “constitutes one of the fundamental affirmations of the contemporary Orthodox Ecclesiology.”¹⁴⁸ The analogical relationship between the Trinitarian doctrine and Ecclesiology is amply demonstrated by the history of

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹⁴⁷ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Episkopè et épiskopos,” p. 500.

¹⁴⁸ B. BOBRINSKOY, “Communion trinitaire...,” p. 169.

doctrinal development, where one question that emerges time and again is that of the relationship between unity and multiplicity. In the words of S. Harkianakis,

Dans les premiers siècles chrétiens, cette question se posait à propos de l'essence de Dieu, dans les siècles suivants à propos de l'essence de l'Eglise. Comment Dieu peut-il être conçu comme trois Personnes, bien qu'il reste toujours un seul Dieu, cette question fut remplacée par cette autre : comment l'Eglise que le Christ a fondée en la voulant une peut-elle exister en même temps dans plusieurs Eglises particulières?¹⁴⁹

This close association between the Trinitarian theology and Ecclesiology is of consequence for the latter: it is concluded from this that the Church in her being is a communion. This affirmation is based on the fact that “we believe in a God who is in his very being *Koinonia*.”¹⁵⁰ If God *first is* and then *relates*, then the Church will not be communion *in her being*, but only secondarily, i.e. for the *bene esse*. The fact that God in his being is relational (*koinonia*) is the basis of the Ecclesiology of communion. According to the Orthodox theologians, the Trinitarian theology is helpful in explaining the relationship between the One Church and the multiplicity of its local realisations. “There is one Church, as there is one God. But the expression of this one Church is the communion of the many local Churches. Communion and oneness coincide in ecclesiology.”¹⁵¹

This has repercussions also on the institution which is supposed to express the unity of the Church. It must be an institution which expresses *communion*. There is no institution of universal unity which is prior to the event of communion; in the same way, there is no communion which can be prior to the oneness of the Church: “the institution which expresses this communion must be accompanied by an indication that there is a ministry safeguarding the oneness which the communion aims at expressing.”¹⁵² That is to say, “oneness and multiplicity, must coincide in an institution which possesses a twofold ministry: the ministry of the *πρῶτος* (the first one) and the ministry of the ‘many’ (the heads of the local Churches).”¹⁵³

3.2. Autonomy of Local Churches in the Context of Communion

The trinitarian approach to Ecclesiology affects the way we consider the independence and autonomy of the local Churches. As S. Harkianakis has formulated it,

¹⁴⁹ S. HARKIANAKIS, “Un ministère pétrinien dans l'Eglise peut-il avoir un sens? Une réponse grecque orthodoxe,” *Conc(F)*, 64 (1971), p. 106, *hereafter cited as* S. HARKIANAKIS, “Un ministère pétrinien dans l'Eglise.”

¹⁵⁰ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “The Church as Communion,” *SVTQ*, 38 (1994), p. 6, *hereafter cited as* J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Church as Communion.”

¹⁵¹ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as communion*, pp. 134-135.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

...de même que, dans le problème trinitaire, l'idée de l'*homoousie* (la consubstantialité) ne doit pas faire tort à l'indépendance des Personnes particulières de la divine Trinité, de même l'idée de l'unité de l'Eglise ne doit pas faire tort à l'indépendance des Eglises particulières [...]. Et de même que, dans la vie trinitaire, l'idée d'une subordination fut prudemment tenue éloignée par l'ancienne Eglise, ainsi cette idée doit rester exclue aussi dans la vie de l'Eglise.¹⁵⁴

However, this does not rule out the possibility of a hierarchy and communion among the local Churches. But this hierarchical structure of Churches in communion was never detrimental to the autonomy and independence of the particular local Churches.

Cette hiérarchie ne diminue pas les églises, ne les subordonnent pas l'une à l'autre, elles est seulement destiné à faire vivre chaque église de toute et toutes de chacune, car c'est cette vie de toutes en chacune et de chacune en toutes qui est le mystère du Corps du Christ.¹⁵⁵

That is to say, the hierarchy among local Churches does not hinder them from living their independent and relatively autonomous life. For a local community of the faithful, having its own bishop and other ministers, has all that is necessary for its normal functioning and survival.

At the same time, as Meyendorff has put it, "[l]es églises locales ne sont [...] pas des monades isolées les unes des autres: elles sont unies par l'identité de leur foi et de leur témoignage."¹⁵⁶ A primitive local Church had direct experience of the communion and mutual identity with other Churches on the occasion of the consecration of its bishop. In the words of G. Tsetis, "c'est à l'occasion de la consécration de leur chef que peuple et clergé de l'Eglise locale prennent conscience d'appartenir à une famille plus vaste, à l'Eglise Catholique."¹⁵⁷ According to the canonical tradition, the presence of the bishops of the neighbouring Churches as consecrators is necessary for the valid consecration of a bishop in a local Church. The faithful who witness to the consecration of their bishop, on their part, enter into communion with other Churches across the world in and through their bishop who was consecrated by the bishops who represent the whole *corpus* of the Church.¹⁵⁸

From this it follows that "[a]n ecclesiology based on the catholic plenitude present in each local Church [...] does not at all lead to an atomisation of the ecclesial organism."¹⁵⁹ Rather,

¹⁵⁴ S. HARKIANAKIS, "Un ministère pétrinien dans l'Eglise," p. 106.

¹⁵⁵ A. SCHMEMANN, "La notion de primauté," p. 143.

¹⁵⁶ J. MEYENDORFF, *L'Eglise orthodoxe*, p. 173.

¹⁵⁷ G. TSETIS, "Dimension universelle de l'Eglise locale," *UnChr*, 84 (1986), p. 44, *hereafter cited as G. TSETIS*, "Dimension universelle de l'Eglise locale."

¹⁵⁸ "The fact that in each episcopal ordination at least two or three bishops from the neighbouring Churches ought to take part tied the episcopal office and with it the local eucharistic community in which the ordination took place with the rest of the eucharistic communities in the world in a fundamental way," J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "Eucharistic Community... Catholicity," p. 325.

¹⁵⁹ J. MEYENDORFF, *Orthodoxie et Catholicité* (Paris: Ed. Du Seuil, 1965), p. 13, *hereafter cited as J. MEYENDORFF*, *Orthodoxie et Catholicité*.

as Schmemmann has quite rightly insisted, a local Church can remain as Church only when it has “the universal conscience of the Church.”¹⁶⁰ In his view, a local Church cut away from this catholic communion does not have any sense, because this communion is part of the very nature of the Church-Body of Christ. Clarifying the point further, he says,

La plénitude de l’Eglise locale se manifeste précisément en ce qu’elle tient en elle tout ce que possède chaque Eglise et ce qu’elles possèdent toutes ensemble. Elle le tient non par elle-même, comme une plénitude particulière à elle seule, mais de Dieu, comme une grâce en Christ. Et, d’autre part, elle ne tient cette plénitude que dans l’accord avec toutes les Eglises. Il s’agit donc de la seule et même plénitude qu’elles possèdent toutes. [...] Et c’est uniquement dans la mesure où une Eglise locale ne se sépare pas de cet accord, ne fait pas de la grâce de Dieu une grâce qui lui est propre, qui est séparée, qui est « hérétique » dans le sens littéral de ce terme, qu’une Eglise possède la plénitude.¹⁶¹

3.3. Communion of Churches on the Basis of Mutual Identity

We have already seen that owing to their eucharistic foundation—i.e. owing to the eucharistic presence of Christ in all his fullness and wholeness—all local Churches are equally *catholic Churches*. As such they are ontologically identical. It is on the basis of this identity that the Eucharistic Ecclesiology interprets communion of Churches. The Church of God, which is the Body of Christ, is unique and indivisible; it remains indivisible in each of the local Churches, i.e. “in the visible unity of the people of God assembled in the Eucharist, gathered «in the bishop».”¹⁶²

According to Schmemmann, “universal unity is precisely the unity of the Church and not simply the unity of the *Churches*.”¹⁶³ Put in other words, it is not the multitude of local Churches throughout the world which together form the unique organism, rather each of the local Churches—in the identity of faith, structure and grace—is *the same* Church. Thus, each of the local Churches individually as well as in their totality is the Church one, holy, catholic and apostolic.¹⁶⁴ It is this ontology of the Church, as the theandric and embodied unity indivisibly present in each local Church, which is the basis of the relationship between local Churches. The fullness enjoyed by each of the local Churches far from ruling out

¹⁶⁰ A. SCHMEMANN, “La notion de primauté,” p. 143.

¹⁶¹ A. SCHMEMANN, “Le patriarche œcuménique et l’Eglise orthodoxe,” *Ist.*, 1 (1954), p. 37-38, *hereafter cited as* A. SCHMEMANN, “Patriarche œcuménique.”

¹⁶² ID, “La notion de primauté,” p. 132.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ “...l’essentiel de cette unité ne consiste pas à réunir toutes les Eglises locales en un seul organisme, mais dans ce que chaque Eglise [...] est *la même Eglise*, la même existence triunique, donnée aux hommes en tel ou tel lieu géographique. Ainsi, nous retrouvons la même unité organique de l’Eglise, mais sans que les Eglises se *complètent* l’une l’autre, sans qu’elles soient des *parties* ou des *membres* chacune d’entre elles et toutes ensemble n’étant rien autre que l’Eglise une, sainte, catholique et apostolique,” ID, “Patriarche œcuménique,” p. 37.

interdependence between them rather postulates this relationship and dependence as a necessary condition of their ecclesial fullness. Only in communion with other Churches can a local Church possess the plenitude. “La plénitude de l’église locale consiste en ce qu’elle possède en elle-même *tout* ce que possède chaque église et qu’elles possèdent toutes ensemble.”¹⁶⁵

Nevertheless, says Schmemmann, every local Church can be considered as both a *part* and a *whole*. “It is a part because only in unity with all Churches and in obedience to the universal truth can it be the Church; yet it is also a whole because in each Church, by virtue of her unity with the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, the whole Christ is present, the fullness of grace is given, the catholicity of the new life is revealed.”¹⁶⁶

This ontological identity leads to the visible bond, constantly renewed by the unity of faith, the unity of sacramental structure and the unity of action or mission. If unity of faith is preserved in the Tradition, the unity of sacramental structure is preserved in the apostolic succession. The aim of inter-ecclesial communion is not to form a fuller, greater Church. Rather—in the words of Paul Evdokimov—“L’*Una Sancta* est l’unité des différents lieux de sa manifestation toujours égale à elle-même.”¹⁶⁷ The *Una Sancta* referred to here must be also clearly understood. It is not the result of a federation of local Churches, because the Church of God is always and everywhere equal to herself; she is always fully catholic. So if the various local Churches come together, this is not in view of creating a Church which is fuller, but to respond to the call of charity and to the needs of the Church’s missionary expansion. Evdokimov continues:

...si les Eglises communient entre elles, ce n’est pas pour former en s’additionnant une Eglise plus pleine, ce qui est un non-sens [...] mais pour répondre à la charité débordante du Corps d’une part, et d’autre part, au registre dynamique d’expansion missionnaire, symptomatique non pas de la *catholicité* de l’Eglise, mais de l’*oecuménicité* de la chrétienté, de son déploiement extensif.¹⁶⁸

3.4. The Universal Church versus the Local Church

According J. Zizioulas, the tendency to oppose the local Church and the Universal Church is a wrong one. For, as far as the primitive Church was concerned, every local Church was “*the concretization and localization of the general* [...] [T]he local eucharistic assembly understood itself as the revelation of the eschatological unity of all in Christ. This meant that

¹⁶⁵ ID, “La notion de primauté,” p. 132.

¹⁶⁶ ID, “Ecclesiological Notes,” p. 38.

¹⁶⁷ P. EVDOKIMOV, “Ecclésiologie eucharistique,” p. 131. Cf. G. TSETIS, “Dimension universelle de l’Eglise locale,” p. 41.

¹⁶⁸ P. EVDOKIMOV, “Ecclésiologie eucharistique,” p. 131.

no mutual exclusion between the local and the universal was possible in a eucharistic context, but the one was automatically involved in the other.”¹⁶⁹ Here again, analogy with the Trinitarian theology is helpful to explain the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church. “The faith in ‘one’ God who is at the same time ‘three,’ i.e. ‘many’ implies that unity and diversity coincide in God’s very being.”¹⁷⁰

The Church is the mystery of the ‘One’ and the ‘Many,’ i.e. the realisation of the event of Christ constituted by the Spirit in space and time. [...] Just as in the Holy Trinity and in Christology the ‘many’ are as primary ontologically as the ‘one,’ unity in the Church is inconceivable without multiplicity. The Church is not first one Church and then many Churches. She is one by being many, and many by being one.¹⁷¹

In the Church the ‘one’ and the ‘many’ co-exist as two aspects of the one and the same being. At the universal level, this would mean that local Churches would constitute one Church by means of a ministry or an institution which is simultaneously made up of a ‘primus’ and a synod of which he is the ‘primus’. At the local level, the head of the local Church (bishop) is conditioned by the existence of his community and other ministries, especially the presbyterium. There is no ministry which is not in need of other ministries.

What is crucial in the question of the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church is whether “we are prepared to allow a primary and constitutive role for the local Church in ecclesiology.”¹⁷²

If we do that diversity becomes automatically of the *esse* of the Church, because the basic and fundamental meaning of the diversity is not moral but ontological. Diversity is necessary in the Church not because, for various reasons, it is a morally good thing, but because without it the Church ceases to exist. This can make sense only if the Church is primarily a local reality.¹⁷³

In this perspective, “one Church will be understood as many Churches incarnating, so to say, the Church in a particular space and time, and in a concrete cultural context. Unity in this case will not precede diversity but will have to be realised in such a way as to safeguard the integrity of the local Church with its specific cultural characteristics.”¹⁷⁴

When one affirms the integrity and specificity of the local Churches, one must be mindful of the need to safeguard the unity of all local Churches in the one Church of God. “Diversity should not destroy unity, and unity should not destroy diversity.”¹⁷⁵ This is a task difficult to achieve. Historically the Church has come up with a solution in the form of synodality.

¹⁶⁹ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Eucharistic Community... Catholicity,” p. 324-325.

¹⁷⁰ ID, “Uniformity, Diversity...,” p. 47.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

3.5. Concluding Remarks

The necessity of communion among Churches is insisted on by both Afanasiev and other Orthodox theologians whose ideas we have presented above. However, these theologians develop an aspect of the communion theology, which is largely untouched by Afanasiev, viz. the association between trinitarian theology and theology of the Church. In this analogical association, it is possible to define Church as a communion in its innermost being. Just as unity and multiplicity co-exist, in a primordial manner, in the Trinitarian mystery, so also the Church is ontologically one and many. That is to say, communion and oneness coincide in ecclesiology.

A Trinitarian understanding of the ecclesial communion rules out any subordination. It is true that there exists some hierarchy among the local Churches; but neither this hierarchy nor unity itself should be prejudicial to the independence and autonomy of the local Churches. However, this independence and autonomy is not absolute, it is conditioned by communion. It is on this point that we find the basic difference between Afanasiev and other Orthodox theologians we consider here, particularly Schmemmann. Although Afanasiev affirms the necessity of communion among local churches, it appears to remain in the level of the *bene esse* of the Church and not in the level of the *esse*. In the Afanasievan perspective any community which is capable of celebrating the Eucharist must be deemed as fully the Church of God. Quite contrary is the view of Schmemmann. According to him a local Church can remain as Church only when it has ‘the universal conscience of the Church,’ for communion is part of the very nature of the Church; it belongs to its *esse*. Only in communion with other Churches can a local Church possess the plenitude.

Analogy with Trinity is also helpful in explaining the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church. Just as in the Triune God, the *many* are as primary as the *one*, so too in the Church, the *unity* is inconceivable without the *multiplicity*. The Church is therefore ‘one by being many, and many by being one.’ This means that diversity also belongs to the *esse* of the Church; without diversity the Church cannot exist. In this context, the tendency to oppose the multiplicity of the local Churches and the universal Church is wrong. The reason is simple: they are not opposing realities, but simultaneous realities, for the Church is not *first* one and then many or *vice versa*, but at once one and many. This is a point of convergence between the contemporary Orthodox ecclesiology and Catholic ecclesiology, as represented by Tillard, Legrand, Kasper, etc.

4. Synodality in the Life of the Church

4.1. Introduction

There is a common agreement that *conciliarity* belongs to the very essence of the Orthodox concept of the Church. But when it comes to its practical application, this agreement evaporates. As Schmemmann has remarked, there exists “a fundamental confusion as to the real meaning and practice of ‘conciliarity.’ [...] This confusion calls for a constructive rethinking of the very principle of conciliarity, for its truly Orthodox definition and interpretation.”¹⁷⁶ In this endeavour, while Schmemmann wants to move “from the ‘phenomenology’ of councils [...] to their ‘ontology,’ i.e., to their relation to the totality of the Church’s life, to their ecclesiological roots and foundations,”¹⁷⁷ Zizioulas takes the road back to the historical beginnings of synodal practice.

4.2. From the Phenomenology of Councils to their Ontology

According to Schmemmann, “the Church, as the new life in Christ and participation in the new aeon of the Kingdom, has priority over ‘institution’.”¹⁷⁸ It means that institution does not cause the Church to be, but serves as her expression and actualization in this world. In this view, the validity of an institution always depends on “its ontological adequacy to the reality which it truly ‘represents,’ makes present, and therefore can communicate and fulfil.”¹⁷⁹ In other words, an institution—from an ecclesiological point of view—is sacramental in nature: it is constantly called to transcend itself as an institution, to actualise itself as a new being.

Although a council may appear—from a phenomenological point of view—as an assembly of bishops, Schmemmann thinks that it should not be envisaged only under the aspect of episcopal collegiality but equally under the aspect of its relationship to the life of faith in the Church. That is, synodality has to do with the very being of the Church. That is the reason why the Orthodoxy understands the Church as basically conciliar. The Church is conciliar because she is the revelation of the Holy Trinity—the perfect council. “The Church is Trinitarian in both ‘form’ and ‘content’ because she is the restoration of man and his life as an image of God, who is Trinity.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ A. SCHMEMMANN, “Towards a theology of Councils,” p. 160.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

The Church is conciliar in content because, as “an image of the Trinity and the gift of Trinitarian life,” “life is redeemed and restored in her as essentially *conciliar*.”¹⁸¹ The Church is conciliar in form because all institutional aspects of the Church are meant to fulfil the Church as perfect council. In this way, conciliarity is her essential quality.

If Church is conciliar, it must be also hierarchical, that is to say, there is no opposition between synodality and hierarchy. Here again the reason is drawn from a Trinitarian analogy. The Holy Trinity, which is council par excellence, is “not an impersonal equality of interchangeable ‘members.’ [...] The Trinity is the perfect council because the Trinity is the perfect hierarchy.”¹⁸² The Church, which is the manifestation of the true life, is hierarchical because she is conciliar. For hierarchy is an essential quality of conciliarity. The conciliarity as revealed and realised in the Church “does not result in the dissolution of persons in an impersonal unity, rather it is “*unity of persons*, who fulfil their personal being in ‘conciliarity’ with other persons, who are *council* inasmuch as they are persons, so that *many are one* without ceasing to be many. And this true conciliarity, the oneness of many, is by its very nature *hierarchical*, for hierarchy is, above every thing else, the total mutual recognition of persons in their unique, personal qualifications, of their unique place and function in relation to other persons, of their objective and unique vocation within the conciliar life.”¹⁸³

In this context, Schmemmann warns us against considering the council merely as an organ of the Church government. In the Westernised theological systems of the East, Ecclesiology was often reduced to the questions of Church order in its institutional aspect.

It is as if theologians had tacitly admitted that “institution” has priority over “life,” or, in other terms, that the Church as the new life of grace and communion with God, as the reality of redemption, is “generated” by the Church as institution. Within this approach the Church was studied as a set of “valid” institutions, and the whole ecclesiological interest was focused on the formal conditions of “validity” and not on the reality of the Church herself.¹⁸⁴

In the genuinely Orthodox perspective, what should really prime—without neglecting the institutional aspect—is the reality of the Church as new life in Christ. It means, in other words, that the institution is not the cause of the Church, but only its means of expression and actualisation in the world.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 165.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

4.3. Origin and Development of Synodical Institution

As Schmemmann, Zizioulas also thinks that synodical institution is often misunderstood because the ecclesiological content of this institution is generally neglected. According to him, in order to understand the ecclesiological content of an institution, one must turn back to its historical beginnings, taking into account the historical transformations it has undergone in the course of time. The history of synodal institution goes back to the début of the Church. Already in the apostolic community, one can notice a primitive conciliarity, which forms the background for subsequent development which leads to the emergence of conciliar institutions.

The New Testament presents us with two forms of synods: the ordinary synodal gathering (*synaxis*) of a local Church as witnessed in Pauline communities, especially that of Corinth, and the occasional conciliar gatherings as witnessed by the apostolic synod of Jerusalem. In both cases, the local Church is the basis of the synod.

In the Pauline model, as depicted in the *First Corinthians*, particularly in chapter five, we can discover the context and the structure of this primitive conciliarity.¹⁸⁵ Here, the local Church of Corinth is called to act as a court which will “judge those inside the Church” so that the “saints” will not go to law before “the unrighteous.” This *synaxis* is composed of the people, the Apostle and the Lord¹⁸⁶. This function of the local Church cannot be understood outside the setting of a eucharistic gathering. For “its language and theological reasoning reveal a deep relationship between this conciliar activity and the worshipping life of the Church.”¹⁸⁷ According to Zizioulas, “in the first local Churches an ordinary conciliar activity expressed within the context and for the sake of the eucharistic communion.”¹⁸⁸

Besides these ordinary conciliar gatherings in the particular local Churches, there were also occasional conciliar gatherings to make decisions on urgent matters. One such case is reported in the *Acts*, viz. the so called ‘Apostolic Council’ of Jerusalem. Among the participants, besides the *Church as a whole*, a special mention is made of the Apostles and the presbyters, who are clearly distinguished from the rest of the local Church. The Church as a whole

¹⁸⁵ Cf. J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “The Development of Conciliar Structure to the Time of the First Ecumenical Council,” in: *Councils and the Ecumenical Movement, «World Council of Churches Studies – 5»* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1968), p. 34, *hereafter cited as* J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Development of Conciliar Structure.”

¹⁸⁶ This composition reminiscent of the so-called Apostolic Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15, which we will treat below.

¹⁸⁷ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Development of Conciliar Structure,” p. 35.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* In this context, it is interesting to note that the early synods had a lot to do with the question of eucharistic communion. In fact, the ancient practice of convening two synods a year in every eparchy was meant to allow the question of excommunication to be deliberated together and the decision be carried out by all the bishops.

participates only at the beginning (an assembly before the synod proper) and at the end of the synod. The deliberations of the synod proper are carried out by the Apostles and the presbyters. Therefore, only to these should we attribute the following important phrase of the conciliar letter: “it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us” (*Acts* 15: 28). In the light of the above analysis, it is not difficult to notice that the structure of ‘Apostolic Council’ is “basically different from the regular meetings of the local Churches in that its composition was limited to the Church leaders known here as ‘the Apostles and the presbyters’.”¹⁸⁹

This primitive synodal practice came to be institutionalised during the 2nd century, leading to the ‘council around the bishop’ (the *collegium* of the presbyters acting as counsellors of the bishop) as found in Ignatius of Antioch.¹⁹⁰ By the time of *Didascalia Apostolorum*, i.e. some 100 years after the time of Ignatius, ‘the bishop’s council,’ consisting of bishop, presbyters with the presence of the deacons, was quite common. One of the immediate purposes of this institution was “to hear and pass judgment in all cases of suit or quarrel that might divide the faithful of the Church”¹⁹¹ lest these cases be brought to pagan tribunals. Ultimately, from a spiritual and eucharistic point of view, the bishop’s council wanted to achieve reconciliation in view of the Sunday eucharistic assembly.¹⁹²

4.3.1. Transition to Provincial Conciliar Structures

Many factors contributed to the appearance of new conciliar forms from the second half of the second century. The struggle against Gnosticism and Marcionism led to the formation of the Canon of the Scripture and the stress on apostolic succession. With this development, local Churches far and wide possessed a common point of reference to judge the veracity of any doctrinal matter. This served as an effective weapon for the local Churches to fight against heresy. It also served as a uniting factor and a basis for dialogue.

The possibility of dialogue between the various local Churches on matters causing disagreement is a consequence of the establishment of common norms and criteria of truth in the second half of the second century. It is perhaps not a mere accident that the councils in the form of gatherings of the various local Churches appear exactly at this time.¹⁹³

4.3.2. Episcopal Composition of Synods

The provincial conciliar gatherings were composed uniquely of bishops. This “cannot be explained simply by a reference to previously existing conciliar structures.”¹⁹⁴ Zizioulas

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁹⁰ IGNATIUS, *Magn.*, 6: 1.

¹⁹¹ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Development of Conciliar Structure,” p.38.

¹⁹² Cf. *Mt* 5: 23-24.

¹⁹³ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Development of Conciliar Structure,” p. 40.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

thinks that its explanation is to be sought in the development of a certain theology of the bishop which was not unconnected with the primitive concept of the local Church. According to the primitive Ecclesiology, every local Church formed a single body. And the synod constitutes the assembly of Churches, i.e. of unity already realised and not of the 'decomposed.'¹⁹⁵ A local Church can participate in a synod only as an indivisible unicity. The bishop in person incarnates this undivided unicity of his local Church. As Zizioulas formulates it, "de par sa position de *proéstôs* de la communauté eucharistique, l'évêque était considéré, dans l'Eglise ancienne, comme celui qui incarne toute l'Eglise locale."¹⁹⁶ Also in his capacity as the *proéstôs* of the eucharistic assembly, which manifested the whole Christ and the whole Church, the bishop was deemed as the one in whom the local Church surpassed all localism and united itself with other local Churches.¹⁹⁷

The roots of synodal institution are to be found precisely in the *ordination* of each bishop. By introducing the name of a local Church in consecratory prayer (which is the constitutive act of the episcopal institution) it is shown that "l'évêque n'est consacré évêque de l'Eglise catholique qu'en passant par une relation avec une Eglise locale."¹⁹⁸ The bishop takes charge of the diocese in and through the eucharistic celebration in which his faithful participate.¹⁹⁹ Consequently, when a bishop takes part in a synod, which expresses supra-local ecclesial unity, he does so not as an individual but as the one who embodies and incarnates the local Church for which he was consecrated.²⁰⁰ Therefore, it was only natural—so thinks Zizioulas—that

...tout acte de l'Eglise visant à l'expression de l'unité des églises locales, comme c'était le cas du synode, se manifestât par l'évêque. Par conséquent, la composition épiscopale du synode se justifie et s'impose dans l'Eglise ancienne, du point de vue ecclésiologique, du fait que l'évêque est, en tant que *proéstôs* de

¹⁹⁵ "...si l'on refuse la composition épiscopale des synodes, on aboutit à une « décomposition » de l'Eglise locale, étant donné qu'on ne lui reconnaît plus la possibilité de communier avec les autres Eglises, en tant qu'unité indivisible et indissoluble, c'est-à-dire comme la veut Dieu et la présuppose la véritable notion d'Eglise," J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "L'institution synodale: Problèmes historiques, ecclésiologiques et canoniques," *Ist.*, 47 (2002), p. 36, *hereafter cited* J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "L'institution synodale."

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁹⁷ The particular function of the bishop consists both in being the pastor of his local Church and in carrying a responsibility for the universal communion of all the Churches. This is the theological meaning of episcopal conciliarity, and it is an ontologically required element in the episcopal consecration, which presupposes a gathering of all the bishops of a given province representing the one episcopate of the universal Church," J. MEYENDORFF, "Catholicity... An Introduction," p. 9.

¹⁹⁸ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "L'institution synodale," p. 24.

¹⁹⁹ "Une consécration d'évêque dans une autre épiscopie, sur un autre trône, dans une autre Eglise locale, etc., aurait été inconcevable dans les premiers siècles," *Ibid.*, p. 25, n. 27.

²⁰⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 24.

l'Eucharistie, celui qui exprime l'unité aussi bien de l'Eglise locale en elle-même que son unité avec les autres Eglises locales, unité à laquelle [...] les synodes ont de tout temps aspiré.²⁰¹

Owing to this, the relation between the synod and a particular local Church should always take place through the bishop, because,

...toute création de relations directes entre les fidèles et le synode impliquerait automatiquement une fragmentation de l'Eglise locale et un individualisme dans l'ecclésiologie. Si un fidèle - ou un clerc - peut nouer une relation directe avec l'Eglise dans son ensemble, et pas seulement une relation passant par son Eglise locale et l'évêque qui l'incarne, l'Eglise devient des lors « l'ensemble des croyants en Christ », [...] autrement dit comme un ensemble de personnes, et non une communion de communautés et d'Eglises. Le synode ne fait plus dans ce cas que se substituer à un « évêque universel » c'est-à-dire à une institution ou à un fonctionnement unissant les fidèles en un seul corps, afin que l'on puisse parler d'une seule Eglise et éviter finalement l'individualisme.²⁰²

This does not mean that the local Church as a whole has no role to play in the synodal practice. In fact, the decisions taken by the synod of bishops must be completed by the approval of each of the local Churches made present by the participating bishops. Analogous to the eucharistic celebration in which the *Amen* of the community is constitutive of the liturgy, so too the consent of the people forms part of the synodal life of the Church. However, the authority and validity of the synodal decision does not have their source in the will of the people but in God's will, which is expressed through the bishops in communion with the Church.²⁰³ Concluding the discussion, Zizioulas says,

...la participation de chaque évêque à la praxis synodale de l'Eglise est un droit et un devoir qui découlent directement de sa consécration et ne dépendent d'aucune pratique ni d'acte de nature administrative ou autre. Par conséquent, chaque évêque, par le droit que lui confère sa consécration épiscopale, peut et doit participer aux synodes qui concernent, de quelque façon que ce soit, les débats et les décisions touchant la vie de son église locale et de l'Eglise en général.²⁰⁴

4.4. Autonomy of Local Churches and Authority of Synodal Institution

According to Zizioulas, the theological function of synodical institution consists in maintaining the balance between the local Church and the Church Catholic spread out in the whole world.²⁰⁵ This ecclesiological function of the synodal institution is very subtle and delicate, given the difficulty involved in the safeguarding of the equilibrium. In Zizioulas'

²⁰¹ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "L'institution synodale," 23. Cf. ID, "Eucharistic Community... Catholicity," pp. 314-334; ID, "La communauté eucharistique et la catholicité de l'Eglise," *L'Etre ecclésial. «Perspective orthodoxe - 3»* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1981), pp. 111-135, *hereafter cited as* J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "La communauté eucharistique," *L'Etre ecclésial*.

²⁰² J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "L'institution synodale," p. 34.

²⁰³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 35, n. 41.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

view, there exist two principal misconceptions concerning the synodality. According to the first, synodal institution is considered simply as an instrument of consultation, while the final decisions are reserved to an institution or instance whose authority is presumed to be higher and final. This view “sacrifices the integrity of the local Church to the Church universal.”²⁰⁶ According to the second view, synodal institution is seen as an authority standing above the local Church and imposing its decisions on it. Here too, “the local Church is in danger of ceasing to be a full and integral Church.”²⁰⁷ In Zizioulas’ opinion, “Synods should never be understood as institutions standing above the local Churches; they exist as instruments of communion of these Churches so that their unity may emerge as a *symphonia* of diverse ways of living the same Gospel.”²⁰⁸

In order to achieve this, the primitive Church applied certain rules. According to the ancient canonical legislation—which has its origin in St Cyprian²⁰⁹—no bishop has the right to intervene in the *episkope* of another bishop. It is difficult to see how a position like this can be compatible with the synodal life of the Church. What is more intriguing is the fact that St Cyprian, who aired this view, was also one of the earliest and zealous promoters of synodal practice in the early Church. The view of Cyprian and that of the early Church becomes comprehensible only when we set it in the context of a healthy balance between the local Church and the communion of Churches. Just as it is ruled out that the catholicity and autonomy of the local Church are endangered by the synodal institution, so also synodal institution must not be endangered by the catholicity and autonomy of the local Church. This concern to maintain this balance is observable in such canonical texts such as canons 5 of the 1st Nicaea, 19 of the council of Antioch and 34 of the Canons of the Apostles.

Canon 5 of the 1st Nicaea, which is concerned with the administration of penance, prescribes that the one who was excluded from eucharistic communion by a local bishop should not be admitted by other bishops. This text, which makes the decision of a local bishop binding for all the bishops, is an open acknowledgement of the autonomy of the local Church and its bishop. However, the first ecumenical council wanted to ensure that the local bishop had not reached this decision for vested interests. For the eucharistic communion is a question

²⁰⁶ ID, “Uniformity, Diversity...,” p. 50.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51. “Toutefois, le Concile n’était jamais un pouvoir *sur* les églises, mais un témoignage de leur identité; sa voix était celle de chacune et de toutes, elle parlait non pas au-dessus mais *dans* l’Eglise en exprimant l’identité, l’accord et la communion,” P. EVDOKIMOV, “Un ministère pétrinien dans l’Eglise peut-il avoir un sens? Une réponse russe orthodoxe,” *Conc(F)*, p. 111, *hereafter cited as* P. EVDOKIMOV, “Un ministère pétrinien dans l’Eglise.”

²⁰⁹ CYPRIEN, *Ep.* 55 (52), 21, 2: Each bishop is responsible directly to God for matters pertaining to his diocese.

which affects other Churches too.²¹⁰ According to the mind of the Fathers of the first Ecumenical Council

...la divine Eucharistie exprime à la fois la catholicité de l'Eglise locale et celle de l'Eglise répandue à travers tout l'univers; de ce fait, il n'est pas possible de participer à la divine Eucharistie d'une autre Eglise locale sans pouvoir également participer à l'Eucharistie de sa propre Eglise locale (= renforcement de l'autorité de l'évêque local); mais, exactement pour la même raison, l'excommunication d'un membre du corps eucharistique, bien que ce soit, au départ, un droit reconnu à l'évêque local, touche finalement toutes les autres Eglises locales et doit être soumise à l'approbation des autres évêques (= renforcement de l'autorité du synode).²¹¹

Here it must be noted that the primary role of the synod does not consist in denying the right of excommunication belonging to a local bishop, but rather to assess the motivations behind such acts. However, in Zizioulas' view, the fifth canon of the First Nicaea represents a shift with regard to the preceding period. Whereas during the earlier period, the decision of the local bishop was considered as ultimate, here the ultimate decision in the matter is reserved to the provincial council. As he points out,

...although the decisions of the individual bishops had "the force of law in accordance with the canon which enacts that those who have been excommunicated by some bishops shall not be admitted by others," the authority of the single bishop was no longer ultimate with respect to the ecclesiastical status of a member of his own Church. The catholicity and fullness of the local Church was no longer the background of the councils. The establishment of permanent provincial councils held twice a year and acting as higher courts of appeal for excommunicated Christians, did not simply mean another type of council. It represented at the same time a new ecclesiological concept, leading directly to a "universal" Church organization in which the particular Churches were understood as mutually completed parts. Thus, the ecclesiological foundations of an Ecumenical Council were laid by the beginning of the fourth century.²¹²

Canon 19 of the Antiochian Council speaks of the election and the consecration of bishops. Accordingly, the election and the consecration of a new bishop must be done preferably by all the bishops of the eparchy, or at least by the majority of them and in the presence of the Metropolitan.²¹³ The non-respect of this rule renders the election and the consecration invalid. According to Zizioulas, this text too constitutes a further step towards the consolidation of the

²¹⁰ "De toute évidence, le problème qui est ici sous-jacent est celui de la relation entre l'Eglise locale et l'Eglise répandue par tout l'univers, telle que cette dernière s'exprime dans la communion eucharistique," J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "L'institution synodale," p. 27.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "Development of Conciliar Structure," pp. 45-46

²¹³ "A bishop should not be ordained without a synod and the presence of the metropolitan of the province. And once he is at any rate present, it is better to have all of his fellow-ministers present with him, and it is necessary for the metropolitan to convoke (them) by sending letters. And if all of them respond, this would be better. But if this is found to be difficult, the majority of them should be at any rate present or express agreement through letters, and thus after the presence or the agreement of the majority the ordination (katastasis) may take place... And if the ordination takes place in accordance with the fixed canon and some are found to disagree... the vote of the majority must prevail," Council of Antioch, Canon 19.

power of the synod at the detriment of the local Church. It introduces the principle of majority in the synodal decisions, thus paving the way for the transformation of synodal institution into a purely juridical institution.²¹⁴

According to the provisions of canon 34 of the Canons of the Apostles, a) in every nation there must be a '*protos*'-bishop who must be recognised as the head, b) all the bishops of the region must always act in accord with the *protos*, in every question which concerns their province and c) the *protos* (one) must avoid acting without the accord of the other bishops of the province (many). This canon depicts in a magnificent way how balance can be kept between the local Church and the synodal institution. According to the stipulations of this canon, the local bishop is responsible for every affair which concerns the local Church: neither the synod, nor the *protos* has right to interfere. At the same time, all matters which affect other Churches also come under the competency of all the bishops of the region under the leadership of the *protos*.²¹⁵ The relationship of *protos* with his brother-bishops is one of interdependence. The synodal institution in the light of this canon is not an ecclesiastical organisation with a pyramidal structure, but one that is at the service of the communion of local Churches by the intermediary of their bishops. And the function of the *protos* is to ensure the balance between the local Church and the synod.

4.5. Synodality and Sacramental Life

The decisions of the early councils had direct bearing on the sacramental unity of the early Church, for the exclusion from sacramental unity and leading to sacramental unity were both equally tasks of the councils. The main message conveyed by canon 5 of the 1st Nicaea, which we have referred to a while ago is "the conviction that exclusion from the liturgical fellowship of the Church is too serious a matter to be left to the local Church alone."²¹⁶ Therefore, provincial councils were to be held twice a year to enquire whether there were abusive excommunications in the province. Thus the supra-local conciliarity was "born out of the

²¹⁴ "Ce principe soulève de sérieux problèmes ecclésiologiques, parce qu'il sous-entend que la quantité est un critère décisif de l'unité de l'Eglise, ce qui va à l'encontre du caractère (ethos) de l'ecclésiologie ancienne." J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "L'institution synodale," p. 28.

²¹⁵ "...la juridiction des synodes ne couvre pas l'ensemble des aspects de la vie de l'Eglise, mais se limite aux questions touchant la vie de plus d'une Eglise locale-épiscopale.... toute question concernant essentiellement l'unité des Eglises locales les unes par rapport aux autres, comme les actes constitutifs par excellence de cette unité de l'Eglise, à savoir la divine Eucharistie et l'élection et la consécration de l'évêque, relèvent naturellement, et pour des raisons ecclésiologiques fondamentales, de la compétence du synode," *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

²¹⁶ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, "Development of Conciliar Structure," p. 46.

Church's intention to restrain exclusion from liturgical fellowship so that 'all smallness of mind may be put away and the gift may be offered to God in pureness'.²¹⁷

Councils not only pronounced anathemas and exclusions, but also made strenuous efforts to bring the schismatics or the excluded back to the eucharistic communion.

The borders of the liturgical community were, to be sure, never left unguarded, being [...] identical with the very borders of the Church of God. But as the liturgy itself was never entirely divorced from conciliarity—it is, I think, quite significant that at a time when the term “synod” had become a *terminus technicus* for the formal councils people could use it for the liturgy—conciliar action was at once the way to exclusion from and the gate to acceptance into the fellowship of the Lord's Table.²¹⁸

4.6. *Supra-Provincial Synodality*

We have seen above that the provincial synodal meetings of bishops were sanctioned and demanded by the 1st Council of Nicaea. However, the council, in its canon 6, recognised some exceptions to the general rule of provinces. The Metropolitans of certain sees enjoyed, as per ancient custom, supra-provincial authority. Thus, the bishop of Alexandria could consecrate all the bishops of Egypt, the bishop of Rome could do the same in suburbican Italy.²¹⁹ This canon appears to have been made with particular reference to the ecclesiastical situation in Egypt. The increasingly centralising attitude of Metropolitan Alexander of Alexandria (reserving to himself the right of episcopal ordination all over Egypt) was contested by Miletius, bishop of Lycopolis, who along with his partisans wanted small ecclesiastical circumscription grouped under different Metropolitans. In fact, the demand of Miletius was more traditional than the claims of the ‘pope’ of Alexandria. The Fathers of the Nicaea, in their concern not to reduce in any way the power of the great adversary of Arius, supported the position of Alexander of Alexandria.

This exceptional power given to the bishop of Alexandria was evidently contrary to the ancient ecclesiastical structure which was based on the fullness of catholicity belonging to each local eucharistic community. Hence, this had to be justified. So the Council Fathers had recourse to the principle of preserving the special privileges enjoyed by certain Sees. The *ἐξουσία* of the Alexandrian pope is admissible because such is the custom of the bishop of

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²¹⁹ “Let the ancient customs in Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis prevail, that the Bishop of Alexandria have jurisdiction (τὴν ἐξουσίαν) in all these, since the like is customary for the Bishop of Rome (ἐπειδὴ καὶ τῷ ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ ἐπισκόπῳ τοῦτο σύνηθές ἐστιν) also. Likewise in Antioch and the other provinces (ἐπαρκίαις), let the Churches retain their privileges (τὰ πρεσβεῖα). And this is to be universally understood, that if any one be made bishop without the consent of the Metropolitan, the great Synod has declared that such a man ought not to be a bishop. If, however, two or three bishops shall from natural love of contradiction, oppose the common suffrage of the rest, it being reasonable and in accordance with the ecclesiastical law, then let the choice of the majority prevail,” First Council of Nicaea, Canon 6.

Rome.²²⁰ The council was introducing here a novelty. The prerogatives (τὰ πρεσβεῖα) recognised to certain sees like Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, etc. were now transformed into juridical authority. “C’est ainsi qu’il admet que les «πρεσβεῖα», qui sont des ἀρχῆα ἔθνη, puissent se matérialiser en ἐξουσία. Ce « pouvoir » consiste essentiellement en la faculté d’ordonner les évêques siégeant dans un ensemble de provinces civiles.”²²¹

4.7. Synodality and Primatial Authority in Contemporary Orthodoxy

4.7.1. Protos and Regional Synodality

In the light of the above discussion, Zizioulas throws a critical look on the synodal structure and practice of Orthodox autocephalous Churches today. In his view, “the formation of regional synods with independent heads (the autocephalous Churches) came, to a large extent, as a result of 19th century nationalism.”²²² But the national principle, strong as it may have been historically, cannot fully explain the phenomenon of autocephalous Churches because—as he puts it—“the Church needs more stable ground to build its institutions.”²²³ Therefore one must look for deeper theological reasons.

These reasons will become more visible only when we approach the Church from a pneumatic and Christological point of view. In the ecclesiological system inspired by Pneumatology, “the ‘one and the many’ exist independently, and this is impossible outside a canonical system in which, synods at all levels complete and correct one another.”²²⁴ The mystery of incarnation should also inspire a theology of the Church which accords due respect to the cultural and historical diversity. Early Christians, led by the Spirit, were bold enough to receive into the Body of Christ diversity of cultures and sensibilities. In today’s setting, it must be realised in the level of regional synods in communion with one another. In this context, Zizioulas makes the following observations:

1) The authority of a *primus* (for instance, that of a patriarch in relation to a synod) is not “simply a primacy of honour, as it is often stated by Orthodox theologians.”²²⁵ A synod

²²⁰ “L’usage romain, qui accordait à un seul évêque le pouvoir de confirmer les élections de ses confrères sur un territoire dépassant les limites d’une province civile, s’est imposé aux Pères de Nicée qui ont admis ce même usage à Alexandrie,” J. MEYENDORFF, “La Primauté romain dans la tradition canonique jusqu’au concile de Chalcédoine,” *Ist.*, 4 (1957), p. 466, *hereafter cited as* J. MEYENDORFF, “La Primauté romain dans la tradition canonique.”

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 467.

²²² J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “The Institution of Episcopal Conferences: An Orthodox View,” *Jurist*, 48 (1988), p. 381, *hereafter cited as* J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Institution of Episcopal Conferences.”

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 382.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

cannot function without its head. It is the *primus* who gives theological status to the synod.²²⁶ The competency to convoke a synod remains with the *protos*. But he does so as the mouth and expression of the will of the fellow bishops. Although the *protos* is the one who effectively convokes the synod, all the local Churches through the intermediary of their bishops participate in the event of the convocation of a synod.

2) The primate does not have the right to intervene in the affairs of a local Church: “The principle of the catholicity of the local Church is thus maintained in all the aspects of the synodal system.”²²⁷

3) This primacy should be given to the head of a local Church. The primacies are tied to *sees* and not to *individuals*. *See* here stands for a local Church. “It is, therefore, impossible to move outside the context of local Churches in dealing with the idea of primacy.”²²⁸

Zizioulas is highly critical of a highly centralised autocephalous Church. “Concevoir des Eglises autocéphales, organisées selon une structure pyramidale, avec une institution synodale exerçant un pouvoir absolu face aux Eglises locales, ou avec un *protos* exerçant ce pouvoir sur les synodes, constitue une déviation dangereuse de l’esprit ecclésiologique des canons.”²²⁹

For a synodal institution of this type can lead to the wiping out of the notion of catholicity of the Church, as it was formed in the ancient Church and put down in the ancient canons and ancient synods. According to him, it is erroneous to consider the synodal system as a pyramidal one with the ecumenical council at the helm.²³⁰ In a similar vein, Schmemmann has expressed as follows:

Un concile d’évêques, comme l’épiscopat lui-même, n’est pas l’organe d’une autorité qui s’exercerait sur l’Eglise, mais il n’est pas non plus une « assemblée » de délégués des Eglises : il constitue une manifestation surnaturelle (blagodatnoe) de l’unité de l’Eglise, ses lèvres spirituelles. Il ne s’adresse pas à l’Eglise, mais dans l’Eglise, dans la plénitude de sa conscience catholique. Il n’est ni « plus complet », ni « supérieur » à la plénitude de l’Eglise locale, mais en lui, toutes les Eglises locales reconnaissent et réalisent leur unité ontologique, celle de l’Eglise une, sainte, catholique et apostolique.²³¹

²²⁶ Cf. Canon 34 of *Apostolic Canons*.

²²⁷ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Institution of Episcopal Conferences,” p. 381. The *protos* acts always “...à la condition fondamentale et indispensable de ne jamais porter atteinte, d’une part, au principe de synodalité et de collégialité pour les responsabilités de l’Eglise, et, d’autre part, au principe de non-ingérence dans les affaires intérieures des autres Eglises, ces deux principes étant les deux principes canoniques fondamentaux de la haute administration ecclésiastique, tels qu’ils ont été exprimés et formulés dans le 2^e canon du II^e concile œcuménique,” MAXIMOS OF SARDES, *Le Patriarcat œcuménique dans l’Eglise orthodoxe. Etude historique et canonique*, trans. by Jacques TOURAILLE, «coll. Théologie historique, n° 32» (Paris: Beauchesne, 1975), pp. 351-352, *hereafter cited as* MAXIMOS OF SARDES, *Le Patriarcat œcuménique*.

²²⁸ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “The Institution of Episcopal Conferences: An Orthodox View,” p. 380.

²²⁹ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “L’institution synodale,” p. 30.

²³⁰ Ecumenical council is in fact not an institution; it is an event. There is no regulation regarding its periodicity, nor precise preconditions.

²³¹ A. SCHMEMMANN, “Patriarcat œcuménique,” p. 38-39.

A synod taking its decision on a majority—instead of unanimity—can find itself in a situation in which its decisions are contested. A provincial synod, insofar as it represents the local Churches of that region, has authority only in that region. Synods which express the unanimity and communion of bishops all over the world enjoy a higher authority. Nevertheless, “même ces synodes ne peuvent contourner les Eglises locales, leur validité et leur autorité n’étant, finalement, approuvées que par le seul « Amen » du peuple de Dieu.”²³²

Le synode tire son autorité, non pas de l’institution qu’il représente, mais de la communion des Eglises entre elles, – par le biais de leurs évêques. L’Eglise est un corps de communion et de liberté, et non de contraintes juridiques.²³³

4.7.2. Exercise of Primatial Power

According to the principles of the spokespersons of the eucharistic Ecclesiology, there cannot be any power over the local Church. Still, as Schmemmann observes, according to the ecclesiastical law in force, not only that the supreme power does exist in Orthodoxy but also it is precisely on this power that the Church and its life are built up. This idea of supra-episcopal power—although it does not assume a universal dimension as in the Catholic Church—is conceived in the form of autocephalous Churches. In the setting of autocephaly, the power of the primate is conceived as being exercised over the bishops and dioceses, which are subjected to him.

Zizioulas, for his part, refers to another tendency today, viz. the one which considers and names the autocephalous Churches as ‘local Churches.’ This would effectively and logically give them the possibility to absorb the episcopal dioceses in such a way that they are ignored in favour of the permanent synod of the head of the autocephalous Church. Thus, it is not difficult to see that a rupture exists between Ecclesiology and the ecclesial practice and the law in force. Having denied the existence of primacy in a universal level, the Orthodoxy has forcefully applied it to the level of autocephalous Churches, without giving it a theological or ecclesiological basis. Zizioulas remains convinced that the basic unit of the Church is the diocese. Any other unity, either below it or above it, should draw its ecclesial status from the episcopal diocese.²³⁴

Ainsi, ni une métropole, ni un archidiocèse, ni un patriarcat, ne peut en soi être appelé une église, mais ne peut l’être que par extension c’est-à-dire en vertu du fait qu’il (ou elle) repose sur un ou plusieurs diocèses

²³² J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “L’institution synodale,” p. 35.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²³⁴ “Je reste persuadé que le statut ecclésial, dans l’Eglise orthodoxe, de chaque unité autre que le diocèse épiscopal ne provient pas de l’unité elle-même mais du diocèse épiscopal ou des diocèses épiscopaux concernés. Cela n’est pas seulement valable — comme nous l’avons vu — pour des unités plus petites que le diocèse (par exemple la paroisse) mais aussi pour des unités plus grandes,” J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Eglise locale... perspective eucharistique*, p. 186-87, n. 7.

épiscopaux-églises locales, qui sont les seuls organismes à pouvoir proprement être appelés églises en raison de l'Eucharistie épiscopale. Cela veut dire également qu'un métropolitain, un patriarche, etc. doit son statut au fait qu'il est le chef d'une église locale particulière.²³⁵

In order to avoid that an autocephalous Church draws its ecclesiality from herself and not from the episcopal dioceses, it is necessary that the primate is surrounded by the synod of bishops. This synod is not simply a representative body; it should be composed of all the diocesan bishops of the region.²³⁶

4.7.3. Synodality in the Universal Level

Can we think of a synodality in the universal level according to the Orthodox perspective? In the context of Orthodox Ecclesiology, as Zizioulas explains, it is difficult to make a distinction between a regional and a universal synod. This is because synods are headed by primates who are independent of each other (autocephaly).²³⁷ Hence, according to him, “the synod cannot be regarded in the Orthodox Church as an intermediary instance between the local and the universal Church.”²³⁸ Does this mean that a tripartite conception of synodality cannot be envisaged from within the Orthodox Ecclesiology? In this respect, Zizioulas does not share the opinion of some of his Orthodox colleagues, who hold that the Orthodoxy is tied to a two-level (local and regional) concept of synodality:

Personally I think that in a united Church the question of universal primacy would automatically arise, since there can be no communion of local Churches without some form of universal synodality, and no universal synodality without some form of universal primacy.²³⁹

J. Meyendorff also insists greatly on the necessity of communion among the various autocephalous Churches of the Orthodoxy. In his opinion, it is high time that the Orthodox people should “recognize that their own present system of loose communion of independent Churches is also to be judged by the consciousness of the Church.”²⁴⁰ He regrets that the Orthodoxy lacks a scheme, which can realise and manifest the unity and *koinonia* of the world episcopate. Instead of manifesting themselves as Churches in communion, modern Orthodox autocephalous Churches are often in a state of mutual isolation and estrangement. It is in this context that he sees the necessity of a universal primacy.

If the administrative, jurisdictional and doctrinal power of the papacy did not empirically exist at the beginning, but is accepted by the Roman Catholics as a development that meets the needs of Christian unity

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 187, n. 8.

²³⁷ The ecumenical Council, which is not a permanent institution, cannot apply in this case.

²³⁸ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “The Institution of Episcopal Conferences: An Orthodox View,” p. 381.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ J. MEYENDORFF, “The hope that is in us – A comment on the Document: *The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity*,” *SVTQ*, 27 (1983), p. 297, hereafter cited as J. MEYENDORFF, “The hope that is in us.”

in history, there must be a place for a “reception” of such a development by the Church and, in fact, the admission that the universal primacy—just like the regional primacies of Orthodox patriarchs, metropolitans and archbishops—is subject to definitions by the Church and is responsible to the Church.²⁴¹

4.8. Church of Rome in the Communion of Churches: the Orthodox View

4.8.1. Development of Primatial Sees in the Primitive Church

The fact that the primatial sees trace their origin to the earliest phase of Church history is a point of convergence between the Catholics and the Orthodox. Equal in ecclesial dignity, various local Churches were, from the beginning, rallied around one or other of the early centres of Christianity.²⁴² This could not have been otherwise since Christianity first spread to great urban centres of the Roman Empire and only later did it spread to the surrounding areas. Thus, most of the local Churches got formed as the fruit of the missionary activity of the early Christian centres, which include Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Lyon, Carthage, etc. They enjoyed a special spiritual authority in the communion of Churches. These Churches—better equipped theologically and intellectually—transmitted to the surrounding local Churches the Tradition, the rule of faith and the rule of prayer (liturgy).²⁴³ The authority enjoyed by these so-called *Mother-Churches* was not understood in the initial period as a juridical power.

The Ecumenical Councils transformed this *de facto* authority, based on custom, into juridical or canonical power.²⁴⁴ At the same time, as Schmemmann reminds us, this power of primacy must not be conceived as a power *over* the Church, but as the manifestation and the expression of their unanimity.²⁴⁵

4.8.2. The Church of Rome and the Communion of Churches

Among the various primatial centres of the early Christianity, one centre—that of Rome—enjoyed a pre-eminent position and authority as the centre of unity of the universal communion of Churches. The Orthodox ecclesiologists and canonists, given their anti-Roman attitude, often ignored or even denied this fact. In this context, A. Schmemmann thinks that an

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² “Although in principle the equality of all Bishops has been strongly maintained, certain particular sees came to prominence: Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, to mention but the most important,” G. FLOROVSKY, “Antinomies of Christian History: Empire and Desert,” in: Richard S. Haugh. (Gen. ed.), *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky. Vol. 2: Christianity and Culture* (Belmont, Massachusetts: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974 [2nd printing]), p. 88-90, *hereafter cited as* G. FLOROVSKY, “Antinomies of Christian History.”

²⁴³ Cf. A. SCHMEMMANN, “La notion de primauté,” p. 140.

²⁴⁴ “Les conciles ont été les organes qui ont investi ces Eglises de pouvoirs juridique ou canonique, mais, même indépendamment de ces décisions conciliaires précises, ces Eglises, et surtout l’Eglise de Rome, ont continué à exercer une autorité doctrinale et morale particulière, comme avant Nicée,” J. MEYENDORFF, “La Primauté romain dans la tradition canonique,” p. 481.

²⁴⁵ “...il faut souligner que cette primauté concerne non le pouvoir *sur* les églises, mais toujours la manifestation et l’expression de leur unanimité, de leur identité dans la foi et dans la vie,” A. SCHMEMMANN, “La notion de primauté,” p. 141.

objective study of the Tradition and the early Church history can reveal that there indeed existed a universal primacy along side the regional and supra-regional primacies. These data inform us that

...l'Eglise, dès les premiers jours de son existence, avait un centre d'unité et d'accord universel. Dans les premières décennies, l'église de Jérusalem était ce centre, puis ce fut l'Eglise de Rome qui, selon expression de saint Ignace d'Antioche, « présidait à la charité » (Rom. 1, 3).²⁴⁶

A similar opinion is shared by Archbishop Peter L'Huiller. As he put it: "Indépendamment de toute considération juridico-canonique, Rome jouissait d'un grand prestige attaché au souvenir des coryphées des Apôtres Pierre et Paul, et aussi lié à tout ce qu'évoquait Rome sur le plan de l'ordre et de la civilisation..."²⁴⁷ He recalls especially the invaluable contribution made by Rome in the great Christological controversy which split apart the Eastern Christianity. This doctrinal authority of Rome, held highly, was not considered as *ex sese* normative by the Eastern Churches. Thus,

...c'est un fait qu'en certaines circonstances, les Orthodoxes orientaux ont fait subir des altérations à des documents romains qui leur semblaient exprimer d'une manière excessive les prétentions papales : le pape Hormisdas, lors de la liquidation du schisme d'Acace sur la base de l'orthodoxie chalcédonienne, exigea de l'épiscopat byzantin la signature d'un formulaire affirmant, avec référence à Matthieu 16, que « *in sede Apostolica, immaulata est semper catholica servata religio* ». Le patriarche Jean (518-520) signa bien ce document, mais en le faisant précéder d'un préambule qui atténuait fortement l'affirmation du formulaire relative à l'autorité romaine. Lors du VIIe Concile oecuménique, le pape Hadrien Ier, dans ses lettres à l'impératrice Irène et au patriarche Taraise, mettait l'accent sur le rôle de la cathedra Petri; or la traduction grecque lue à la deuxième session synodale comportait de notables modifications, en particulier sur ce point.²⁴⁸

That is to say, from the Eastern point of view, although the communion with Rome was highly desirable and the absence of it was even seen as an anomaly, "l'on ne va pas faire de cette communion la pierre de touche de l'orthodoxie ou même de la légitimité canonique, laquelle a ses critères intrinsèques..."²⁴⁹

Briefly, the Orthodox consider communion with Rome as an element which is important for the *bene esse* of the Church, but not constitutive of its *esse*. Archbishop L'Huiller is in total agreement with Mgr Batiffol, when the latter wrote in 1938 that the authority enjoyed by

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* Here the author alludes to the detailed analysis given by Afanasiev in N. AFANASIEV, "Kafoličeskaja Cerkov," and ID, "L'Eglise qui préside."

²⁴⁷ P. L'HUILLIER, "Collégialité et primauté. Réflexion d'un Orthodoxe sur les problème historique," in: *La collégialité épiscopale. Histoire et théologie*. «UnSa – 52» (Paris: Cerf, 1965), p. 339, *hereafter cited as P. L'HUILLIER*, "Collégialité et primauté."

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 339-340.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

Rome was “une autorité de première grandeur, mais on ne voit jamais qu’elle soit pour l’Orient une autorité de droit divin.”²⁵⁰

It is in this context that one must consider the Roman interventions in the East. For instance, when candidates of doubtful orthodoxy were installed—with the support of civil authorities—on the Eastern episcopal sees, Rome intervened in the name of orthodoxy. And this intervention was not resisted in the East. History also provides us with cases of appeals made to Rome, demanding her intervention in certain matters. However, it is important to underline here that while appealing to Rome, the Eastern sees or their prelates did not recognise a papal jurisdictional supremacy. According to the Oriental point of view, papal primacy is “une sollicitude particulière d’une Eglise-sœur, s’exerçant dans le cadre constitutionnel prévu par les canons pour le *bene esse* de l’Église.”²⁵¹ Understood in this way, says Schmemmann, Rome was right in affirming its primacy. However, it went wrong when it identified this primacy with *supreme power*.²⁵² According to P. L’Huillier, when the popes started considering their primacy in terms of a universal jurisdiction, the dialogue between papacy and the East became difficult. This Roman error—says Schmemmann—should not lead the Orthodox to deny the genuine primacy which belongs to the Church of Rome. He esteems that the Orthodoxy is yet to make a truly orthodox evaluation of the place of Rome in the first millennium. “La primauté—in his view—est l’expression nécessaire de l’unité de foi et de vie des églises locales et de leur communion vivante et effective en cette vie”²⁵³

4.8.3. The Bishop of Rome and the Communion of Churches

A) Petrine Succession of the Bishop of Rome

Primacy of the bishop of Rome is a major point of disagreement between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. The Roman claim to the primacy of the bishop of Rome is based largely on the doctrine of Petrine succession developed around Mt. 16: 18. The East was unwilling to consider the Petrine succession as a prerogative exclusively of a single Church or its bishop. Following St Cyprian, it considers every bishop a successor of Peter. In this respect, the pope is also a successor of Peter like any other bishop. This is clearly expressed by the 14th century Byzantine theologian, Nil Cabasilas:

²⁵⁰ P. BATIFFOL, *Cathedra Petri: études d’histoire ancienne de l’Eglise*, «UnSa – 4» (Paris: Cerf, 1938), pp. 75-76, hereafter cited as P. BATIFFOL, *Cathedra Petri*.

²⁵¹ P. L’HUILIER, “Collégialité et primauté,” p. 343.

²⁵² “L’erreur ecclésiologique de Rome consiste non pas dans l’affirmation de sa primauté, mais dans le fait qu’elle identifia cette primauté avec le *pouvoir suprême*, en faisant de l’évêque de Rome un *principium, radix et origo* de l’unité de l’Eglise et de l’Eglise elle-même,” A. SCHMEMANN, “La notion de primauté,” p. 141.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

Quoi donc le pape n'est donc pas du tout successeur de Pierre? Il l'est, mais en tant qu'évêque [...] Car Pierre est un Apôtre, et le chef des Apôtres, mais le pape n'est ni un Apôtre (car les Apôtres n'ont pas ordonné d'autres apôtres, mais des pasteurs et des didascales), ni encore moins le coryphée des apôtres. Pierre est le didascale de l'univers, quant au pape, il est évêque de Rome. Pierre a pu ordonner un évêque à Antioche, un autre à Alexandrie, et un autre ailleurs, mais l'évêque de Rome ne le fait pas....²⁵⁴

More recently, J. Meyendorff has remarked that

La *forma Petri* qui, suivant saint Léon, est présente en chaque Eglise, n'empêche aucunement l'existence d'une *Cathedra Petri* unique. Mais l'autorité de cette dernière n'enlève en rien la « grâce » qui, suivant les Pères de Carthage, est présente tout entière « dans chaque province ».²⁵⁵

In fact, there were various ways of understanding the Petrine succession in the East. According to one, the Petrine succession is seen as a succession in the faith of Peter. Accordingly, Mt. 16: 18 must be taken as the Lord's response to Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. According to Origen, Peter is only the first among the 'believers,' and whoever confesses the faith of Peter will become, in his turn, *Peter* (rock).²⁵⁶

The authors who held a less individualistic view of Christianity maintained that "la foi ne peut être pleinement réalisée que dans la communauté sacramentelle au sein de laquelle l'évêque accomplit, d'une manière toute particulière, le ministère d'enseignement du Christ et ce faisant préserve la foi."²⁵⁷ Accordingly, the Petrine succession exists wherever "la foi juste est préservée et ne peut donc pas être localisé géographiquement ni monopolisée par une seule église ni par un individu."²⁵⁸ In general, the East could not see how "une église particulière pût, dans un sens pleinement théologique, être plus qu'une autre investie du pouvoir de préserver la foi de Pierre. Pour eux, le signe de vérité le plus élevé qui soit était constitué par le consensus des évêques et non pas par l'autorité de l'un seulement d'entre eux."²⁵⁹

Thus, as far as the Orthodoxy is concerned, Rome is not the unique see of Peter. Other Churches can also claim to a Petrine succession although Rome has a special place. Following the Cyprianic doctrine, each bishop can be, in his see, a successor of Peter. Therefore, if a Church has a privileged position with regard to others, its source must be sought not in the Petrine succession but on the decisions of the council, which in turn, was inspired by antique traditions.

²⁵⁴ As cited in J. MEYENDORFF, *L'Eglise orthodoxe*, p. 172.

²⁵⁵ J. MEYENDORFF, "La Primauté romain dans la tradition canonique," p. 482.

²⁵⁶ "Si nous disons aussi: Tu es le Christ, le Fils du Dieu vivant, alors nous devenons aussi Pierre (...) car quiconque se joint au Christ devient pierre," Origen, Hom. sur Matt. XII, 10, éd. Klostermann GCS 40 (Leipzig, 1935), pp. 85-89, cited in J. MEYENDORFF, *L'Eglise orthodoxe*, p. 132.

²⁵⁷ J. MEYENDORFF, *Initiation à la Théologie byzantine*, pp. 133.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Yet, as Meyendorff points out, the Church had quite early on—at least from the time of Cyprian—an awareness of the universal role of the episcopate, as the successors of the college of Apostles. And the bishop of Rome occupied within this college the place occupied by Peter in the apostolic college.

Ce dernier [bishop of Rome] avait, en effet, des titres multiples pour remplir cette charge, notamment celui de présider l'Eglise « très grande et très ancienne » et de conserver, par succession, l'enseignement de Pierre et Paul. Ce rôle de l'évêque de Rome ne pouvait toutefois être assimilé ni à une infaillibilité, ni à un pouvoir juridique sur les autres évêques, puisque rien de tel ne lui avait été conféré par aucun concile.²⁶⁰

In the background of this perspective, it was only logical that the Western elaboration of the papal primacy during the medieval period as well the definition of Vatican I were considered as unacceptable to the East. E. Lanne has brilliantly articulated this Orthodox attitude when he wrote:

Que le pouvoir primatial de juridiction du pontife romain soit vraiment épiscopal, c'est-à-dire ordinaire et immédiate sur absolument tous les fidèles et sur tous leurs pasteurs, c'est là le scandale de ce qu'elle [Orthodoxie] appelle le « papisme ». [...] Pour un orthodoxe [...] une telle conception de la primauté est théologiquement impossible. Une juridiction primatiale immédiate et ordinaire n'a pas de sens, car elle contredit à la doctrine de l'épiscopat.²⁶¹

Archbishop Basil of Brussels adds that “it is alien to Orthodox Ecclesiology that one bishop, whoever he may be, should be considered the universal and visible head of the whole Church.”²⁶² According A. Schmemmann, if the Orthodox Church denies the personal power of a single bishop over others, it is because there cannot be a power superior to that of the bishop over his diocese.²⁶³ Therefore, it cannot admit a universal primate who would exercise his power over the heads of the local Churches throughout the world. The power of the primate, according to the Orthodox view, is toned down by the principle of collegiality: the *primus* is aided by a collegial, governmental organ (council, synod, etc.). According to Meyendorff, the Western development must be seen in their historical context. Having filled a political and cultural vacuum left by the decline of the Western Roman Empire, the papacy consolidated its power by asserting the spiritual supremacy and political independence vis-à-vis the Germanic kings. The bishop of Rome, now become sovereign Pontiff, wielded power in both secular and pastoral areas. Even when the popes had to shed their secular power, they continued to exercise their *plena potestas* in the pastoral and doctrinal field. In this way, they played an

²⁶⁰ J. MEYENDORFF, “La Primauté romain dans la tradition canonique,” p. 481.

²⁶¹ E. LANNE, “Papauté et division de l’Eglise. Jusqu’à quel point une primauté romaine est-elle inacceptable pour les églises orientales?” *Conc(F)*, 64 (1971), p. 54, hereafter cited as E. LANNE, “Papauté et division de l’Eglise.”

²⁶² BASIL OF BRUSSELS, “Catholicity and the Structures of the Church: Some remarks,” *SVTQ*, 17 (1973), p. 50, hereafter cited as BASIL OF BRUSSELS, “Catholicity and the Structures of the Church.”

²⁶³ Cf. A. SCHMEMANN, “La notion de primauté,” p. 122.

important role in the spiritual formation of the Western Christianity. In this context Meyendorff remarks:

Most Roman Catholics would recognize today that the medieval and modern Roman papacy manifests a historical development. It did not come about simply with the Lord telling Peter, "You are Peter," but resulted from a gradual growth, justified by the need to secure the unity and *koinonia* of all the local Churches.²⁶⁴

B) Nature of the Roman Primacy

From the Orthodox theological and canonical point of view, the position of the primate in the communion of bishops is that of *primus inter pares*. This is applicable to the position of the bishop of Rome in the communion of bishops and their Churches. As S. Harkianakis formulates, "[q]uand l'évêque de Rome comprenait sa primauté dans le sens d'un *primus inter pares*, il avait la possibilité d'exprimer, dans les questions intéressant toute l'Eglise, une opinion décisive, et d'être respecté de tous, et il pouvait ainsi rendre effectivement à toute l'Eglise un service essentiel."²⁶⁵ Of course, it was much more than a primacy of honour.²⁶⁶ He had authority, necessary for carrying out his function within the communion of Churches. According to A. Schmemmann, it was the function of the universal primacy to

...garder et exprimer l'unité des Eglises dans la foi et dans la vie; garder et exprimer leur communion de pensée, ne pas permettre aux Eglises locales de s'isoler dans le provincialisme des traditions locales, d'affaiblir les liens catholiques, de se séparer de l'unité de vie [...]. En définitive cela signifie: avoir souci et "sollicitude" de ce que chaque Eglise soit plénitude, car cette plénitude est toujours celle de toute la tradition catholique, de l'unique et indivisible don de Dieu à son Eglise.²⁶⁷

From the Catholic side Y. Congar, explains how, in reality, the Roman primacy was understood and interpreted in the East:

L'Orient n'a jamais accepté une juridiction ordinaire de Rome, ni d'être soumis au jugement d'évêques occidentaux. Ses appels à l'aide de Rome ont été liés, non à une reconnaissance de principe d'une juridiction de Rome, mais à la reconnaissance que Rome tenait la même vérité, le même bien que lui. Il a jalousement protégé son autonomie de vie. Rome, elle, est intervenue pour protéger l'observation des règles de droit, pour soutenir l'orthodoxie de la foi, pour assurer la communion entre les deux parties de l'Eglise, le siège romain représentant et personnifiant l'Occident.²⁶⁸

But the situation changed when Rome started interpreting the role of the primate differently. To quote once again S. Harkianakis, "des qu'il commença à comprendre son

²⁶⁴ J. MEYENDORFF, "The hope that is in us," p. 296.

²⁶⁵ S. HARKIANAKIS, "Un ministère pétrinien dans l'Eglise," pp. 107-108.

²⁶⁶ Cf. J. D. ZIZIOLAS, "The Institution of Episcopal Conferences: An Orthodox View," p. 380.

²⁶⁷ A. SCHMEMMANN, "La notion de primauté," pp. 141-142.

²⁶⁸ Y. M.-J. CONGAR, "La collegialité de l'épiscopat et la primauté de l'évêque de Rome dans l'histoire (brève esquisse)," *Ang.*, 47 (1970) p. 42, *hierafter cited as* Y. M.-J. CONGAR, "Collegialité de l'épiscopat et la primauté."

pouvoir épiscopal comme foncièrement différent du pouvoir de tous les autres évêques, il n'eut plus la possibilité d'être en communion avec l'orthodoxie."²⁶⁹

C) The Ecclesial Basis of Primacy

From the Eastern perspective, primacy is not bound up with a person but rather with a Church. It is an attribute primarily of a local Church, and only mediately, of its bishop.²⁷⁰ The text of predilection of the Orthodox theologians in their interpretation of the role of the primate is the 34th Apostolic Canon. Accordingly, the primate expresses the faith of all. The role of the primate is to be situated neither in the setting of a simple *union* of persons with equal rights (where the president obeys the majority) nor that of an organism (where a single one possesses the power, as the source of life of the organism). Rather, the primate must be seen as the incarnation of the indivisible unity of the Church.²⁷¹

D) The Pope and the Conciliar Life of the Early Church

The Orthodox theologians are keen to show the position and the authority of the bishop of Rome was not incompatible with the conciliar life of the early Church. Historically it is clear that, at least from the time of Damasius, Rome clearly asserted its primacy based on the Petrine succession of her bishop. It was articulated by the papal legates at the Council of Ephesus, when they reminded the Fathers that Peter, established by Christ as the foundation of the Church, continues to exercise his ministry through his successors. It is in his capacity as the successor of Peter that the pope sent legates to the Council. Pope Damasius, in his letter to the council, underlines—quoting 2 *Cor* 11, 29—the duty which behoves on him to have solicitude for all the Churches.

Later, when the Council of Chalcedon was in session, Pope Leo the Great declared that the Apostles received powers from Christ through the intermediary of Peter.²⁷² This idea was later employed by Rome to situate the power of patriarchs in relation to the power of the pope.

During the Third Council of Constantinople, Pope Agatho claimed a decisive role in matters of faith, owing to the fact that the apostolic faith was always preserved in Rome without fail. A century later, during the Second Council of Nicaea, the papal legate declared

²⁶⁹ S. HARKIANAKIS, "Un ministère pétrinien dans l'Eglise," p. 108.

²⁷⁰ "Soulignons ici que cette primauté n'est pas tant celle de l'évêque de telle ou telle église que la primauté de l'église elle-même, une autorité spirituelle spéciale dont elle use parmi les autres églises locales," A. SCHMEMMANN, "La notion de primauté," p. 140.

²⁷¹ Cf. A. SCHMEMMANN, "Patriarche œcuménique," p. 39.

²⁷² Cf. *Sermo* IV, 2. PL 54, 149.

to the assembly that the faith of Rome is a major criterion of faith and hence, communion with Rome is a condition for belonging to the ecclesial communion.²⁷³

Despite this assertiveness in the positions of the Roman Bishops, they were not unaware that the faith they defended was the faith of Peter and the faith of all. It must be also remembered that in the early period the Roman decisions were always synodal decisions. Even while insisting that a council accept their decisions in matters of faith and morals, the early popes were mindful of the respect due to the Council. For instance, it is noteworthy that Pope Celestine, while asking the Council of Ephesus to ratify his decision, did not fail to add that the Council Fathers may accept it if the decision was found useful by all, and ensuring peace to the whole Church.²⁷⁴ The Fathers at Ephesus, on their part, declared that “we have been compelled of necessity both by the canons and by the letter of our most holy father and fellow servant Celestine, bishop of the Church of the Romans.”²⁷⁵ This compulsion is not of course a juridical one, but one of prestige.

A similar attitude is observable in Pope Leo, who despite being convinced of the nullity of the Robber Council, did not proceed to annul it, rather suggested to the Emperor to convoke a new council. Later, in his letter of confirmation of Chalcedon, he calls the Fathers of the council ‘brothers and fellow-bishops’²⁷⁶ Although his legates attributed to him the title of ‘the archbishop of the universal Church’—in Latin, it was rendered as ‘the pope of the universal Church’²⁷⁷— personally he never claimed the right to act as the bishop of each of the particular Churches. Rather, he considers his authority as an essential witness to the Truth, which is ultimately the faith of the Church, first proclaimed by Peter.²⁷⁸ In his view, Rome was a decisive centre of communion. Hence, he asked the bishops who participated in the Robber council—now repentant—to renew their communion with the bishop of Rome, because it is the criterion of catholic communion. Summing up this discussion, O. Clement says:

Rome affirme fortement sa primauté mais ne peut imposer sa prétention à définir seule la vérité, à se poser en critère absolu de la communion. La conscience qu’ont les évêques d’une autorité collégiale est trop forte... Ce qui n’empêche que les légats du pape siègent à la gauche des commissaires de l’empereur, qui président, la

²⁷³ Cf. *Mansi* XII, 1086.

²⁷⁴ Cf. *ACO* I/II, 24. In this sense, W. de Vries is right in hailing this letter of Celestine as a hymn to the collegiality of bishops. Cf. W. DE VRIES, *Orient et Occident. Les structures ecclésiales vues dans l’histoire des sept premiers conciles œcuméniques* (Paris: Cerf, 1974), p. 66, *hereafter cited as* W. DE VRIES, *Orient et Occident*.

²⁷⁵ *ACO* I/I, 2, 54.

²⁷⁶ Ep. 69, *PL* 54, 892.

²⁷⁷ *ACO* II/I, 2, 93. Cf. W. DE VRIES, *Orient et Occident*, p. 127.

²⁷⁸ Ep. 120, *PL* 54, 1046-1047.

gauche définissant alors la place d'honneur. Ce qui n'empêche davantage les acclamations charismatiques qui suivent la réception du Tome de Léon: «Pierre a parlé par la bouche de Léon !» (ACO II/I 2, 81).²⁷⁹

In brief, although the East does not accept the papal primacy claimed and exercised after the Gregorian Reform and the Council of Trent, it is undeniable that the Roman primacy was recognised and exercised during the period of the Ecumenical Councils. And on this point, O. Clement is categorical: “il s'agissait de bien autre chose que d'une simple primauté d'honneur, d'un pape qui serait seulement *primus inter pares*.”²⁸⁰ As a matter of fact, the popes and the councils collaborated.

Les conciles n'ont été œcuméniques que par l'apport [...] des tomes romains par où s'exprimait l'Occident. Sans les conciles ainsi complétés, la règle de foi dont nous vivons n'aurait pu être élaborée. Sans les papes, plus éloignés, donc plus libres du centre califal de l'Empire, l'indépendance de l'Eglise n'aurait pas été préservée.²⁸¹

Each of these instances, taken in isolation, made errors: the papacy failed in Pope Honorius; the emperors multiplied compromises with the Monophysites and later, attempted to impose iconoclasm. The council could not, in the 5th century, prevent the break up of the Church.

4.9. Orthodox Appreciation of the Catholic Doctrine of Collegiality

Contemporary Orthodox theologians have devoted several studies on the doctrines of Vatican II. According to S. Harkianakis, the two doctrinal points of the Council, particularly pleasing to the Orthodox theologians, are its teaching on the collegiality of bishops and its insistence on the importance of local Churches. This is because, as he put it, “Orthodoxy is known first of all as the fatherland of the institution of collegiality and the principle of autocephaly.”²⁸²

4.9.1. Collegiality and Communion of Local Churches

The primitive Church considered the notion of episcopal collegiality as inseparably linked to the notion of the local Church.²⁸³ The ministry of the bishop was always bound up with a local Church. This bond was such that when we talk about the communion of local Churches, it entails also the communion or collegiality of bishops who head them, and *vice versa*. Each

²⁷⁹ O. CLEMENT, “Le pape, le concile et l'empereur au temps des sept conciles œcuméniques,” *Cont*, 41 (1989), p. 281, *hierafter cited as* O. CLEMENT, “Le pape, le concile et l'empereur.”

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 286-287.

²⁸² S. HARKIANAKIS, “The Ecclesiology of Vatican II: An Orthodox Summary,” *Diak(US)* 2 (1967), p. 239, *hierafter cited as* S. HARKIANAKIS, “Ecclesiology of Vatican II.”

²⁸³ “La conception orthodoxe de l'organisation ecclésiastique ne peut être comprise sans que la doctrine de l'épiscopat universel [...] soit toujours confrontée avec la conception primitive de chaque église locale possédant la plénitude de la catholicité,” J. MEYENDORFF, “La Primauté romain dans la tradition canonique,” p. 482.

local Church, fully the Church of God as it was, always tended to enter into a communion relationship with other Churches. This was realised through the communion of bishops, who always had an awareness belonging to an *Ordo*. Owing to this awareness, “ils se concertent pour approuver l’entrée d’un nouveau membre dans leur collège et lui imposer les mains; ils se réunissent en assemblée régulière pour discuter les problèmes communs qui se posent.”²⁸⁴

According to J. Zizioulas, the bishop carries in his person the twofold dimensions of the Church, viz. the local and the universal; the local rootage and the communion reaching out. On the one hand, he is ordained for a specifically identifiable local Church; the name of the Church is mentioned in the prayer of ordination, implying thereby that the local Church is inseparably linked to the bishop. On the other hand, he is ordained by bishops who came from the neighbouring Churches, implying thereby that a local Church alone cannot offer itself a bishop. To receive a new bishop, the local Church in question must be in communion with other local Churches. In his view, it is important to hold together these twofold dimensions of locality and universality. He cannot agree with those²⁸⁵ who, in his opinion, “tend to give priority to the bishop’s place in his own local Church and make this the basis for episcopal collegiality on a broader level.” This tendency, in his view, “although aiming at emphasizing the right point that the bishop should be related to a particular Church, helps perpetuate the false dilemma ‘local versus universal’—a dilemma transcended by the very nature of the Eucharist.”²⁸⁶

He is equally critical of the views expressed by certain of the Catholic theologians, who tend to give priority to the bishop’s attachment to the universal college over his attachment to a particular local Church.²⁸⁷ In his view, “Only through a simultaneity of these two dimensions—a simultaneity inherent in episcopal ordination itself—can we arrive at the proper perspective.”²⁸⁸ This view is shared, on the Catholic side, by Y. Congar²⁸⁹, H.-M. Legrand²⁹⁰ and J.M.R. Tillard.

²⁸⁴ P. L’HUILIER, “Collégialité et primauté,” p. 332.

²⁸⁵ He has in mind especially J. Meyendorff [*Orthodoxie et Catholicité*, p. 147].

²⁸⁶ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Apostolic continuity and Orthodox Theology,” pp. 103-104, n. 112.

²⁸⁷ He has in mind especially A. Gréa (*L’Eglise et sa divine constitution. Préface de Louis Bouyer* (Tournai: Casterman, 1965) [originally published by Société générale de librairie catholique, Paris, 1885¹, 1907²], *hierafter cited as A. GREA, L’Eglise et sa divine constitution*), E. Schillebeeckx (*L’Eglise du Christ et l’homme d’aujourd’hui selon Vatican II*, pp. 99ff.), J. Colson (*Les fonctions ecclésiales aux deux premiers siècles* (Bruges; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1956), p. 341, *hierafter cited J. COLSON, Les fonctions ecclésiales*); K. Rahner (“De l’épiscopat,” in: *Eglises chrétiennes et Episcopat*, 1966, p. 209), etc. H. de Lubac (*Les Eglises particulière dans l’Eglise universelle, suivi de «La Maternité de l’Eglise» et d’une interview recueillie par Gwendoline Jarczyk* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1971), p. 82, *hierafter cited as H. DE LUBAC, Les Eglises particulière dans l’Eglise universelle*) seems to regard question as open.

²⁸⁸ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Apostolic continuity and Orthodox Theology,” pp. 103-104, n. 112.

According to Zizioulas, episcopal collegiality can make sense only “if it is applied to the concept of a communion of local Churches and of bishops, truly and fully catholic and apostolic each in itself, expressing and continuing their unity across space and time through synods and councils of a regional or universal character.”²⁹¹

4.9.2. Relationship between Primacy and Collegiality

Although Harkianakis hailed conciliar teaching on the collegiality and the local Churches as a major step in the right direction, he is highly critical of the way in which these doctrines were elaborated in the Council. In his view, the Second Vatican Council’s elaboration of the relationship between the pope and the bishops, does not amount to a progress at all in comparison to that of the First Vatican Council. He points out especially the formulation of *Lumen Gentium*, according to which, while “the college or body of bishops has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff,” “the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And he is always free to exercise this power.”²⁹² In this context he cannot see in what way “the idea of collegiality of bishops and the representation of local Churches,” as found in Vatican II, represent a progress “since theoretically the pope remains, even according to Vatican II, the absolute monarch of the Church.”²⁹³ For “the bishop of Rome guards categorically for himself his God-given (as is affirmed in the text) rights to act at any moment in history independently and without the bishops”²⁹⁴ It appears to him that Catholics make an essential distinction between the apostolic succession and the Petrine succession. According to this Catholic point of view, there is an essential distinction between the general apostolic succession of the bishops and the particular Petrine succession of the pope. As he put it, the Catholic position “places alongside of, above and outside of the episcopal dignity still another fourth grade of the priesthood, namely, the office of the pope.”²⁹⁵ Although the Catholic Church officially asserts

²⁸⁹ *Ministère et Communion ecclésiastique*. «Théologie sans frontières» (Paris: Cerf, 1971), pp. 123-140, *hierafter cited as* Y. M.-J. CONGAR, *Ministère et Communion ecclésiastique*.

²⁹⁰ “La nature de l’Eglise particulière et le rôle de l’évêque dans l’Eglise,” in: *La charge pastorale des évêques. Décret «Christus Dominus», “UnSa – 74»* (Paris: Cerf, 1969), pp. 103-124, *hierafter cited as* H.-M. LEGRAND, “La nature de l’Eglise particulière.”

²⁹¹ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Institution of Episcopal Conferences,” pp. 379-380.

²⁹² *LG*, 22.

²⁹³ S. HARKIANAKIS, “Ecclesiology of Vatican II,” pp. 240.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 240-41.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 243. This is a point raised also by Professor Gerasimos Konidaris. “In the Roman Church the apostolic succession in regard to the bishops almost disappears before the succession of Peter since the power of the bishops is almost never autonomous, but depends on the bishop of Rome who has the *plenitudo potestatis* (the fullness of jurisdiction),” G. KONIDARIS, “I spoudaioteton peri to politevma tis archeponou ekklesias erevnon kai dia tin oikoumenikin kinisin,” in *Evkharistirion to Didaskalo Hamilkar Alivizatos*, Athens, 1958, p. 196.

that the episcopal rank constitutes the *pleroma* (the fullness) of the sacramental priestly power, it does not seem to take seriously the doctrine that the apostolic succession constitutes the only foundation of the highest spiritual power in the Church. So, on the one hand, the episcopal dignity is affirmed, and on the other, it is almost abolished in its relationship to the pope. It appears that the hieratic character of the pope is not at all equivalent to that of the bishop. For “even according to Vatican II the pope stands above the rank of bishop and above the college of bishops who have [...] any authenticity only if the pope gives it personally or by his approval....” This would imply that the office of bishop and even the gathering of the episcopate in an ecumenical council “is in the absolute power of the Roman Pontiff and such gatherings have no validity without at least his tacit approval.”²⁹⁶ This “would lead us to conclude that an ecumenical council appears superfluous as an organ of the universal Church.”²⁹⁷

4.9.3. Episcopal Conference

A) Episcopal Conference and Collegiality

In one of his recent essays, Zizioulas has furnished an Orthodox appreciation of the Catholic institution of the episcopal college in its relationship to the idea of episcopal collegiality. In his view, the manner in which “the idea was formulated and presented around the time of Vatican II by the Roman Catholic theology gives the impression that what is meant by ‘collegiality’ is a structure of an episcopal body standing above the local Churches and overseeing them with the pope as its head.”²⁹⁸

He notes that although the roots of the episcopal college are traced back to the college of Apostles, clarity is needed as to how one relates the Apostles to the Church. Here two approaches are possible. According to the patristic view, often subscribed to by the Orthodox theology, the Apostles are considered as the foundations of each and every local Church. Hence, each bishop occupies *Cathedra Petri* (Cyprian) and the place of apostolic college is occupied by the *presbyterium* around the local bishop (Ignatius). This view, as is evident, can be possible only in the context of a theology of local Churches.

According to another view, the Apostolic College is considered as the foundation of the Universal Church. Here, the episcopal college, succeeding to the apostolic college, is related primarily to the universal Church. In this perspective, each bishop must be seen only as “part

²⁹⁶ S. HARKIANAKIS, “Ecclesiology of Vatican II,” p. 243. Cf. LG 22.

²⁹⁷ G. KONIDARIS, “I spoudaioteton peri to politevma tis archeponou ekklesias erevnon kai dia tin oikoumenikin kinisin,” in *Evkharistirion to Didaskalo Hamilkar Alivizatos*, Athens, 1958, p. 196.

²⁹⁸ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Institution of Episcopal Conferences,” p. 379.

of this universal college and each local Church is part of the universal Church.”²⁹⁹ Thus, in the framework of the universalist Ecclesiology, the episcopal conference or synod of bishops is seen as a gathering of bishops, where “the bishops meet by virtue of their authority as members of the apostolic or episcopal college in order to dictate to the Churches what to do or to believe.”³⁰⁰

B) Episcopal Conference and Communion of Churches

It is important, in this context to clarify whether or not the episcopal conference is “a convening of bishops or of Churches”³⁰¹ If we were to understand episcopal conference as corresponding to synods of the Orthodox Church³⁰², i.e. as consisting of diocesan bishops only, then “Episcopal conferences must be understood not as meetings of bishops but as meetings of Churches through their bishops.”³⁰³ In other words, the institution of episcopal conferences must be “placed in the context of an ecclesiology of communion of local Churches.”³⁰⁴ According to this Ecclesiology, which is also shared by the Vatican II, the local Church is the basic unit in Ecclesiology. A local Church headed by a bishop is indeed a catholic Church and not simply a ‘part’ of the Church. All supra-diocesan institutions, including the episcopal conference “must respect the fullness and catholicity of each local Church.”³⁰⁵ In other words, “an episcopal conference should not have authority to intervene in the internal affairs of a diocese except in so far as these affairs affect the life of other local Churches in an essential and direct way.”³⁰⁶

4.10. Concluding Remarks

In this discussion on the synodality in the life of the Church according to the Orthodox perspective, we have seen how, according to Schmemmann, synodality belongs to the essential constitution of the Church. His reasoning is based on the Trinitarian rootage of the Church: because Trinity is a council par excellence, the Church, which is constituted after the model of Trinitarian communion (where the *many* are *one* without ceasing to be *many*), must be also conciliar in a constitutional way. While accounting for the origin and development of synodal institutions, the explanation given by Zizioulas concerning the episcopal composition of synods is noteworthy. Here, we see him quite close to Afanasiev. Synods are, according to

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

³⁰² The present-day Orthodox canon law stipulates that only the diocesan bishops can take part in synods.

³⁰³ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, “Institution of Episcopal Conferences,” p. 377.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

both, communion of Churches or better instruments of the communion of Churches. That is why a uniquely episcopal composition of the synod is called for, for only bishops can embody and incarnate their respective local Churches.

As far as the subject of our research is concerned, Zizioulas' view—that the theological function of synodical institution consists in maintaining the balance between the local Church and the Church Catholic spread out in the whole world—is of crucial importance. Here two realities need to be held in healthy balance: a) integrity and catholicity of the local Church, b) unity and communion of Churches as realised by synodal institutions. First, synodal institutions must not be endangered by exaggerated views on the autonomy and independence of local Churches. The synodal institutions, on their part, must help emerge the unity of various local Churches as a *symphony* of diverse ways of living the same faith. It is in this way, Zizioulas explains the origin and development of autocephalous Churches of the Orthodoxy. Their identity and particular physiognomy are the result of the reception into the Body of Christ of diverse cultures and sensibilities. When Zizioulas remarks that a *prôtos* (a metropolitan or a patriarch) owes his position and authority to his being the bishop of a local Church, he is close not only to Afanasiev but also to many of the contemporary Catholic theologians like J.-M. R. Tillard, Y. Congar, H.-M. Legrand, W. Kasper, J. A. Komonchak, etc. On the basis of this principle, these Catholic theologians explain the ministry of the pope in the communion of Churches.³⁰⁷

Another interesting feature of the theology of synodality of the contemporary Orthodox theologians is their openness to a tripartite structure of the ecclesiastical organization consisting of local, regional and universal levels. In the present context, with autocephalous Churches living their autonomous and independent life, the Orthodoxy lacks a universal level of ecclesial organization. As we have seen, Meyendorff regrets that the Orthodoxy lacks a scheme, which can realise and manifest the unity and *koinonia* of the world episcopate. Zizioulas is convinced that in the event of reunion with the Catholic Church, the question of the universal synodality headed by a universal primate must be envisaged, for, according to him, no communion of local Churches is possible without some form of universal synodality and no universal synodality is possible without some form of universal primacy.

When it comes to the status and role of the Church of Rome (and its bishop), the views of Afanasiev and other theologians converge. They all accept the particular place and, therefore, authority of the Roman Church in the communion of Churches. But they make a distinction:

³⁰⁷ For details, see our discussion in chapters five and six.

the communion with the see of Rome is not constitutive of the ecclesiality of a Christian community; it has to do rather with the *bene esse* of the Church. On this point, as we will see later, the Catholic view is divided. According to some, hierarchical communion with the bishop of Rome and other members of the college of bishops is constitutive of the episcopal ministry, hence of the ecclesiality of the episcopal Church. According to others, this hierarchical communion is only a condition; it does not affect the ontology either of the episcopal ministry or of the Churches embodied by the bishops.

In order to understand the Orthodox view on episcopal collegiality, we must approach it in the context of the relationship between the bishop and his Church. According to them, it is as the head of the local Church and as its embodiment that a bishop can engage in supra-local synodal activities. All the Orthodox theologians we have seen, including Afanasiev, are appreciative of the doctrine of episcopal collegiality, because it is part of the synodal structure of the Church. But they are not very enthusiastic about the doctrine of collegiality developed by Vatican II, because—as Afanasiev points out—instead of creating an equilibrium between the episcopate and primacy, it has resulted only in an unstable equilibrium which swings more in favour of the pope. The reason, according to the Orthodox perspective, is the failure to articulate the relationship between bishops and local churches. According to Zizioulas, only in the context of this articulation can we recognise the theological status of an episcopal conference. It is not simply an assembly of the bishops of a particular region; it is above all a meeting of the local Churches of a region through their bishops.

There is no conflict between the bishop's role as the head of a local Church and his activity in the supra-local level as a member of the episcopal college or, in other words, between his local rootage and his universal reaching out. Zizioulas is against making a choice between the two. According to him, the bishop's place as the head of a local Church and his membership in the universal episcopal college must be held together in a healthy balance. As we will discover later, converging views may be found in many of the contemporary catholic ecclesiologists too.

5. Conclusion

The main purpose of this chapter was to situate the Afanasievan theology of the local Church in the context of the ecclesiology of a selection of contemporary Orthodox theologians. In the course of our discussion, we have already given contextual remarks on the points of convergence and difference between Afanasiev and his fellow Orthodox

theologians. What remains to be done is to draw the perspectives for our exploration in the following chapters.

The two preceding chapters, devoted to the Orthodox ecclesiology, pivot on two axes, viz. the local Church and the synodality of local Churches. These axes are present not only in Afanasiev but also in the Orthodox theologians we have discussed. Their difference comes from their difference of emphasis. Afanasiev gives greater accent on the local Church in opposition to the universal Church. For him, a local Church which he identifies with a eucharistic assembly, is fully the Church of God. This fullness comes from the fullness of Christ who is fully and wholly present in every eucharistic celebration. This is the reason for the fundamental equality of local Churches. Because the Church of God in Christ is fully present in every eucharistic assembly, it can be also said that every local Church is present there, because the Church of God is always identical to itself. This is the basis for synodality in Afanasiev. However, in his system, synodality or communion does not seem to be constitutive of the ecclesial fullness of a local Church. But that is not the case in Schmemmann or Zizioulas, for instance. According to them—as we have seen in the ‘concluding remarks’ above—isolated from the other Churches, no Church can be what it is, namely the Church of God realised in a particular place and time.

Quite like Afanasiev, these theologians also insist on the inseparable relationship between *sedes* and *sedens*. It is an area in which the Catholic ecclesiology needs to make further progress. It has the potential, especially in the ecumenical field, to explain the role of the bishop of Rome in the universal Church based on the special place of the Church of which he is the bishop. But unfortunately, Vatican II has not given serious consideration to the see of Rome which is the concrete foundation of the papal primacy.

The relationship between the college of bishops and the local Churches entrusted to each of them is also a principle particularly emphasized by the Oriental Ecclesiology. Here too, particularly in the context of a rapprochement with the Orthodox Churches, concrete steps must be taken on the Catholic side to articulate the relationship between the local bishop and his Church in the context of episcopal collegiality. As E. Lanne³⁰⁸ has said, a kind of disincarnated conception of episcopal college is quite unintelligible to the East, as though this college would be poised above the communion of Churches and independent of them. The college is not made up of isolated bishops but of bishops who are pastors of their proper Churches.

³⁰⁸ Cf. E. LANNE, “Papauté et division de l’Eglise,” p. 56-57.

The Orthodoxy is not averse to the primatial role of the Roman Church and its bishop; what it insists on is that it must be exercised in the context of synodality. It presupposes that Rome considers other Churches as sister-Churches. For this we must develop an Ecclesiology and an ecclesial life which is rooted more in communion than in the power of jurisdiction. This, in consequence, implies the real autonomy of orthodox Churches and the continuation of the oriental tradition which goes back to the Apostles and the Fathers. In other words, we must recognise their ecclesiality in their historical becoming.

PART TWO:

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LOCAL
CHURCH AND THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL
ACCORDING TO
THE CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE**

CHAPTER FOUR:

J.-M. R. TILLARD: MAN AND MISSION

1. Childhood and Formation

Roger Tillard¹ was born on the 2nd September 1927 on the French island of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon that lies between Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. He was the son of Fernand Tillard and Madeleine Ferron,² who also had a daughter, Christiane, six years younger to Roger.

At the successful completion of the elementary education in his native island, his teachers—impressed by the talents of the young boy—suggested that he should continue his studies.³ It was at *Collège Saint-Christophe* (run by the Spiritan Fathers) on the Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon that Roger Tillard started his secondary education. He could not complete his studies there as the outbreak of the Second World War interrupted the activities of the college. But the resolute young man, unwilling to be discouraged by this unpleasant surprise, started for Canada in a small coal ship. There, in a small town called Limbourg (close to Ottawa), he resumed his studies in *Collège Saint-Alexandre*.

It was in this college, particularly owing to the influence of such professors as Aloys Gutzwiller and Paul Gay, that he was introduced into the world of culture and was actively involved in extra-academic cultural activities. As his one time professor and later colleague, Father Gilles-Dominique Mailhiot, remembers: “Le jeune collégien dévore la littérature

¹ Roger was his name as a child. Later he added *Jean-Marie* to his name as a token of his friendship to Jean-Marie Bédard whom he met at *Collège Saint-Alexandre* (see below). “Dans sa classe se trouvait un élève nommé Jean-Marie Bédard, d’Ottawa, qui se lia d’amitié avec Roger. Comme Roger était seul et étranger, il fut pratiquement adopté par la famille Bédard, fidèle en rejets. Un de plus, un de moins, qu’était-ce autrefois dans les familles nombreuses? Pour sceller cette amitié - cette fraternité d’adoption - Roger accolera toujours le prénom de Jean-Marie à son propre nom. Il sera pour toujours le *frère Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, de l’Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs,*” From an interview with Père Paul Gay, c.s.sp, his professor of Rhetoric, as cited by G.-D. MAILHIOT, *Nécrologie: F. Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, o.p. (1927–2000)*, le 13 novembre 2001 at: http://www.collegedominicain.com/pdf/necrologie_jmt.pdf (as on 01.02.2004), *hereafter cited as* G.-D. MAILHIOT, *Nécrologie*.

² She was related to Mgr Auguste Diès, who edited Plato in the collection Guillaume-Budé. Mgr Louis Duchesne was also a family friend.

³ According to the reminiscences of his sister Christine, “A 16 ans il passait son Brevet Élémentaire avec succès et c’est alors que les examinateurs avaient dit: «Il faut que ce garçon continue ses études»,” Cf. G.-D. MAILHIOT, *Nécrologie*.

nouvelle et, pour gagner quelque argent, écrit des discours, que prononceront dans des réunions littéraires certains personnages réputés intellectuels.”⁴

After passing his baccalaureate⁵ in 1948, he returned to his native island. During this stay there he taught for a year in a girl’s school (where his sister Christine also studied). This teaching stint gave him sufficient time to reflect on his vocation. A year later, he returned to Canada and before long entered the Canadian province of the Order of Preachers. He started his novitiate on the 14th September 1949, along with Camille Bouvier, Bernard Trépanier, Yvon Veilleux and André Saint-Jacques, and took the simple profession on 15 September 1950.

His philosophical studies got started at the Dominican College of Ottawa (1950-1952), and completed in the St Thomas Aquinas University (*Angelicum*) Rome (1952-1953), where he defended a thesis on the theme: *Le bonheur selon la conception de saint Thomas d’Aquin*.⁶

After the solemn profession, which he took on the 15th September 1953, his superiors sent him to France to do his theological studies at the *Studium* of the French Dominicans, *Le Saulchoir*, from where he obtained the *Licence et lectorat en théologie* in 1957.⁷ The professors⁸ of the *Saulchoir* were greatly influential in the theological formation of Tillard. They applied historical method to the study of the sources. They explained to their students how St Thomas made use of the sources of theology, namely the Bible and the Fathers. The theological training one received at the *Saulchoir* was one that was situated in its context, viz. the living faith of the believing community. This was a source of great inspiration for Roger Tillard throughout his career as a theologian and professor. His milieu of reflection always used to be his monastery, where the solemn celebration of the liturgy, the atmosphere of prayer and contemplation and fraternal sharing always nourished his theologising.

The *Saulchoir* professors were also keen to open the minds of their students to various philosophical currents of the time. It is not without reason that his classmates at the *Saulchoir* such as Jacques Pohier⁹, Claude Geffré¹⁰, Bernard-Dominique Dupuy¹¹, Albert Besnard¹², Liam Walsh¹³ excel in such varied fields.

⁴ G.-D. MAILHIOT, “Le professeur,” in: G.R. EVANS and M. GOURGUES, (eds), *Communion et réunion: Mélanges Jean-Marie Roger Tillard*, p. 21, hereafter cited as G.-D. MAILHIOT, “Le professeur.”

⁵ Baccalauréat è Arts (B. A.)

⁶ It was published in Ottawa in 1953. Cf. G.-D. MAILHIOT, *Nécrologie*.

⁷ It was during his theological formation that he was ordained a priest (3rd July 1955).

⁸ They include Hyacinthe Dondaine, Jean Tonneau, Marie-Dominique Chenu, Yves CONGAR, Jerome Hamer, etc.

⁹ “Jacques Pohier s’attacherait à retenir de la psychologie ce qu’elle disait de l’être humain et à mettre ses vues en rapport avec l’approche chrétienne de Dieu, en suggérant des purifications nécessaires d’attitudes qui tendent à simplifier l’inexprimable,” G.-D. MAILHIOT, “Le professeur,” p. 23.

2. Professor of Theology

Back in Ottawa in 1957, he was assigned to teach dogmatic theology (Trinity, Christology and sacramental Theology) at *his alma mater*, a duty he faithfully discharged until his death.

His service as a guest professor was solicited by several other faculties and universities. Already in 1957, he was approached by the Theological Faculty of *Université Laval*, requesting his service as a professor. Before long he started teaching in the Department of Religious Sciences of the University of Ottawa. Two other theological faculties in Canada would later benefit from his lecturing namely, *Institut de pastorale des dominicains* at Montreal and *Sedes Sapientiae* (which would later become St Paul University).

In Europe, the International Centre *Lumen Vitae* at Bruxelles was honoured by his teaching stint between 1966 and 1980. Similarly, students of St. John's College, Nottingham (1978-1985), St. Stephen's House at Oxford (1969) and Lincoln College (1970) at Lincoln—all in the UK—would benefit from his mastery of theological and ecumenical subjects. In Switzerland, he taught at the *Faculté de théologie, Université de Fribourg* from 1981 onwards. In 1998, he was invited to teach at the Orthodox Ecumenical Institute of Chambesy, Geneva. He also found time to teach in the theological centres in Salamanca, Madrid and Barcelona.

Those of us who had the chance to attend his lectures will always remember him as a man on fire. He radiated enthusiasm and life and those who listened to his lectures would not miss to sense it. Unlike his books and articles, which—with their abundance of notes—have an air of seriousness, his lectures were full of examples and useful anecdotes to drive home the meaning of the points he was explaining. As one of his students and later, colleagues remembers,

¹⁰ “Claude Geffré poursuivrait une réflexion sur la vie de foi, l’herméneutique et le dialogue avec les grandes religions,” *ibid*.

¹¹ “Bernard-Dominique Dupuy apporterait une contribution importante à l’œcuménisme et au dialogue avec le judaïsme, cherchant à mettre en valeur les racines communes,” *ibid*.

¹² “Albert Besnard proposerait à un large public, dans ses livres et dans *La Vie Spirituelle*, une réflexion sur la croissance de la foi au quotidien, en particulier sur la vie de prière,” *ibid*.

¹³ Besides being professor in various universities, including the *Université de Fribourg*, he was actively involved—along with J.-M. R. Tillard—in the ARCIC. Cf. L WALSH, “ARCIC — Jean-Marie et la communion anglicane,” *Jean-Marie R. Tillard o.p. – un théologien au service de l’œcuménisme*. Conférence du Colloque à l’Université de Fribourg, vendredi, 19 janvier 2001, «Repère œcuménique-5» (Fribourg: Institut d’études œcuméniques de l’Université de Fribourg, 2001), pp. 35-46.

A l'écoute de la recherche philosophique, des avancées en sciences humaines, muni d'antennes pour capter le meilleur de la production littéraire et artistique, c'est avec toute cette ouverture que Tillard revient sans cesse aux sources de la foi chrétienne et poursuit sa réflexion théologique.¹⁴

3. Illness and Death

The cancer to which he would fall victim was detected and diagnosed by his doctors in October 1999. Initially they prescribed him a chemo-therapy, which he had to undergo once in two weeks. But still he continued his activity as professor, theologian and ecumenist.

En 1999, il a enseigné le traité de l'eucharistie et surtout deux cours du samedi : « Souviens-toi », en octobre et novembre 1999, puis, en mars-avril 2000, « Transmets ce que tu as reçu ». A l'automne 2000, il avait commencé à donner son cours de christologie, qu'il dut interrompre pour entrer à l'hôpital, le 28 septembre. Ainsi, il ne put donner le cours « Une tragique querelle de famille : orthodoxes et catholiques », qu'il devait offrir le samedi en octobre et novembre 2000. Il avait demandé, à ses médecins d'interrompre ses traitements de chimio-thérapie pour qu'il puisse participer, à Toronto, le 14 mai et les jours suivants, à la réunion annuelle entre Anglicans et Catholiques (ARCIC), où il devait donner la conférence inaugurale.¹⁵

By September, the virulence of the cancer rendered chemo-therapy ineffective. On the 28th September 2000, he was admitted to the Ottawa General Hospital. Soon, at the advice of his doctors, his left leg was amputated. After passing a couple of weeks in this hospital, he was transferred to a rehabilitation centre by the middle of October. Before long, as his condition worsened with the cancer affecting his bones and lungs, he was moved to the Élisabeth-Bruyère Centre for Palliative Care on the 8th November. And a few days later—having received the sacrament of the sick from his Prior, Father Yvon-D. Gélinas—he left for his eternal abode on the 13th November 2000 at 2.15 a.m. His funeral took place on the 18th November at 10.30 a.m. in the midst of condolence messages arrived from the world over.¹⁶ In the weeks that followed his unexpected death¹⁷ several personalities and reviews rendered him homage.¹⁸

¹⁴ L. CAZA, “Le théologien: fougueux frère de Dominique et de Thomas d’Aquin, héraut infatigable de «l’appel sauvage des grands espaces»,” in *Communion et réunion*, p. 32, hereafter cited as L. CAZA, “Le théologien.”

¹⁵ G.-D. MAILHIOT, *Nécrologie*, p. 48.

¹⁶ Cf. G.-D. MAILHIOT, *Nécrologie*, pp. 51ff.

¹⁷ When he was seriously ill, Father Timothy Radcliffe, the Master General of his Order wrote to him: il “Il est difficile de t’imaginer malade. Depuis notre première rencontre (...), tous les souvenirs que j’ai de toi débordent de vie. Puisse le Seigneur te donner la force et la paix,” G.-D. MAILHIOT, *Nécrologie*, p. 49.

¹⁸ “Fr. Tillard was an ecumenical ‘giant’,” *The Catholic Register*, 20 November 2000; *Jean-Marie Roger Tillard OP (1927-2000), apôtre de l’oecuménisme dans l’Eglise d’après Vatican II communiqué publié lors du décès du père Tillard (14 novembre 2000)*, at: http://www.collegedominicain.com/profs/jmtillard/jmt_2000f.htm (as on 01.02.2004); “In Memoriam,” *La Maison-Dieu*, 225 (2001); “Jean-Marie Tillard, O.P.,” *Catholic Insight*, 25 (2001); “Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, o.p. (1927-2000),” *Unité des chrétiens*, no 121 (janvier 2001); “Un domenicano tutto per l’ecumene che invita a lavorare per tutta l’ecumene,” *Koinonia (Pistoia)*, no 240 (2001); R. BEAUPERE, “Hommage au fr. Jean-Marie Tillard,” *Prêcheurs*, No 34 (2001); ID “Le Père Jean-Marie Tillard,”

4. Theologian

In his contribution to the *Mélanges* offered to Father Tillard—Dominican, professor, theologian and ecumenist— Timothy Radcliff, the former Master General of his Order, wrote:

Fr. Tillard has been remarkably involved in the renewal of our vision of the Church as a paschal mystery of communion. His outstanding contributions in the fields of ecclesiology and of religious life, by their careful listening to the patristic tradition and the Scriptures and their sensitive attentiveness to the main issues of our time, have given to this vision a solid foundation. They give us an inspiring example of a theology grounded in the living traditions and able to face the challenges of today, a theology that builds between memory and the future.¹⁹

He characterised him as a courageous theologian who treated issues at hand “with great care and boldness, in a way that is sensitive to the requirements of the local and the universal, of unity and plurality.”²⁰ What is remarkable about Tillard is his capacity—while being “sensitive to the uniqueness of the diverse realities, from the charism of religious life to the gift of the different ecclesial traditions”—“to connect them to one another, in a relatedness, a communion, that may enable people to live and to faith together, aware of their gifts and respectful of others.”²¹

According to G.-D. Mailhiot “Tillard a laissé la vie de l’Eglise modeler son ministère, la servant selon ses besoins, reconnaissant tout ce qu’il y a de positif souvent à des endroits inattendus, écoutant les questions soulevées, les faisant siennes, les portant dans sa réflexion et sa prière.”²² As a theologian, he drew greatly from the reservoir of the Patristic writings.²³

Chrétiens en marche, no 69 (janvier-mars 2001); E. BONNETTE, “A la mémoire d’un grand oecuméniste,” *Revue Sainte-Anne*, 129 (mai 2001). Y.-D. GELINAS, *Homélie prononcée lors des funérailles de J.-M.R. Tillard, le 18 novembre 2000*, at: <http://www.collegedominicain.com/profs/jmtillard/homelie.htm> (as on 01.02.2004); Mgr M. GERVAIS, Marcel, *Allocution lors des funérailles du révérend père Jean-Marie Tillard, o.p. Eglise Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Ottawa, le 18 novembre 2000*, at: <http://www.collegedominicain.com/profs/jmtillard/allocution.htm> (as on 01.02.2004); M. GOURGUES, *Éloge funèbre du Père Tillard, Témoignage prononcé lors des funérailles du P. Tillard en l’église Saint-Jean-Baptiste d’Ottawa, le 17 novembre 2000* at: <http://www.collegedominicain.com/profs/jmtillard/eloge.htm> (as on 01.02.2004); ID., “Le ‘nonobstant’ d’un croyant lucide,” *Le Devoir*, 24-25 mars 2001; ID., “...comme on aime d’amour une personne,” *La Vie Spirituelle*, no 738 (mars 2001 [also in *EglCan*, 34 (janvier 2001)]; N. LOSSKY, “J.-M.-R. Tillard, op,” *Contacts*, 53 (2001) 194, 98-106; G.-D. MAILHIOT, Gilles-Dominique, *Nécrologie: F. Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, o.p. (1927–2000)*, Le 13 novembre 2001 at: http://www.collegedominicain.com/pdf/necrologie_jmt.pdf (as on 01.02.2004); ID., “Hommage au frère Jean-Marie Roger Tillard O.P.,” *Sources*, 27 (mai-juin 2001); F. STRAZZARI, “Il credente testardo,” *Il Regno – Attualità*, 22 (2000); M. TANNER, “In memoriam : Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, O.P. (1927-2000),” *One in Christ*, 6 (2000); H. TINCQ, “Jean-Marie Tillard, un théologien oecuméniste, fils spirituel du Père, Congar,” *Le Monde*, 15 novembre 2000. L. WALSH, “Jean Tillard Remembered : 1927-2000,” *Religious Life Review*, 40 (2001) 206, 29-30.

¹⁹ T. RADCLIFF, “A passion for Communion,” in: G.R. EVANS and M. GOURGUES, (eds), *Communion et réunion: Mélanges Jean-Marie Roger Tillard*, «BETL-121» (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), p. 3, hereafter cited as T. RADCLIFF, “A passion for Communion.”

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² G.-D. MAILHIOT, “Le professeur,” p. 26.

²³ “Pour Tillard, c’est devenu une seconde nature que de situer sa pensée dans un dialogue constant avec l’ensemble du message biblique avec les frères et sœurs qui, tout au long de l’histoire de l’Eglise, ont aussi

Ever since his first major work,²⁴ he had always been keen to show that the witness of the Fathers attests to the fact that the Eucharist and the Church are intimately connected.

Alongside his hectic career as a theologian in several centres of theological study, his services were solicited in various research groups and theological consultations. Already as a young theologian, his service as a consultant was made use of by the Canadian episcopate during the sessions of the Second Vatican Council. His contribution to the preparatory discussion on the decree on religious life is worth mentioning. His short articles in *Le Devoir* between 10.09.1965 and 08.12.1965, communicating his impressions of the Council, reveal the enthusiasm with which he lived the greatest ecclesial event of the 20th century.²⁵ He would later give a retrospective evaluation of this period in a lecture on the theme, “L’*épiscopat canadien francophone au Concile*,” given at the *Université Laval* in 1997.

After the Council, in September 1968, he became one of the initiators of the so called *samedis théologiques*, a course given at the Dominican College, Ottawa in which some 200 to 250 people participated, for the most part, the religious men and women, pastors and enlightened laity. From 1969 onwards, with the arrival of younger professors, Tillard chose to concentrate his research on two sectors of dogmatics: Christology and the Treatise on the Eucharist.

réfléchi à la foi. Parmi ces frères, il faut reconnaître qu’il a accordé une attention très grande à ceux qu’on appelle les Pères de l’Eglise,” L. CAZA, “Le théologien,” p. 33. Cf. J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Eglise d’Eglises. L’*ecclésiologie de communion**. Coll. «*Cogitatio Fidei* – 143» (Paris: Cerf, 1987) [hereafter cited as J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Eglise d’Eglises*] and ID, *Chair de l’Eglise, chair du Christ. Chair de l’Eglise, chair du Christ. Aux sources de l’*ecclésiologie de communion**, «*Cogitatio Fidei* – 168» (Paris: Cerf, 1992) [hereafter cited as J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Chair de l’Eglise*]

²⁴ *L’Eucharistie, Pâques de l’Eglise*, «*UnSa*– 44» (Paris: Cerf, 1964), hereafter cited as J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Eucharistie, Pâques de l’Eglise*.

²⁵ Entre deux sessions conciliaires (10.09.65); Lorsque le Concile se remet en branle (11.09.65); La création du synode d’évêques rend sa véritable place à l’*épiscopat* et place l’Eglise au cœur des problèmes (21.09.65); Les derniers débats avant l’adoption du schéma sur la liberté de religion (22.09.65); La liberté religieuse: les enjeux du débat (27.09.65); Premières discussions sur le schéma 13: personne ne semble vraiment satisfait (02.10.65); Quand la discussion conciliaire rappelle la tour de Babel (05.10.65); Le Concile reprend l’étude des problèmes du mariage (06.10.65); L’Eglise a-t-elle le droit de se poser à elle-même des questions? (09.10.65); Le mariage n’est pas uniquement moyen de procréation (12.10.65); L’agonie du schéma treize: un dernier sursaut de vie (14.10.65); Le débat sur le sens de l’action missionnaire complète la discussion sur la liberté de religion (15.10.65); Les laïcs chrétiens et l’action missionnaire de l’Eglise, aujourd’hui (19.10.65); Le prêtre d’aujourd’hui est amené à s’interroger sur sa place dans l’Eglise et dans le monde (21.10.65); Bilan provisoire de la 4^e session I. Une certaine lassitude et des défauts de procédure expliquent la baisse d’intérêt des Pères (25.10.65); Bilan provisoire de la 4^e session II. Approfondissement doctrinal et cristallisation autour de thèmes majeurs: un apport indiscutable (26.10.65); Les fruits du Concile. Le décret sur l’*apostolat des laïcs* marque une très importante étape pour l’avenir de l’Eglise (23.11.65); L’allocution de Paul VI déclare les lendemains du Concile et définit l’*espérance de l’Eglise* (24.11.65); Le décret sur l’*activité missionnaire de l’Eglise* équivaut, en fin de concile, à une charte de la véritable catholicité (01.12.65); Le décret sur le ministère et la vie des prêtres confirme la vocation unique et la dimension du sacerdoce (02.12.65); Le schéma treize: une entreprise difficile, mais la preuve de l’ouverture de l’Eglise aux problèmes du monde (07.12.65); Trois années de réflexion et de grâces. Le Concile aura vraiment été pour l’Eglise un grand élan par le passage de l’*Esprit de Dieu* (08.12.65).

The main objective of Tillard, the theologian, was to share a vision. As Sr. Lorraine Caza has noted, “la grâce de Tillard à laquelle je lui sais gré de rester fidèle, c’est d’offrir la ligne d’horizon.”²⁶ He always tried to avoid partial answers. That is why, for instance, while treating the question of ministry in the Church, he connects it with the community in which it is to be exercised, or while analysing the thorny problem of papacy, he situates it within the ecclesial reality, namely *the Church of Churches*.²⁷

4.1. The Eucharist: the Key to the Theology of Tillard

The Eucharist was at the heart of Tillard’s theological reflection. His interest in the Eucharist was manifested first through a series of articles and later through, *L’Eucharistie, Pâque de l’Eglise* (1964). Whether he reflected on religious life—as he did at the start of his career—or on the Church or on the question of the unity of Christians and their Churches, the Eucharist was there “comme une étoile guidant l’ensemble de sa réflexion théologique.”²⁸ The starting point of his reflection on the Eucharist was the Last Supper. By a profound examination of the Scriptures and the Tradition he shows how the sacrifice of the Lord is a memorial of salvation, the sign of the unique and supreme character of the Christ mediator and the instrument through which the believer obtains communion to the obeying death and access to the life of the Saviour. Tillard considered the celebration of the Eucharist as the foundation ecclesiology. For him, as he insisted in his *L’Eucharistie, Pâques de l’Eglise*, the Eucharist is the sacramental *locus* of the qualitative growth, incessant resourcing and march *en avant* of the ecclesial Body of Christ.²⁹

4.1.1. Religious life in the light of the Eucharist

Father Tillard, who wrote a lot on religious life and contributed greatly to the renewal of religious life worldwide, always fixed its axis in the Eucharist. He wrote in 1974, in a work which has been translated into several languages, that a religious community is basically a eucharistic community.³⁰ For him, the Lord’s Supper is the feast of ecclesial fraternity “que soudent le pain et la coupe de la réconciliation, la célébration de la création nouvelle dans la puissance et le souvenir de la Croix.”³¹ At the heart of the religious life is the working of the power of God, opening man to the true dimensions of communion with God and man, and the

²⁶ L. CAZA, “Le théologien,” p. 37.

²⁷ Cf. J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 399f.

²⁸ L. CAZA, “Le théologien,” p. 32.

²⁹ Cf. J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Eucharistie, Pâques de l’Eglise*, p. 241.

³⁰ Cf. ID, *Devant Dieu et pour le monde: le projet des religieux*, «Cogitatio Fidei – 75» (Paris: Cerf, 1974), pp. 197-279, hereafter cited as J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Devant Dieu et pour le monde*.

³¹ *Ibid.* pp. 272ff.

Eucharist is mysteriously bound up with this divine action. Hence, concludes Tillard, the religious life is centred on an act of faith in the risen Lord who welds together every member of his Body with the Father and the brethren. And this takes place at the eucharistic celebration. So while celebrating the Eucharist, a religious community is celebrating its own mystery.³²

4.1.2. Ecclesiology in the light of the Eucharist

Tillard's 1987 work, *Eglise d'Eglises. L'ecclésiologie de communion*, represents the cream of his ecclesiological reflection. Here he invites his readers to look at the Church, firstly, in the larger background of the plan of God which he characterises as the *Gospel of God* and has for objective the realisation of *communion*, secondly, as 'People of God in communion' and only thirdly, to consider the exercise of the service of communion within the *Church-communion*. In all stages of his reflection on the ecclesiology of communion, the eucharistic synaxis occupies the central place.

Exposing the idea of Church as the realisation of the *mysterion* of God, he adds: "devenir par l'Esprit au baptême membre du Corps du Christ et s'identifier à celui-ci par l'eucharistie, c'est entrer dans le dynamisme d'une réconciliation qui veut sans cesse s'actualiser, gagner le monde entier."³³ In order to explain the relationship between the Church and the Kingdom, Tillard again returns to the eucharistic celebration. According to him, the Church is pierced by the Kingdom at the eucharistic celebration:

La communauté est, à la synaxe, l'Eglise entre le *déjà* et le pas encore: le *koinônia* de pauvres pécheurs habités par l'Esprit, saisis dans la puissance du Corps et du Sang du Seigneur qui les rassemble en lui, communiant dans une unique louange du Père avec les autres communautés dispersées de par le monde mais aussi [...] avec les patriarches, les saints et même les anges que l'Apocalypse met en scène. Alors, le Royaume est là, quoique encore dans la lourdeur de l'histoire.³⁴

While considering the dynamism of the Church as *People of God in communion*, he insists on the necessary relationship of the Church with the old people of God, Israel, which according to him, is manifested in the eucharistic celebration. Gathered in eucharistic synaxis as a People of God desired by God, the Church takes up on her lips the cry of Israel for the coming of the Messiah.³⁵

For explaining the process of reception, which should characterise a healthy ecclesial life, the best analogy, according to him, is the relationship existing between the eucharistic

³² Cf. *ibid.* p. 273f.

³³ ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 70.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 135.

president and the members of the assembly. For him, eucharistic synaxis is the *locus* par excellence of the confession of faith of a community in a given place. When it celebrates the Eucharist, it proclaims to the world and for the world the salvific action undertaken by God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁶

Later, in the context of examining the communal structure of the ministry of communion, he says, “Il y aura ministère de *communio* et communion de ministères.”³⁷ The ministers in the Church are in view of the exercise of the priestly function of the People of God. In Tillard’s vision, ministry is also centred on eucharistic celebration, and this with reason: the synaxis is “l’acte central de la communauté comme telle.” In this act not only are the people of God joined in communion but also their diverse charisms, functions and ministries. The minister, who on a daily basis presides over the unity and charity of a community, also comes to preside over the central act of the community, namely the eucharistic synaxis.

5. Ecumenist

Father Tillard’s involvement in the field of ecumenism has helped “the search for Christian unity to make real steps towards communion. Despite the difficulties and the complexities of the issues, he kept hope and sustained others in their journey.”³⁸ His interest in ecumenical questions should have been awakened by his ecumenically minded professors such as Y. Congar, Jerome Hamer, M.-D. Chenu, etc. Later, during the sessions of Vatican II he had occasions to meet and discuss with Anglican, Orthodox and Reformed theologians who came as observers at the Council. This initial encounter would develop into a life-long friendship and ecumenical collaboration. Among the various activities he undertook as an ecumenist, we may take note of the following:

- ◆ He was one of the first official catholic ‘observers’ to the Uppsala Assembly of the WCC, where he collaborated with John Meyendorff and John Zizioulas in the preparation of the text on worship.³⁹
- ◆ From 1969 onwards, he was a member of the ARCIC (Rome-London)
- ◆ In the same year, he became the consultant of the Secretariat for Christian Unity (Rome).
- ◆ From 1975⁴⁰ onwards he was a member of *Faith and Order* Commission, of which he became one of the four Vice-Presidents from 1977, a post he held till his death. In this

³⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 211.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

³⁸ T. RADCLIFF, “A passion for Communion,” p. 3.

³⁹ Cf. J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Le document d’Uppsala sur le culte,” *NRT*, 90 (1968), 812-833, *hereafter cited as* J.-M.R. TILLARD, “Document d’Uppsala.”

capacity, he made major contributions to the preparation of such documents as *Unity of the Church and Renewal of Human Community*, *Confessing Common Faith: Ecumenical Clarification of Apostolic Faith*, *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*.

- ◆ In 1977, he was invited to become a member of The International Commission for the Dialog with the Disciples of Christ (Rome- Indianapolis).
- ◆ In 1979, he also became a member of the International Commission for the union between Orthodox Churches and Roman Catholic Church (Rome-Constantinople), created jointly in the same year by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Dimitrios I of Constantinople.⁴¹
- ◆ In 1980, he was chosen as a member of *Institut Paolo VI* (Rome) for the research on Vatican II.
- ◆ Between 1981 and 1985, he was a member of the director board of the Ecumenical Institute of Tantur (Jerusalem).
- ◆ From 1986 onwards, he was also associated with *Association Jacques-Maritain*, Paris-Ottawa.

6. Publications

Jean-Marie Roger Tillard was a dogmatician by formation and taste. A survey of his prolific career as a writer reveals that his *oeuvre théologique* is anchored on two major areas of theology: religious life and ecclesiology. If religious life received more attention during the period between 1957 and 1975, during the period that followed it was ecclesiology with special sensitiveness to ecumenical questions that received his special attention. Principal among his works include the following:⁴²

6.1. On Religious Life

- ◆ *La vie religieuse dans le mystère de l'Eglise*:⁴³ Father Tillard concludes this study by saying that “la vie religieuse n’a de sens et de réalité que par référence au mystère de l’Eglise.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ That is, when the commission was renewed in its composition and direction after the WCC Assembly of Nairobi.

⁴¹ The first meeting of this commission was held on the Islands of Patmos and Rhodes between 29 May and 4 June 1980.

⁴² For the complete listing of all his publications, including scientific articles published in various reviews, see the Bibliography of Father Tillard, furnished at the end of this work.

⁴³ Leçon inaugurale au Collège dominicain, Ottawa, septembre 1961.

⁴⁴ Cf. G.-D. MAILHIOT, *Nécrologie*, p. 16.

- ◆ *En Alliance avec Dieu*:⁴⁵ Here the author defines Christian life as a taking hold of the creature by the paschal love of God. The new covenant is nothing but a human response by a loyal and generous dedication to correspond to the plan of God.
- ◆ *Les religieux au cœur de l'Église*:⁴⁶ This is a collection of articles published earlier in different reviews.
- ◆ *Les Religieux au cœur de l'Église*⁴⁷ and *Religieux, aujourd'hui*:⁴⁸ Both books are collections of articles published earlier. While the former put accent on the dogmatic aspect of religious life, the latter furnishes a reflection on the situation of the religious life in the face of its *aggiornamento*.
- ◆ *Religieuses dans l'Église d'aujourd'hui*:⁴⁹ This book brings to the public two lectures given by Tillard, by which he wanted to “permettre aux communautés de se mettre à l'écoute de l'Esprit dans le courage.”⁵⁰
- ◆ *Devant Dieu et pour le monde. Le Projet des religieux*:⁵¹ What the author proposes here is to bring to the fore what religious life claimed to be from its origins and to judge it in the light of the Gospel. He concludes by saying: “Notre temps s'inscrit ... dans la ligne de la Tradition pour laquelle l'Eucharistie construit et exprime la *Koinônia* chrétienne. La sainte Cène est la fête de la fraternité ecclésiale que soudent le pain et la coupe de la réconciliation, la célébration de la création nouvelle dans la puissance et le souvenir de la Croix.”⁵²
- ◆ *Il y a charisme et charisme: la vie religieuse*:⁵³ This book speaks about the charisms, given by the Lord through his Spirit. All charisms are given in view of the gathering together of the people of God.
- ◆ *Dans le monde, pas du monde: la «vie religieuse apostolique»*:⁵⁴ This work examines the new situation of the religious men and women in which they, leaving their traditional activities, are involved in active ministries in the secular world. It insists on the

⁴⁵ «Vie et Prière» (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1965) 208 p.

⁴⁶ «Cahiers de 'Communauté Chrétienne' - 5» (Montréal, 1967) 212 p.

⁴⁷ «Problème de vie religieuse – 30» (Paris: Cerf, 1969) 178p.

⁴⁸ «Tradition et Renouveau-5» (Bruxelles: Lumen Vitae, 1969) 208 p.

⁴⁹ (Paris: Union des Supérieures Majeures de France, 1971).

⁵⁰ G.-D. MAILHIOT, *Nécrologie*, p. 17.

⁵¹ «Cogitatio Fidei – 75» (Paris: Cerf, 1974) 460p. [*El Proyecto de vida de los religiosos* (Madrid: Instituto Teológico de Vida Religiosa, 1974) 517 p; *Davanti a Dio e per il mondo: il progetto dei religiosi* (Roma: Edizioni Paoline, 1975, xv-462 p; *Diante de Deus e para os homens: o projeto dos religiosos* (Sao Paulo: Edicoes Loyola, 1975) 423 p].

⁵² *Devant Dieu et pour le monde*, p. 272ff.

⁵³ (Bruxelles: Lumen Vitae, 1977) 133p [*There are Charisms and Charisms: the Religious Life* (Bruxelles: Lumen Vitae, 1977) 140p].

⁵⁴ (Bruxelles: Lumen Vitae, 1981) 196 p.

theological perspective which unifies the religious consecration, prayer and apostolic activities.

6.2. On Church and Christian Unity

- ◆ *L'Eucharistie, Pâques de l'Eglise*⁵⁵: This book explores, according to the author, the truth of the traditional assertion, *the Eucharist makes the Church*.⁵⁶
- ◆ *L'évêque de Rome*:⁵⁷ According to the author, this book is the fruit of several years of ecumenical involvement—especially in *Faith and Order*, *ARCIC*, *International Commission for the Dialog with the Disciples of Christ*, *International Commission for the union between Orthodox Churches and Roman Catholic Church*—as well as the fruit of decades of teaching in several theological faculties. Here, he tries to clarify the real position of the Bishop of Rome within an ecclesiology of communion. Moved by an irenic will, the Catholic Church must re-discover the bishop of Rome as a servant of communion, argues the author.
- ◆ *Eglise d'Eglises. L'ecclésiologie de communion*:⁵⁸ To the question *What is Church*, the usual answer given during the pre-Vatican II period was that it is an *ensemble*, divided into parts, whose initiatives should always come from the centre. But the theological researches of the 20th century have brought out the fact that this vision of the Church is not compatible with the primitive vision of the Church, according to which *Church is a communion*. But in this communion, “chaque groupe, chaque tradition, chaque époque, loin d'être absorbé en un tout indistinct, garde ses traits propres, là où ils ne sont pas en opposition avec la Bonne Nouvelle.”⁵⁹ In Tillard's view, the Church is the catholicity of the *communion*. He wrote this book because of the conviction—which he had had ever since he wrote his *L'Eucharistie, Pâque de l'Église* (1964)—that the ecclesiology of communion is the one that corresponds well with the biblical and patristic data.

⁵⁵ «Unam Sanctam – 44» (Paris: Cerf, 1964) 267 p. Translations are available in English, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

⁵⁶ “Ce livre veut simplement mettre en lumière les enracinements d'une vérité traditionnelle en ecclésiologie et en théologie sacramentaire: *L'Eucharistie fait l'Eglise*,” *L'Eucharistie, Pâques de l'Eglise*, p. 7.

⁵⁷ *Rome* (Paris: Cerf, 1982) 240p. [*The Bishop of Rome. Translated by John de Satgé* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983) 242p; *Il Vescovo di Roma* (Brescia, Quenniana, 1985) 214 p ; *O Bispo de Roma* (Sao Paulo: Edicoes Loyola, 1985) 218 p; *El Obispo de Roma; estudio sobre el papado* (Santaander: Editorial Sal Terrae, 1986) 244p].

⁵⁸ Coll. «Cogitatio Fidei–143» (Paris: Cerf, 1987) 415p. (Paris: Cerf, 1987) [Church of Churches. The Ecclesiology of Communion. Translated by R. C. De Peaux (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992); *Chiesa di chiesa: l'ecclésiologia di comunione* (Brescia: Queriniana, 1989), 388p].

⁵⁹ *Eglise d'Eglises*, presentation on the back cover.

- ◆ *Chair de l'Eglise, chair du Christ. Aux sources de l'ecclésiologie de communion*.⁶⁰ The author considers this book as the second volume of his *Eglise d'Eglises*, and it was written in response to numerous questions raised by the readers of the said first volume. Most of the readers wanted to know whether or not ecclesiology of communion is rooted in the great ecclesial tradition. This book proposes to explore the very interior of the Church.
- ◆ *L'Eglise locale. Ecclesiologie de communion et catholicité*.⁶¹ Here the author explores the present situation of the theology of local Churches. According to him,

La communion ecclésiale est, au sein même de l'Eglise catholique, le lieu d'une difficile tension. D'une part, volonté de redonner aux réalités locales la place qui leur revient: les membres de l'Eglise ne sont pas des individus abstraits et sans attache, que leur appartenance au Christ arracherait à leur enracinement en une terre, une culture, une 'mémoire' un mode d'être avec ses problèmes et sa façon propre de comprendre et de vivre les valeurs universelles. D'autre part, volonté de résister à un effritement possible de l'unanimité ecclésiale, qui incite à agir comme si les diverses communautés locales ne pouvaient demeurer authentiquement 'catholiques' et vivre du bien commun de l'Eglise de Dieu que par un renforcement de l'autorité de la primauté, autorité centrale qui doit s'imposer parce que la responsabilité de l' 'universel' lui incombe en priorité. Ici 'universel' est identique à 'catholique'.⁶²

In his view, herein lies the cause of tension. In order to overcome it, what is needed most urgently is an authentic theology of the local Church, caught up in the dynamism of synodality where primacies in different levels are not at all ruled out, provided they are ordained to the local Churches. In view of this goal, Tillard presents in this book "toute une ecclésiologie bâtie sur la réalité de l'Église locale [...] dans la fidélité aux grandes intuitions qui ont porté le II^e concile du Vatican et qui ne cessent d'interpeller le mouvement œcuménique."⁶³

In the next chapter, our endeavour would be to explore how far Tillard has succeeded in building up an ecclesiology with local Churches and their traditions having their due place in the Church, which is a *Church of Churches*.

⁶⁰ «Cogitatio Fidei–168» (Paris: Cerf, 1992) 168p.

⁶¹ «Cogitatio Fidei – 191»(Paris: Cerf, 1995).

⁶² *L'Eglise locale*, from the presentation on the back cover.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FIVE:

OSMOSIS BETWEEN THE LOCAL CHURCH AND *CATHOLICA* ACCORDING TO J.-M. R. TILLARD

1. Introduction

Our appraisal of the Orthodox understanding of the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church permitted us to identify two pivotal points of Eastern Ecclesiology, viz. the local Church and the synodality of the local Churches. According to the Eastern perspective, the Church of God, both in its local and synodal manifestations, is permeated and penetrated by the dynamism of communion, which has its source in the Eucharist. The communion realised and given in the eucharistic celebration is, as we have seen, Christic and ultimately rooted in the intra-Trinitarian *koinonia*.

On the basis of these findings, we are now ready to explore the Catholic Ecclesiology in view of discovering points of convergence between the Eastern perspective, embodied in the ecclesiology of the Orthodox theologians we have studied, and the Catholic (mostly Western) perspective, embodied in the writings of Tillard (studied in this chapter) as well as in those of other Catholic theologians (studied in the next chapter). The views of Tillard on the question of the relationship between the local Church and the Church universal—which is the topic of this chapter—is particularly important not only because of his scholarship in ecumenical theology and ecclesiology, but also because of his deep knowledge of Orthodoxy thanks to his decades-long personal contact with the pastors, the theologians and the faithful of various Orthodox Churches. We will begin this chapter by a short section on certain preliminary notions which will help us situate the ecclesiology of the Dominican theologian. It will be followed by sections dealing with the eucharistic foundation of the Church, the ecclesiological significance of locality and the catholic and missionary nature of the local Church. Then we will examine the dynamism of communion in the life of the local Church. The latter part of the chapter will be consecrated to an exploration of the relationship of the Church of Rome and its bishop with the communion of Churches as well as with the collegiality of bishops.

2. Preliminary Notions

2.1. Introduction

A comparative reading of the texts of Vatican I and Vatican II will reveal the changed language and climate in which the latter is formulated. This is due to the fact that the Second Vatican Council's affirmations on the Church and her mission are set within the horizon of communion. According to this vision of the Church inherited from the first Christian generation, the ecclesial communion cannot be reduced to just the hierarchical communion of the leaders of the Church; rather it must be seen as constitutive of the entire Christian being. The Christian existence in all its aspects and all its components was then seen as an *existence of the Church*, understood as a communion. Nothing in the early Church escaped the mark of communion.¹ The note which follows is intended to furnish an idea about how Tillard traces the sources of the Ecclesiology of communion, on which his theology of the local Church is based.

2.2. Sources of the Ecclesiology of Communion

2.2.1. Biblical Data

In Tillard's view, the basic ambience of Christian existence, according to the New Testament, is God and the *others*. In order to clarify this point, the Dominican ecclesologist has recourse to the texts of St Paul, St John and the Catholic epistles.

According to St Paul, Christian life can be seen as the life of Christ in the believer² or as the believer's 'life in Christ.'³ This means that the Christian existence in its root is an absolute negation of all self-sufficiency and individualism. The relation to the *other* (this other is, first of all, God or Christ) is intrinsic to the Christian existence. Where there is no communion to Christ, there is no Christian existence. But this relation to Christ implies also the relation to the *others*. It is through the working of the Spirit that God transforms believers into a communion, a communion of the children of God, assembled in Christ as 'sons in the Son' (*fili in Filio*). In order to characterise the communion in this unity of life which comes from the Spirit in dependence to Christ, Paul uses the expression: 'Body of Christ.' In his view, to receive salvation from God is to be welded to the Body of Christ which is animated by the

¹ From the act of faith to the vision, from secret prayers to the eternal Liturgy evoked by the Apocalypse, from personal witness to the commitment of the community, from the respect of one's own person to the defence of the rights of the oppressed—none of these escape the embrace of the communion into which the baptism inserts us and which the Eucharist seals and signifies, cf. J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Chair de l'Eglise*, p. 7.

² Cf. *Gal 2*: 19-20.

³ It may be noted that «*en Christo*» appears 160 times in Pauline writings.

Spirit of God. In other words, reconciliation with God implies also an entry into the fraternal unity of the Body of Christ; the reconciled life with God is a life with others.⁴ It is not simply a life *in Church* but also a life *of Church*. The fact of being “of the Church” does not signify being ‘uniform,’ being reduced to one expression and one opinion. On the contrary, the Spirit of the Lord leads persons and local Churches to a deepening and an appropriation taking into account their proper character, which enriches the Church.

What the Pauline epistles and the epistle to the Ephesians express by the analogy of the human body, the Johannine tradition conveys by an analogy of the living vine. The fourth Gospel identifies the vine with the person of Jesus, perceived in his relationship to the Father who is the owner (*geôrgos*) of the vine. The vine is made up of many branches (i.e. disciples) through which flows the sap that enables them to bring forth fruits. Here we can identify many ecclesiological points: the branches are *in* the vine, i.e. the disciples are in Christ; the vine is *in* the branches, i.e. Jesus is *in* the disciples.⁵ Between Christ and the disciples there exists a reciprocal relationship of inclusion, expressed through the idea of ‘dwelling.’⁶ Jesus dwells in his disciples, and they in him: together they form a single living reality. From this ‘dwelling’ flows the unity among the disciples. In the vine, each branch, according to its nature as branch, lives the same life, viz. that of the ‘vine.’ Each branch bears the same type of fruit, viz. that of the ‘vine.’ Being cut away from the vine is mortal for all the branches. In other words, the branches can be alive and be fruitful only as long as they are in the living unity. This is true also of the disciples. Outside the union to Jesus and to other disciples, a disciple is sterile. The commandment to ‘love one another just as I have loved you’⁷ must be understood in the light of this relationship. It is that without which there will not be any vine at all, but rather only a bundle of sterile branches devoid of any living sap. Not to love the other disciples is to put oneself outside the *agape* of the Father and the Son, in which one should dwell in order to be a disciple.⁸

The Catholic Epistles, excluding those of John,⁹ also present the fundamental law of fraternal existence, which is the life of Christ in the Church of God.¹⁰ St James heartily praises what is just in the community and denounces, with a prophetic force, what is unjust in his eyes. His attack is aimed at all that is blocking the openness to *others*. In a long *paranesis*,

⁴ “All who are *in Christ* and *in Spirit* will never be in a solitary relationship with God,” J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Chair de l’Eglise*, p. 18.

⁵ Cf. *Jn* 15: 4-7, 9-10.

⁶ This term is used 15 times in *Jn* 15.

⁷ *Jn* 15: 12, 17.

⁸ Cf. *Jn* 15: 10. “One who does not love, remains in death,” 1 *Jn* 3: 14.

⁹ James, Peter and Jude.

¹⁰ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Chair de l’Eglise*, p. 31.

the epistle situates the source of conflicts and combats in the division (*dipsychia*) of heart—a heart divided between obedience to God and love for the world—which leads to war against the *others*.¹¹ The *First Letter of Peter* is an exhortation to keep one’s eyes fixed on the goal. For the hope into which baptism plunges the believer does not authorise him to lead a selfish life. Being attached to Christ in baptism, the believers are, by that very fact, incorporated into his Church. Hence, they no longer live for themselves, but for Christ and the neighbour. This baptismal life, lived in love and mutual service, is the life of the ‘holy and priestly community’, of ‘the spiritual house’, where pleasing sacrifice is offered to God by Jesus Christ.¹² This priestly character of the community of the faithful has reference to the existential acts of the saintly life of this community. This holiness finds its material above all in a specific relationship to *others*: seeing your good works, they will glorify God.

2.2.2. Patristic Data

In order to complement and complete the data from the New Testament, Tillard turns now to some of the early Fathers of the Church. In his view, St Augustine provides us with some useful notions about communion. The Bishop of Hippo considers the ecclesial communion as the result of the ‘entry’ of the life of the Risen Lord into all the believers and the ‘entry’ of the life of all believers into the unique life of the Risen Lord. These two movements, being two faces of the same work of the Spirit, are inseparable.¹³ To be a member of the ecclesial Body, one has to “...leave oneself at the disposition of the Spirit to be integrated into the *communion* in which all that is human [...] becomes one unity joined to Christ Jesus in the *Agape* of the Cross and Resurrection. The Body of Christ is the Body of *communion*.”¹⁴ Conceived as a *circumincision* of Christ (in his personal being as the Risen One) and his ecclesial Body (a *circumincision* of which the Eucharist is the sacrament), the Church is the *locus* of *Agape* of God. This *Agape* is realised in the communion between Christ-Head and his members.¹⁵ The Head and the members make up just one Christ—the total Christ. In this totality, Christ remains inseparable from his ecclesial Body.¹⁶

¹¹ Cf. *James* 4: 1-12.

¹² Cf. *1Pt* 2: 9-10.

¹³ In this communion human joys and sorrows, victories and failures, hopes and despairs become those of Christ. In the same way, Christ’s Cross, his resurrection, the reconciliation he has brought about, his Spirit, his communion to the Father become those of the believers.

¹⁴ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Chair de l’Eglise*, p. 76.

¹⁵ This takes place in the following ways: (a) On the one hand, Christ, as saviour, assumed all human situations into his historical activity; (b) On the other hand, he continues to live, after the resurrection, the human condition in all its truth and realism in and through his members.

¹⁶ “...le Sauveur du corps et les membres du Corps sont deux en une seule chair, et en une seule voix, et en une seule passion, et, quand sera passée l’iniquité, en un seul repos,” *Commentary on Ps 61*, 4; PL 36, p. 730, as cited in J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Chair de l’Eglise*, pp. 70-71.

St John Chrysostom in the East is particularly known for his teaching on the Eucharist as creative of a close communion in which all are caught up.¹⁷ He highlights the mystery of the sacrament of the Eucharist in the light of the Gospel of reconciliation. According to him this sacrament abolishes all distinctions of race, dignity and social status.¹⁸ St Cyril of Alexandria also insists on the power of the Eucharist to bring about communion between Christ and Christians and among Christians themselves.¹⁹ According to him, communion to Christ reaches a mysterious realism in the Eucharist. It takes hold of the destiny and persons of the communicants, and makes of them a Body which is essentially ecclesial.²⁰ The Eucharist unites the Church by uniting it to Christ by what Cyril calls a ‘physical unity’, which means a *communion* of being which is effected by the presence of the eucharistic body of Christ in the spiritual and corporal reality of the baptised.²¹ The source of this ecclesial unity is none other than Christ in his Body of the new Adam.

2.3. Communion of Believers in the Communion of the living God

According to the Johannine theology, the communion of the disciples of Christ is rooted in “the divine communion of the Father and his Son”²² or in the eternal *circumincession* of the Father and the Son. Consequently, the ecclesial *koinonia* is seen as an association in the divine *koinonia* itself. This happens through the working of the Spirit. He is the one who constitutes the milieu in which the Church germinates, is born, and grows. In this sense, ecclesial *koinonia* is basically charismatic.

¹⁷ He puts the following words on the lips of Jesus: “I am eaten, split up so that the mixing up, the fusion and the union be deep ... I wish that the two (of us) become one,” J. CHRYSOSTOM, *In 1 Tim, homélie* 15, PG, 62, p. 586. Again, in his homily on 1 Cor he says, quoting St Paul: “« Puisque le pain est un, nous sommes un seul Corps, nous les nombreux. » Pourquoi parler encore de communion ? Nous sommes ce Corps même. Qu’est en effet le pain ? Le corps du Christ. Que deviennent les communicants ? Le Corps du Christ ; non pas plusieurs corps. Un seul Corps,” ID, *In 1 Co., homélie* 24, PG 61, p. 200.

¹⁸ “All distinction, all difference of dignity is swept away here. If somebody is in the honours of this world or in the sparkle of riches, if he boasts of his birth or of the glory in the present life, behold he is in the same rank as the beggar and the one in rags, or, as he arrives, as the blind or the crippled,” J. CHRYSOSTOM, *Hom. Baptismale*, II, 13, SC 50, p. 140. “Il n’y a pas dans l’Eglise de différence entre l’esclave et l’homme libre, l’étranger et le citoyen, le sage et le simple, le particulier et le prince, la femme et l’homme. Mais tout âge et toute condition de l’un et de l’autre sexe entrent de la même manière dans la fontaine d’eau baptismal,” J. CHRYSOSTOM, *In 1 Co, homélie* 10, PG 51, p. 247. “...to the Emperor wearing a diadem and clad in silk, in charge of governing the earth as well as to the poor sitting for alms, one and only table is offered.” J. CHRYSOSTOM, *De Resurrectione Dom. Nostri Jesu Christi* III, PG 50, p. 437.

¹⁹ “...le pain étant un, nous devons tous un seul Corps; car tous nous participons à l’unique pain” CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, *Adv. Nest.*, IV, PG 76, p. 193.

²⁰ “En effet, par un seul corps, son propre corps, il bénit ses fidèles, dans la communion mystique, les faisant concorporels avec lui et entre eux [...]. Car si, tous, nous mangeons de l’unique pain, nous formons tous, un unique Corps,” CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, *In Joh.* XI, 11, PG 74, p. 560.

²¹ Cf. J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Chair de l’Eglise*, p. 93.

²² ID, “What is the Church of God?” *OiC*, 20 (1984), p. 234, [hereafter cited as J.-M. R. TILLARD, “What is the Church of God?”]. “For the Johannine Gospel, the unity of the disciples has its source only in God and can be derived only from the Father. It is based on the relation of immanence which constitutes divine life,” ID, “What is the Church of God?” p. 235; cf. *Jn* 17.

Communion among Christians is sustained and nourished by the communion in the riches bestowed by grace. Any Church is, first of all, a *communion* of faith which is inseparable from charity. It is also a *communion* of mission. This mission can be realised only if there is a *communion* of charisms.²³ It is also a communion of reconciliation: “the reconciliation of human conditions, races, sexes, cultures, and human histories which would normally conflict with each other.”²⁴ Finally, the ecclesial communion may be seen also as a communion of hope. The Christian faith in its deepest roots is “a faith in a hope, that is, in a goal to which God intends to guide humankind. The history of salvation in fact begins with a promise.”²⁵

If ecclesial communion is radically a communion of faith, then every ecclesial community must be connected with the apostolic community. Several reasons may be pointed out: a) faith signifies a welcome accorded to the Word of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. But we know of the Word of God only through the prism of the faith of the apostolic community; b) the college of Apostles represents the initial cell of the Church. Every authentic ecclesial community must be, therefore, somehow connected with this *fundamentum* upon which the Church of God rests until the Parousia. In order to ensure and guarantee the levels of communion, mentioned above, the Spirit bestows the charism of *episkope* (the charism of ministry). This is a ministry which is essentially at the service of communion.²⁶

2.4. Communion as Gift and Task

Koinonia is both a grace (gift) and an exigency.²⁷ To be saved is above all finding oneself associated to a new state of humanity “arrachée à sa situation de division mortelle, et introduite dans la plénitude de la réconciliation. On est sauvé par participation à un état collectif, à une grâce qui vise fondamentalement une totalité.”²⁸ The Church of God, in this perspective, is that portion of humanity which accepts to live this new state, depending entirely on what God has done in his Son. To be baptized is to become a member of the Body of Christ or the Priestly People of God, to become a living stone in the House of God or a branch of the Vine. In this new state, there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor

²³ “The diversity of calls and charisms, the variety of ways in which the Word is interpreted, pluralism in forms of life [...] are necessary and integrating elements in ecclesial life and mission, which is possible only if these diverse elements are in *communion*,” J.-M. R. TILLARD, “The Church of God is a Communion. The Ecclesiological Perspective of Vatican II,” *OiC* 17 (1981), p. 122, *hereafter cited as* J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Church of God is a Communion.”

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ For a detailed discussion on this point *see* below the section on “Hierarchical Ministries and Community: a symphony of charisms and services.”

²⁷ Exigency is more than a simple task; it refers to a fidelity to what we are.

²⁸ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Ecclésiologie de communion et exigence œcuménique,” *Irén.*, 59 (1986), p. 201, *hereafter cited as* J.-M.R. TILLARD, “Ecclésiologie de communion et exigence œcuménique.”

freeman, neither man nor women.²⁹ Thus, the Church of God is the community of believers who form but one in Christ. We become members of Christ by being associated to the other members of his Body.³⁰

The communion to Christ is not one of passivity. It is a vocation to be one with Christ in his dedication for the advent of the Kingdom.

Dans cette perspective, l'activité de l'Eglise doit être vue comme une épiphanie de l'intensité de l'engagement du Christ pour le Salut du monde. [...] Ce qu'accomplit le Corps ecclésial, dans la *communio* (*koinônia*, cf. 2 Co 1, 7 ; Ph 1, 5) des souffrances, des persécutions, des détresses, des agonies, des tâches, des annonces de l'Évangile, des responsabilités (cf. Ga 2, 9), est l'illustration et le déploiement de la profondeur de l'amour de Dieu pour l'humanité et le monde, accompli dans le Christ Jésus. [...] La *communio* des engagements et des tribulations des communautés, leur participation à une commune et unique entreprise qui n'est autre que le Salut du monde, démontrent qu'on ne peut appartenir au Christ sans être habité et poussé par son obéissance à l'amour du Père pour sa Création. La foi chrétienne implique une *communio* à l'intense souci de Dieu pour le monde venu de lui.³¹

2.5. Communion as Unity in Diversity

The tension between unity and diversity is a recurrent phenomenon in the history of the Church. In the New Testament itself, we can find diverse perceptions regarding the Church's nature and mission.³² But this diversity, far from being synonymous with contradiction, amounts to a constellation of views on the Church, which were all based on faith in Jesus Christ. This co-existence of diversity was possible because all had the conviction that they all belonged to the community of the Lord Jesus Christ. History and tradition of the Church informs us that "l'expansion du christianisme s'accomplit dans le souci d'allier unité de foi et diversité des pratiques et des expressions doctrinales, en fonction de la variété des milieux d'incarnation de l'Évangile. [...] Le sens profond de la foi est traduit, actualisé, en prenant pour matériau ce qu'apporte le terreau humain."³³ If we consider the Church as a communion, then we must also accord due place to difference and diversity, for—in this perspective—the Church is neither the abolition nor the addition of differences, but their communion.

²⁹ Cf. 1 Pt 2: 5; Eph 2: 9-10; 20-22; Jn 10: 1-16; Gal 3: 27-28.

³⁰ "Cet enserrement de la multitude humaine dans l'Un du Seigneur Jésus Christ est constitutif de l'*ekklesia tou Theou*," J.-M. R. TILLARD, "Ecclesiologie de communion et exigence œcuménique," p. 204.

³¹ ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 201.

³² Thus, the understanding of the relation between Israel and the Church is not the same in *Ephesians* and Johannine literature; the spreading of the Good News is differently viewed in *John* (accent being given to witnessing) and the *Acts* (where the emphasis is on the proclamation); while the Johannine tradition puts lot of weight on the personal relationship of the believer to Christ, the Pastorals underline the structure of the ministry.

³³ J.-M. R. TILLARD, "Pluralisme théologique et mystère de l'Eglise," *Com(F)*, 191 (1984), p. 114-115, hereafter cited as J.-M. R. TILLARD, "Pluralisme théologique et mystère de l'Eglise."

Difference, in ecclesiological terms, is a positive factor. It is a richness in which the catholicity of the Church is formed.³⁴

2.6. Concluding Remarks

From the above discussion, it is clear that both Afanasiev and Tillard are convinced that the local Church can be properly understood only from within a theology of communion as enshrined in the biblical and patristic sources. The difference between them consists in that while Afanasiev limits his investigation mainly to the Pauline writings, particularly the epistles to the Corinthians, Tillard has a wider perspective: he draws not only from St Paul but also from St John and the Catholic Epistles. The same wider perspective can be seen also in Tillard's use of the patristic material. Without denying the importance of Ignatius of Antioch (the protagonist in the Afanasievan system), the Dominican theologian draws from such varied sources as Augustine, Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, etc.

The purpose of Tillard's biblical and patristic exploration was to show that the Christian existence is conditioned by a twofold communion, viz. communion with God and communion with others. And he has done it in a convincing manner. He has shown that the Christian existence is determined by what we may call an evangelical relationship to *others*. It is a relationship of fraternal love (*agape*) which must be understood not only as a sentiment, an attitude of sympathy or affection for the *other* but also as the moving force behind such concrete actions as sharing of wealth, hospitality, service, mutual pardon, etc. The relation to the *other* is, in fact, a corollary to our being *in Christ*, that is, our communion with God. This vertical aspect of communion is clearly emphasised by Augustine, for whom Church is the *locus* of God's *agape*, where a *circumincension* (*perichoresis*) takes place between the risen Lord and his ecclesial Body, so that the former remains inseparable from the latter. The Oriental Fathers, cited by Tillard, clearly show how this union between Christ and the Church is realised at the eucharistic celebration. Tillard also shows the dynamic character of communion by characterising it as a gift and as a task.³⁵

³⁴ Recognizing its importance in the theology of the Church can be considered one of the achievements of the Catholic ecclesiology of our times.

³⁵ For details on this point see *infra* our discussion in the section entitled "Dynamism of Communion within the Local Church."

3. The Eucharist Makes the Church

3.1. Introduction

As it has been noted earlier in this study, the Eucharist is a key constituent of the theology of Tillard.³⁶ We may recall that his theological career got started in a big way with his *L'Eucharistie, Pâques de l'Eglise*, which was an enquiry into the meaning of the assertion, 'Eucharist makes the Church.' As he put it,

L'effet ultime de l'Eucharistie est l'Eglise, la manifestation par excellence de l'Eglise est l'Eucharistie célébrée dans la fidélité au commandement du Seigneur, tels sont les deux points traditionnels dont il nous faut manifester quelque peu la profondeur. Il s'agit, en d'autres termes, de montrer l'ecclésialité à la fois du *sacramentum* et des *res* eucharistiques.³⁷

In his view, the ecclesiological renewal of the last century came about together with the progressive rediscovery of the Western Christianity about the osmosis between the Church and the Eucharist.³⁸

3.2. The Eucharistic Body to the Ecclesial Body

We can correctly understand the Pauline doctrine of the Body of Christ only in the background of his theology of the Eucharist. According to him, the internal unity of the local community comes from the fact its members—each with his or her difference and singularity—are caught up in the unique and indivisible Body of Christ as it is manifested on the Table of the Lord.³⁹ The Body of Christ is not the result of an addition but rather the result of the assumption of the multitude in the one Lord.

According to the theology of *Ephesians*, the personal Body of Christ, in which the drama of pardon and reconciliation of humanity was enacted, is the point of encounter of the renewed humanity. The resurrection of this Body of flesh into the Body of glory seals—in the power of the Spirit—the recapitulation of the entire humanity in Christ. It is exactly in and with this risen Body of Christ that the ecclesial Body emerges.⁴⁰ In Tillard's opinion "[d]e cette lecture de la réalité du Corps ecclésial à l'affirmation que l'Eglise ne trouve sa pleine réalité que grâce au mystère eucharistique, et même que « l'Eucharistie fait l'Eglise », il n'y a

³⁶ See *supra* our discussion on "Eucharist: the Key to the Theology of Tillard" in chapter four.

³⁷ J.-M. R. TILLARD, "Eucharistie et Eglise," in: J. D. ZIZIOLAS et al, *L'Eucharistie*, «Eglises en dialogue – 12» (Paris: Mame, 1970), p. 78 [hereafter cited as J.-M. R. TILLARD, "Eucharistie et Eglise"]. "On sait que par *sacramentum* la tradition latine entend le niveau des signes extérieurs, des rites visibles accomplis par l'Eglise et symbolisant ce qui s'accomplit dans la profondeur de l'événement de grâce; par *res* elle entend la réalité spirituelle et salvifique ainsi produite," *ibid.* n. 1.

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 77.

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 40.

⁴⁰ *Eph.* 2: 6.

qu'un pas."⁴¹ The Eucharist, as the *sacramentum* par excellence of the koinonia, is homogeneous with the Church of God. That is why it is possible to affirm that 'the Eucharist constitutes the Church.' "By receiving the eucharistic Body and Blood, which the Holy Spirit gives them in response to the epiclesis, the members of the celebrating community find themselves caught up in the very reality which welds their koinonia together: the Body whose members they are."⁴² Two consequences follow from this close relationship between the Eucharistic Body and the Ecclesial Body: a) one is saved only by being *in Christ and in the Spirit*; b) one is *in Christ* only by being members of the Body, the branches of the Vine, the living stones of the priestly dwelling, and active believers in the charity of works. One becomes all these in solidarity with the *others*.

3.3. The Church is Eucharistic

It is remarkable that the great Anaphoras, inherited from the past, build the eucharistic celebration around an *anamnesis*, which has for object the paschal event. According to St Paul, in the paschal event of Jesus Christ, a new possibility of existence is given to humanity: man is opened up to the Father and to his brethren, realizing thereby the eternal plan of God (*mysterion*).⁴³ A eucharistic community makes the *anamnesis* by linking its salvation with the paschal event of Jesus Christ. It proclaims that, *hic et nunc*, the *Event* of salvation comes to it.⁴⁴ During the eucharistic celebration, the Pascha of Christ becomes contemporaneous with the celebrating community. To this community, the paschal Body of Christ becomes really present, transforming the former into a fraternal Body of *koinonia*. There is some kind of a movement from the paschal Body of Christ to his ecclesial Body. This movement, in which the paschal Body of Christ transforms the celebrating community into One Body, outlines the very being of the Church. As Tillard formulates it, "que fait l'Eucharistie sinon rendre présent à l'assemblée des frères le Corps qui est le foyer de son être de Corps du Christ?"⁴⁵ In other words, a local Church gathered around the eucharistic Table is celebrating its own mystery: 'Body in the Body'—a Body which has become in the Pascha the *locus* of koinonia.⁴⁶ This

⁴¹ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 42.

⁴² ID, "What is the Church of God?" p. 238.

⁴³ "Le dessein de Dieu, dessein de communion et d'unité, jailli de toute éternité dans le secret divin, saisi au point précis où il rejoint l'humanité déchirée par le péché, s'exprime et se concrétise par le Corps et le Sang donnés pour la fraternité et la communion (koinônia)," ID, "Eucharistie et Eglise," p. 83.

⁴⁴ "L'assemblée ecclésiale rassemblée pour le Repas du Seigneur proclame dans son Eucharistie la réalité qui, dans ce moment même, se saisit d'elle et l'enserme," *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁴⁶ "Lorsque le pain unique, sur lequel a été prononcée la bénédiction scellée par le *Amen* de tous, est rompu puis distribué par celui qui préside, l'unité de tous dans un même don et une même expérience de la bienveillance de Dieu se trouve soudée [...] Il en va de même de la coupe [...]. Circulant de main en main, elle

communion has two levels: a) the level of ‘sacramental communion,’ that is to say, by communicating to the Body and Blood, the Church proclaims her profound unity; b) the level of ecclesial communion, that is to say, in order to eat the eucharistic bread, one must be in the ecclesial body.

3.3.1. From the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Body of Christ to the Church, *forma gratiae Dei*

When the author of the *Ephesians* speaks of the work of God’s grace, he does it in terms of *communion, community, unity, gathering of the multitude and of the diversity in ‘unum.’* God’s grace is not an abstract reality. According to Tillard, “[e]lle est la forme (*forma*) que prennent la bonté et l’action de Dieu lorsqu’elles ont l’homme pécheur pour objet.”⁴⁷ This grace embraces people when they are incorporated into the *communion of a unique Body* (*‘sôma tou Chrstou’*) where the multitude is reconciled in unity.⁴⁸ In this way, a *concorporation* of the entire Church in a mysterious unity⁴⁹ takes place. That is why, ever since the Pentecost, it has been impossible to think of Christ without his Body. This Body⁵⁰ is the Church; it is the form taken by the grace of God. This Church cannot be but eucharistic.

Dans l’Eucharistie en réponse à l’épîclèse de l’Eglise, l’Esprit donne au Peuple de Dieu rassemblé le *sôma* du Ressuscité. [...] Il s’agit du *sôma* du Seigneur précisément dans l’acte où (par la puissance de l’Esprit) celui-ci est “rassemblement dans l’unité des enfants de Dieu dispersés” (Jn 11:52), “destruction du mur de séparation” (Ep 2:14), Temple de la Jérusalem Nouvelle abolissant la dispersion de Babel, Serviteur portant les multitudes et exalté dans la gloire du Seigneur.⁵¹

3.3.2. From the Eucharist, the Proclamation of the Death of Christ to the Church in the Act of *Marturia*

The eucharistic nature of the Church carries with it a mission. According to the *Ephesians*, the Christian community, which is welded together by concord and unity has the mission to become the Body of Christ in perpetual growth towards its plenitude.⁵² This mission is a witnessing (*marturia*). It is the eucharistic synaxis that constitutes the sacramental moment of the *marturia* of the Church.⁵³

met en relief la *koinônia* des convives dans leur participation commune à l’unique don du Père fait en Jésus,” *Ibid.*, p. 92-94.

⁴⁷ ID, “Il n’est d’Eglise qu’eucharistique,” *Nicol*, 10 (1982), p. 237, hereafter cited as J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Il n’est d’Eglise qu’eucharistique.”

⁴⁸ *Eph* 2: 13-22.

⁴⁹ Cf. PASCHASE RADBERT (+ cir. 860), *In Mat.* II, 3, *PL* 120, 168.

⁵⁰ It is important to note that word *soma* in *Eph* 2: 16 probably refers to the sacramental presence of the Body of Christ.

⁵¹ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Il n’est d’Eglise qu’eucharistique,” p. 240.

⁵² cf. 4: 12-13, 16.

⁵³ “Il n’est d’Eglise en acte de *marturia* que par le Mémorial eucharistique,” J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Il n’est d’Eglise qu’eucharistique,” p. 252.

...la synaxe eucharistique accompli, en effet, devant le monde et pour lui, une “révélation”, un dévoilement, une proclamation en actes du dessein du Père devant aboutir, selon l’évangile johannique, “à ce que le monde croie”. L’objet de cette foi n’est autre que le lien profond existant entre l’œuvre de Jésus manifestée par ses fruits de grâce, surtout dans la *koinônia* fraternelle, et le Père (17:21-23). [...] Le simple fait que des communautés enracinées dans des cultures différentes, représentant des contextes sociaux différents, liées à des expressions de la foi différentes, adoptant des liturgies différentes, *reconnaissent* mutuellement leurs eucharistie en déclarant qu’en chacune d’entre elles sous ces différences se vit le même et unique mystère, constitue une “révélation” de l’universalité du Salut. Par l’Eucharistie, les chrétiens non seulement déclarent devant les hommes qu’ils croient en l’Evangile mais manifestent que dans son Fils Dieu a rassemblé ses enfants dispersés et abattu les barrières qui divisent l’humanité.⁵⁴

3.3.3. From the Eucharist, the Memorial of the Servant to the Church in *Diakonia*

The Church is in a state of *diakonia* until the Parousia, and this, in different levels. The *diakonia* of the Church is inseparable from the *diakonia* of Christ. In fact, it is the *diakonia* of Christ which is now passed on to the community.⁵⁵

La communion de Jésus à l’amour du Père pour les pauvres, les blessés par le destin, les pécheurs, passe dans la diaconie de l’Eglise au sein du drame humain; la fidélité de Jésus à annoncer la Bonne Nouvelle d’un Salut à recevoir dans la foi et à actualiser dans la conversion passe dans la prédication de l’Eglise.⁵⁶

Again, it is the eucharistic synaxis which plants in the heart of the Church the dynamism of this *diakonia* which has two aspects: the service to the poor and the service to the Word. According to St Justin, the eucharistic bread which will be transformed into the Body of Christ was a fraction of the bread of charity for the poor. “On comprend alors qu’il faille tenir que la diaconie ecclésiale des pauvres, des petits, des souffrants, procède de l’assemblée eucharistique.”⁵⁷

The notion of the Memorial helps us to grasp how the *diakonia* is rooted in the eucharistic synaxis. If, in the Memorial, God ‘remembers’; the community also ‘remembers’ or is reminded of the exigency of her belonging to the mystery of the Body of Christ. ‘Remembering’, according to the Bible, is not simply a psychological activity; it is rather an act which allows the past to be *actual* in the present. This penetration of the past into the present carries with it responsibilities, too. A community that ‘remembers’ is actually communing with the *mirabilia dei* in her favour in such a way that others may also be beneficiaries of the same.

L’eucharistie est le moment sacramentel de cette communion. [...] Bien compris, le *mémorial eucharistique* débouche nécessairement sur une *communion* qui conjugue et l’efficacité transcendante de l’Esprit du Dieu

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 252-253.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Acts* 3: 12, 16; 9: 33; 2 *Cor* 4: 5; *Jn* 13: 20; 2 *Cor* 5: 20.

⁵⁶ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Il n’est d’Eglise qu’eucharistique,” p. 254.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

de la Pâque et l'effort de l'homme pour entrer non seulement dans les fruits de celle-ci mais dans sa qualité, par une incorporation à ce qui y fut l'attitude du Seigneur. C'est de cette façon que, selon la formule traditionnelle, l'Eucharistie signifie et construit l'Eglise.⁵⁸

3.4. The Eucharist, the Church and the Bishop

The sacramental structure of the Church—as a Body articulating itself in charity and service—is manifested in the eucharistic assembly. It was in function of the celebration of the Eucharist that the tradition primarily envisaged the ministry of the bishop. He was seen as a brother—awakened and empowered by the Spirit—who was the *sacramentum* of the Lord, inviting those who belong to his fold to the Table, transforming them through his words and gestures into the synaxis and giving with the bread and the cup the Body and the Blood.

Other activities of the bishop are also to be situated within the dynamism of the Eucharist. In Tillard's words, “[l]e ministère jaillit de l'Eucharistie. Il exprime le dynamisme profond de l'économie, cette volonté du Père que l'Eglise fondée en la Pâque du Seigneur Jésus et incluse en son Corps se structure dans le service fraternel...”⁵⁹

In order that this may happen, the one who ‘represents’⁶⁰ Jesus should be able to present himself as the *one sent* by Jesus so that he will be the *sacrament* of the mission of the Son by the Father. As the *apostolos*, it is in him that the community can have contact with Christ in his quality as the one sent by the Father.

Sa «présidence dans le service», en plein centre de l'événement où l'assemblée ecclésiale célèbre son mystère, rappelle à celle-ci qu'elle n'est elle-même que dans l'efficacité toujours actuelle de l'acte d'un frère (Ph 2, 7-8 He 2, 17-18) devenu son Seigneur précisément parce que cet acte comblait le désir éternel du Père (Ph 2, 9-11).⁶¹

3.5. The Eucharist and the Communion

3.5.1. The Eucharist as the *Sacramentum* of Communion

The East and the West, divided as they were on several points of liturgy, have, however, always agreed that the communion between the bishop, his local Church and the local Churches of any time and any place is celebrated and affirmed at the eucharistic celebration.

L'essentiel est qu'autour de la Table eucharistique, tout spécialement au moment où elle se nourrit du Corps et du Sang du Seigneur, la communauté de tous les baptisés qui « habitent ce lieu » (...) se trouve enserrée dans le mystère de la réconciliation pascale.⁶²

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 257-258.

⁵⁹ ID, “Eucharistie et Eglise,” p. 103.

⁶⁰ The *sheliah* or *apostolos* represents the sender as though he were the latter.

⁶¹ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Eucharistie et Eglise,” p. 104.

⁶² ID, *L'Eglise locale. Ecclesiologie de communion et catholicité*, «Cogitatio Fidei–191» (Paris: Cerf, 1995), p. 256, hereafter cited as J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L'Eglise locale*.

At the time of the eucharistic synaxis, the Church can be seen as the ‘the humanity reconciled with God and with herself.’ In spite of the scars of the wounds (of division and hatred), still borne in her body, the Church lets herself caught up, at the synaxis, in the reconciliatory and unifying power of Christ.⁶³ Therefore we have to take the Sunday synaxis as “l’expression visible—le *sacramentum* —de la *communio* de tous les ministères, de tous les charismes, de tous les services, de tous les dons qui font, en ce lieu et en ce temps, l’Eglise de Dieu.”⁶⁴

3.5.2. Communion as the Fruit of the Eucharist

Communion has its source in the Body and Blood of Christ, given in the Eucharist.⁶⁵ For it is at the eucharistic table that all those who were re-born of the baptismal water find themselves united by the reality of the Body of Christ. And the *Body of Christ* is a Body of *reconciliation, unity and communion*.

La puissance du Corps et du Sang sacramentels est telle qu’elle transforme peu à peu ceux qui les reçoivent pour qu’en leur comportement concret ils deviennent pleinement conformes au mystère où l’Eucharistie les inscrit.⁶⁶

The Eucharist creates an intimate relationship between the believer and the Lord which, in fact, is the source of fraternal relationship among the believers: “...l’effet du pain de vie dans chaque chrétien est la communion dans l’Esprit avec les autres.”⁶⁷ The Eucharist transforms the celebrating community into the Body of Christ, where the wounds of human community are healed in the communion of grace and holiness which the Holy Spirit creates.⁶⁸ In the sharing of the unique Body and Blood, the participants are caught up in the unique and indivisible Body of Christ. Whatever be their origin, sex or social or economic status, they form but one unique Body, the Body of Christ. Their gathering is not only *around* Christ, but also *in* Christ, signifying their profound communion with the Lord and with one another. They render the ecclesial communion visible and tangible.

3.5.3. The Universal Communion and the Eucharistic Celebration

The universal communion of the believers and the Churches is, at the bottom, a matter of mystery. That is to say, before being based on some juridical link, it is sacramental, more

⁶³ “...à l’Eucharistie, l’Eglise locale se laisse saisir, avec ses cicatrices et ses plaies, pour le temps d’une synaxe [...], dans l’unité que donne le Christ,” *Ibid.* p. 256.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 259. “L’Eucharistie est, par sa nature même, *sacramentum Ecclesiae*, de l’église en acte de communion,” *Id.*, *Chair de l’Eglise, chair du Christ...*, p. 95.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Id.*, “Ecclesiologie de communion et exigence œcuménique,” p. 219.

⁶⁶ *Id.*, “L’Evêque, le diocèse et l’unité de l’Eglise,” *Kanon*, 7 (1985), p. 244, *hereafter cited as as* J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Evêque, le diocèse.”

⁶⁷ *Id.*, *Chair de l’Eglise*, p. 95.

⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 96.

particularly eucharistic. This is because every authentic eucharistic celebration is also an act of the universal communion, an act of the Body of reconciliation which makes the Church. The faithful gathered for the eucharistic celebration are drawn to and transformed by this Body of the universal communion.

Parce que le Corps eucharistique *est* vraiment le Corps du Seigneur assumant en lui la totalité des croyants, chaque célébration eucharistique fait communier à l’Eglise entière. L’Eglise universelle est immanente à l’Eglise locale dans la communion au Corps eucharistique. Et corrélativement, l’Eglise locale célébrant le Mémorial du Seigneur est sacramentellement communion de l’Eglise en sa totalité, une totalité qui embrasse tous les temps, « depuis le juste Abel », tous les lieux, toutes les situations. Lorsque la Tradition affirme que l’Eglise est eucharistique, elle dit ce sens profond de l’unité infrangible de l’*Eglise de Dieu*, inséparable de sa catholicité [...] Là où se trouve un synaxe eucharistique, là est l’Eglise de Dieu telle qu’elle est dans toute les synaxes eucharistiques, qu’elle l’a été et qu’elle le sera.⁶⁹

This is an over-arching communion, the one which crosses history, the one which links the very first eucharistic celebration of the Apostolic community and the last one celebrated before the Parousia. In fact, if the community which celebrates the Memorial, here and now, is in communion of faith and structure with the apostolic Church, then its Eucharist is the same as that of the Apostles.

The Eucharistic communion requires existence of the ecclesial communion, which is the fruit of the Cross of Christ. “L’*Ekklesia* qui célèbre l’Eucharistie est la communauté venue du fait qu’en Jésus Christ les païens (étrangers à la promesse) ont été admis à la *communion* du Peuple de l’Espérance et de l’Alliance.”⁷⁰

This is the reason why it is impossible to have a common eucharistic celebration of Christians who find themselves in a state of canonical division. For, it is a lie to visibly express a communion which really does not exist. The eucharistic expression of communion should be based on a concrete situation of *koinonia*. Vice versa, wherever it is possible to hold an authentic eucharistic assembly, we can confirm there the existence of perfect communion.

3.6. Concluding Remarks

The idea that ‘the Eucharist makes the Church’ is one that Tillard shared with Afanasiev as well as with his fellow Orthodox theologians. Quite like Afanasiev, Tillard too makes use of the Pauline doctrine of the Body of Christ to explain the osmosis between the Eucharist and the Church. However, Tillard’s analysis comes out even richer thanks to his association between the theology of the epistles to the Corinthians and the epistle to the Ephesians, where reconciliation in Christ is a key category. Thus, when the reconciliation of the divided

⁶⁹ ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 44.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

humanity—realised once for all in the personal Body of Christ—is passed on to a portion of humanity in a particular time and place, the Church emerges. This takes place in a supreme manner at the eucharistic celebration, where the Pascha of Christ becomes contemporaneous with the celebrating community; consequently, the divided humanity is transformed into a fraternal community.

But there is a point in which Tillard distances himself from Afanasiev. We have remarked earlier⁷¹ that Afanasiev has hardly anything to say about the mission of the eucharistic community, that is, the ethical consequences of the communion realised at the eucharistic celebration are missing in the Afanasievan ecclesiology. That is precisely where Tillard brings in a corrective. According to Tillard, the eucharistic community, where reconciliation is realised in an ontological manner, is sent out into the world to proclaim it and to realise it in the world. That is to say, becoming one with the Body of Christ, Christians are infused with the reconciliatory power of Christ's Body and are sent out into the world to be associated with Christ's concern for the poor and the sinners. As we will see later, mission is an important component of Tillard's theology of local Church.⁷²

The Eucharist as the foundation of the communion of Churches is, again, a point of convergence between Tillard and Afanasiev. When we read the following words of Tillard, we are reminded of Afanasiev: "Là où se trouve un synaxe eucharistique, là est l'Eglise de Dieu telle qu'elle est dans toute les synaxes eucharistiques, qu'elle l'a été et qu'elle le sera."⁷³ But what is particular about Tillard is that he explains clearly in what consists the communion realised by the Eucharist. It is basically a reconciliation. The Church at the eucharistic celebration is a portion of humanity reconciled with God. The communion with God, which results from this reconciliation, blossoms into a communion with all those who are caught up in the reconciliatory power of Christ. Here we are at the very source of the Ecclesiology of communion. Its ecclesiological importance comes from what it makes of the Christian existence (both communitarian and personal) a consequence of a seizure of the whole being of the believers by the sacramental Body of Christ. Whoever eats the sacramental Body of Christ and shares in his Cup cannot any more live a solitary life. He can exist only for God in communion with the *others*. The moment of one's greatest intimacy with the Lord—the

⁷¹ See *supra* our critique of Afanasiev under the head, "Eucharistic Celebration and Mission."

⁷² See *infra* the section on "Missionary Dimension of Local Churches."

⁷³ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 44.

moment in which one becomes his Body—is also the moment of the greatest solidarity with the *others*.⁷⁴

4. Ecclesiological Significance of Locality

4.1. Introduction

In Tillard's conception of the local Church, *locality* is an important category. Its importance comes from the fact that *Ekklesia tou Theou* can exist only in and through the local Church. Therefore, as he formulated in his book, *Eglise d'Eglises*, “[d]’emblée, le local—avec ce qu’il porte de culturel, de « contextuel », de géographique, de religieux, d’historique—appartient au matériau où s’incarne en sa vérité l’*Ekklesia tou Theou*.”⁷⁵ This point, important both for ecclesiology and missiology, underlines that “[u]n peuple ne peut entrer dans la communion du Christ sans y apporter « ce qui lui est propre ». Ce ne sont pas seulement les personnes, ce sont aussi les terres évangélisées qui ont rapport à la plénitude du Christ.”⁷⁶

The Church is made up of the baptised. But baptism is not given to a portion of humanity which is cut away from its roots; rather it is offered to it in as much as it takes its form in a race, ethnic group, clan, nation and people of an X land, whose common culture and history knit together the diversity of the members within the same place and the same destiny. It is in this tissue of humanity that a local Church is born and grows. It is to this portion of humanity in its total *sitz im Leben* that the Church introduces the imperatives of the Gospel.

Affirming the necessity of *Ekklesia tou Theou* taking flesh in a portion of humanity—with all that involves—is one thing, but it is quite another thing to exaggerate particularism which endangers the catholic unity of the Church. For an over-emphasis on the particularity and the local tradition, which does not open a Church to other Churches, renders impossible the mutual fecundity of Churches in communion. The reality of the local Church is not a radicalisation of the ‘difference’; it should not be detrimental to the ‘catholic’ reconciliation. The reason is the following: Christian existence is basically an existence of solidarity in which the *other* is essential for the believer as well as for the community. The *other* allows the individual or the community to discover its plenitude in the communion, in the *agape*.⁷⁷ When an individual enters into the mystical communion with God, he does so as a member of

⁷⁴ Cf. ID, *Chair de l’Eglise*, p. 43.

⁷⁵ ID, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 30.

⁷⁶ ID, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 99.

⁷⁷ In this communion, the individual does not disappear in a *whole*, rather he remains still the object of God's personal love, care and protection.

the Body of Christ.⁷⁸ In the same way, a local Church worthy of its name will be open to other Churches. According to St Paul, the Church of God is not simply the sum of autonomous Churches whose co-existence is characterised simply by the good neighbourhood, but by the communion of these Churches, which makes them into one Body in which members and communities are welded to one another. Inculturated as it may be, a local community should always confess and celebrate the same faith, which is lived here and now and elsewhere, in the past as well in the future. Only in this totality can a local Church find its identity.

4.2. Lessons from the Magisterium Past and Present

The past history of the Church informs us that the alertness to the *context* or *locality* is not at all a modern discovery. Tillard points out several cases from history. Thus, to an Augustine of Canterbury, who wrote to Pope Gregory the Great, requesting guidelines in the subject of adaptation in liturgy,⁷⁹ the pope gives the advice to choose from different Churches whatever is pleasing to God and adapt it to the liturgical practice of the English Church.⁸⁰ A similar attitude is seen in the instruction of the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith in 1659 to the missionaries of China.⁸¹

More recently, Pope John Paul II, addressing the aboriginals of Alice Springs in Australia, said as follows: “Dans le monde entier, les hommes adorent Dieu dans leur propre langue et donnent aux grands signes et symboles de la religion la couleur de leurs propres traditions. Pourquoi [...] vous refuserait-on le bonheur d’être avec Dieu et entre vous de la manière aborigène?”⁸² Earlier the same pope wrote in his encyclical, *Slavorum apostoli*:

The Gospel does not lead to the impoverishment or extinction of those things which every individual, people and nation and every culture throughout history recognizes and brings into being as goodness, truth and beauty. On the contrary, it strives to assimilate and to develop all these values: to live them with

⁷⁸ Cf. J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Chair de l’Eglise*, p. 25.

⁷⁹ “Alors que la foi est une, comment expliquer qu’on puisse trouver différentes façons de faire dans les différentes Eglises, qu’il y ait une façon de célébrer la Messe dans la sainte Eglise romaine, et une autre dans les Eglises des Gaules?” as cited in ID, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 95.

⁸⁰ “Frère, tu connaît la coutume de l’Eglise de romaine dans laquelle tu te souviens avoir grandi. Il me plaît toutefois que si, soit dans l’Eglise romaine soit dans l’Eglise des Gaules tu trouves quelque chose qui puisse être plus agréable au Tout-Puissant, tu aies grand soin de le retenir et que tu sois attentif à enseigner à l’Eglise des Angles, neuve dans la foi, tout ce que tu a pu ainsi recueillir des autres Églises,” Reg. XI, 56 a (PL *Ep.* XI, 64: 77, 1187), as cited in *ibid.*

⁸¹ “Ne mettez aucun zèle, n’avancez aucun argument pour convaincre ces peuples de changer leurs rites, leurs coutumes et leurs moeurs, à moins qu’ils ne soient évidemment contraires à la religion et à la morale. Quoi de plus absurde que transporter chez les Chinois la France, l’Espagne, l’Italie ou quelque autre pays d’Europe? N’introduisez pas chez eux nos pays mais la foi, cette foi qui ne repousse, ni ne blesse les rites, ni les usages d’aucun peuple pourvu qu’ils ne soient pas détestables, mais bien au contraire veut qu’on les garde et les protège,” B. JACQUELINE, “Les Instructions de la S. C. «de Propaganda Fide» aux vicaires apostoliques du royaume du Tonkin et de Cochinchine,” *RHDFE*, 4 (1970), p. 631, *hereafter cited as* B. JACQUELINE, “Les Instructions de la S. C. «de Propaganda Fide».”

⁸² *DC*, 84 (1987) 6-63 (63).

magnanimity and joy and to perfect them by the mysterious and ennobling light of Revelation. [...] All individuals, all nations, cultures and civilizations have their own part to play and their own place in God's mysterious plan and in the universal history of salvation.⁸³

4.3. *Locality in Canonistics*

Tillard observes with regret that the recent developments in canonistics seem to undervalue this *place-bound* character of the Church of God. In his view, this is evident from the fact that the 1983 *Codex Iuris Canonici*⁸⁴ preferred *particular Church* to *local Church* in order to designate the *locus* of the realisation of the Church of God in which a bishop is in charge.⁸⁵ In his view, it is inappropriate to use, in this context, the expression *particular Church*, since the adjective ‘particular’

...incite à penser que ce qui est présent en telle communauté se distingue de la réalité présente dans les autres communautés, alors qu'en fait en chacune se réalise pleinement la *catholica*, quoique celle-ci ne soit pas uniforme en toutes puisque «jetant ses racines dans la variété des terrains culturels, sociaux, humains, (elle) prend dans chaque portion du monde des visages, des expressions extérieures diverses».⁸⁶

Tillard thinks that the canonists' dislike for the notion of *local Church* is accompanied by the sidelining of another idea dear to the Council. According to the Council,

...ce sont aussi les cultures, les traditions, les terreaux qui, avec les personnes, sont chair de l'Eglise. En prenant trop de distance face à la terre où s'implante l'Eglise, quelque chose de la grande intuition de *Ad gentes* s'obscurcit [...] Car, dans la Tradition, l'Eglise est *locale*. Cela relève de sa nature «catholique».⁸⁷

Although the 1983 *CIC* is not unaware of the notions like *territory*,⁸⁸ *domicile*⁸⁹ and *diocese*,⁹⁰ it is silent about the territorial nature of the diocese. Besides, it even adds that several particular Churches could be erected in the same territory.⁹¹ According to *CIC* 368, besides the dioceses, “a territorial prelature, a territorial abbacy, a vicariate apostolic, a prefecture apostolic and a permanently established apostolic administration” could be deemed as particular Churches. This legislation enters into conflict with the teaching of *Lumen*

⁸³ *Slavorum apostoli* (2 June 1985), nos. 18 and 19.

⁸⁴ *Here after cited as 1983 CIC*

⁸⁵ Cf. *CIC* 368. It is clear that in this choice, the legislator was inspired by the conciliar vision—particularly of the *LG*—of the Church as People of God. According to Tillard, “la préoccupation du concile a été de glisser d’une vision regardant d’abord le territoire à une vision s’intéressant fondamentalement aux personnes,” J. M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 284. For further discussion on this point, cf. ID. “Eglise catholique ou Eglise universelle,” *CrSt*, 16 (1995), pp. 341-359, *hereafter cited as* J. M. R. TILLARD, “Eglise catholique ou Eglise universelle.”

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 345-346. Cf. PAUL VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, (December 8, 1975), no. 62.

⁸⁷ J. M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 285.

⁸⁸ *CIC* 12, 13.

⁸⁹ *CIC* 12, 100, 102, 107.

⁹⁰ *CIC* 368, 369. The term ‘diocese’ (*dioikêsis*, *diocesis* – in use at least from the 4th century) includes necessarily a reference to a territory: a territory entrusted to the bishop.

⁹¹ “...there may be established in a given territory particular Churches distinguished by the rite of the faithful or by some other similar quality,” *CIC*, 372 § 2.

Gentium according to which the ministry of the bishop is an essential constitutive element of the particular Church. But among the various possible forms of the particular Churches enumerated by *CIC* 368, all but diocese can be headed by a minister other than a bishop. This means, as Tillard puts it, “on peut être Eglise particulière [...] sans être relié à la communion apostolique par un évêque au sens traditionnel. On pourra se contenter d’un ministre « gouvernant au nom du pontife suprême » ou « à l’instar de l’évêque diocésain ».”⁹²

According to Tillard, we are here in the face of a grave ecclesiological problem. He wonders how one could say without nuance that the Catholic Church exists ‘in and from’ these groupings, which need not be necessarily headed by a bishop. According to one of the most important affirmations of Vatican II, any power enjoyed by the bishop, comes from the sacrament of episcopal ordination. But according to *CIC* 381 § 2, “Those who are at the head of the other communities of the faithful mentioned in can. 368, are equivalent in law to the diocesan Bishop,” who “has all the ordinary, proper and immediate power required for the exercise of his pastoral office” (*CIC* 381 § 1). No clarification is, however, given as to the foundation on which the power they possess is based. If it is based on the canonical mission they receive, then it is evidently inharmonious with the vision of *Lumen Gentium* concerning the pastoral power. Besides, the idea that people without episcopal ordination are equivalent to bishops is theologically quite strange.

4.4. Concluding Remarks

Locality or place is another point where we discover a marked distance between Afanasiev and Tillard. In Afanasiev, place or city is given only an accidental status.⁹³ The absolute criterion of a local Church is, according to him, the Eucharist; it alone determines the boundaries of a local Church, not the locality. In contrast to that, in Tillard, the ‘local’ is the context in which the Church of God is incarnated. As such, it belongs to the process of the becoming of a local Church.⁹⁴ He is also keen to underline that the accent on the importance of locality should not lead to an exaggerated particularism which is detrimental to the unity of the Church.

⁹² J. M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 288.

⁹³ See *supra* our discussion under the head “Principle of the Unity of the Primitive Local Church,” in chapter two.

⁹⁴ As we will see in the next chapter, Tillard’s position on this point converges with that of H.-M. Legrand.

5. Catholicity and the Local Church

5.1. Introduction

According to the *Acts*, the *Ekklesia* manifests itself in a clearly identifiable place, viz. Jerusalem, a place where it was God's will that Christ die and rise from the dead, a place where God has pitched his dwelling.⁹⁵ Thus, the Church which emerges on the day of Pentecost is marked by the *place* chosen by the Spirit of God to be her birth place. This Church had from the outset the conviction that she is the accomplishment of the *Qahal* of the desert, *Ekklesia tou Theou*.⁹⁶ It bears the plenitude, the fullness, the *katholou* of the gift of God. Thus the Jerusalem community, which was *local*, was also *catholic* at her birth. Catholicity here does not mean simply the geographical universality which is indicated by diverse nations present in Jerusalem for the feast, but more primarily the full realisation of all that goes with the convocation of God. It signifies, therefore, the possession by her of the entire 'gifts' of the Promises,⁹⁷ all that is necessary for being the Church of God. In this way, *catholicity*—not only in its origin, but also in its essence—reveals itself in “la grâce d'une Eglise locale, l'Eglise apostolique de Jérusalem.”⁹⁸ The Fathers of the Church considered the multitude of Churches which came after the first community of Jerusalem as incarnations, in different parts of the world, of that which was first actualised in the former.⁹⁹

5.2. Birth of the Church Marks the Reversal of Babel and the Fulfilment of *Qāhal*

The patristic exegesis saw in the event of Pentecost the reversal of Babel. In place of the confusion of language and the division of humankind, the Pentecost announces the reunification of humanity.¹⁰⁰ In and through the people coming from different parts of the world who were received into the Church on the day of Pentecost, nations of the world found

⁹⁵ Cf. 1 *Chron* 22: 5-19; *Ps* 78: 68-69; 132: 13-18. This city was the symbol of the unity of the people of the covenant (cf. 2 *Kings* 23, 4-27), a city called to become the mother of all peoples (cf. *Ps* 87). According to the Biblical tradition, this city will set the scene for the Final Judgement and the eschatological banquet of all peoples (cf. *Is* 25: 6).

⁹⁶ Cf. *Ex* 19: 6.

⁹⁷ Cf. *Acts* 2: 39

⁹⁸ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L'Eglise locale*, p. 41.

⁹⁹ Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 39-40. Cf. *Rm* 1: 7; 1 *Cor* 1: 2 1 *Thes* 5: 27; 1 *Tim* 5: 10, *Philmn* 5, 7; *Eph* 1: 1.15, *Phil* 1: 1; *Col* 1: 2.4.26. For a complete list of references, see *Ibid.* p. 39. Allusions to the inclusion of all Churches in the Church of Jerusalem is given in the book of Revelations, according to which it is none other than Jerusalem—'holy city', 'prepared as a bride'—which descends out of heaven at the Parousia. Cf. *Rev* 21: 2.10.

¹⁰⁰ *Gen* 11: 1-9. “A Babel un seul langage, symbole d'une unité vécue, est brisé par l'orgueilleuse prétention humaine. En la fête de Pentecôte la multitude des langues, symbole de la barrière dressée entre les peuples, est unifiée dans la compréhension commune de la Parole apostolique,” J.-M. R. TILLARD, “L'Eglise de Dieu dans le dessein de Dieu,” *Irén.*, 58 (1985), p. 29, hereafter cited as J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Eglise de Dieu dans le dessein....”

their way into the *initium* of the Church. Thus, the initial community, emerging from the Pentecostal event, appears as a manifestation of the opening of the time of salvation.¹⁰¹ In other words, the Church, in her initial moments, is deeply bound up with the tragedy of human division and fragmentation which got started at Babel.¹⁰² “Dès sa cellule initiale elle se présente dans le feu de la réponse de Dieu à cette situation universelle. Elle en est la manifestation et le «symbole». Les Pères diront qu’elle en est le *sacramentum*.”¹⁰³

There is a lot in common between the assembly at Sinai and the gathering of the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Originally, the Sinai assembly was called a *qāhal* (*LXX* translated it as *ekklesia*). This term refers to an assembly, gathered together by a call of Yahweh. The assembly of Pentecost¹⁰⁴ should be also understood in the light of the ‘Sinai assembly of the People of God.’ The Sinai assembly was accompanied by fire and thunder. Similarly, on the day of Pentecost—when “they were all together in one place (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό)—“suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind [...] And there appeared to them tongues as of fire.”¹⁰⁵ For the Jewish tradition, the Sinai event also represented the renewal of humanity as such—a reconstitution of humanity in its pre-fall condition.¹⁰⁶ The *Ekklesia* that emerged in the midst of the Pentecostal event had also a dynamism to recreate the world and salvage its humanity from injustice, rivalry and greed and dip it into the experience of *communion*.¹⁰⁷ The assembly of Pentecost, which will be later known as *Ekklesia*,¹⁰⁸ would soon consider itself as the fulfilment of the Sinai assembly, as the Church of God.

The *Ekklesia tou Theou* of Pentecost is destined to spread far and wide, bringing with her the message and experience of the Pentecost. Wherever she emerges, the *Babel* would recede.¹⁰⁹ It is in this way that the Church of God will be present in every part of the world, finding thus her universality.¹¹⁰

¹⁰¹ “La communauté pentecostale—cellule mère de l’Eglise—apparaît ainsi comme la manifestation, l’*epiphaneia*, de l’ouverture des temps du Salut,” ID, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 22.

¹⁰² This is evoked by the feast of Pentecost, which, from the 2nd B.C. onwards, commemorated the gift of the Law at Sinai, and was therefore an occasion for renewal of the covenant.

¹⁰³ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Eglise de Dieu dans le dessein...,” p. 31.

¹⁰⁴ *Acts* 2: 1.

¹⁰⁵ *Acts* 2: 1-2.

¹⁰⁶ Many Rabbis interpreted the purpose of the Sinai event as a ‘recreation’ of the universe, a bringing back of universe to its beginnings, a situation in which “tous s’entendent et ne forment qu’un seul esprit,” The *Mekhilta*, cited in J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. ID, “Eglise de Dieu dans le dessein...,” p. 34.

¹⁰⁸ This is the appellation of the Community of the disciple of Jesus from the 5th chapter of the *Acts*.

¹⁰⁹ “Elle surgira partout où Babel cessera, partout où la réconciliation humaine prendra forme parce que, dans la foi et le baptême, des hommes et des femmes se seront mis sous l’emprise de l’Esprit du Seigneur. Il y aura des communautés dont chacune sera *Ekklesia tou Theou*. Ainsi l’Eglise se multipliera sans se diviser,” J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Eglise de Dieu dans le dessein...,” p. 36.

¹¹⁰ “Il existe par l’univers une seule *Ekklesia tou Theou*, dont il faut par conséquent préserver l’unité à travers le monde et dans le déploiement du temps,” *Ibid.*, p. 37.

5.3. The Church as the fulfilment of the Gospel of God and 'Musterion'

The Church born on Pentecost—put in the larger context of the Biblical Tradition—can be seen as the fulfilment of a long awaited plan of God, cherished in the memory of the people of God.¹¹¹ The scope of this divine plan surpassed the simple fulfilment of the *qāhal* of Sinai. Hence, what happened on the day of Pentecost must be seen as the fulfilment of—as Tillard formulates it—the *Gospel of God* (*euaggelion tou Theou*). *Gospel of God* is the Good News, which God, from the beginning of history, wanted to announce to humanity. This *Gospel of God*, starting from the *proto-evangelium* till its fulfilment in the incarnation and its aftermath, holds together the different phases of biblical history. That is why the Fathers perceived the roots of the Church as going back to Abel, the just. Tillard makes use of yet another Biblical notion—*Musterion*—which is drawn from the epistle to the *Ephesians*.¹¹² The Church, according to the author of the *Ephesians* is “the realisation of the *musterion* as it is fulfilled in Jesus, the actualization of the eternal plan which forms the web of Revelation and whose purpose is the joining together again of humanity: the reunification of the universe in Christ Jesus. She thus belongs to the very mystery of *humanity according to God*.”¹¹³ According to Tillard, this awareness of the rootage of the Church in the eternal plan of God is vital for correctly understanding a local Church.

Ce qui subsiste en son intégrité et avec toute la puissance des moyens de Salut dans les Eglises locales rassemblées par une Eucharistie que préside un évêque en pleine communion avec l'évêque de l'Eglise de Pierre et de Paul, ne peut être compris en sa vraie nature que si on y contemple l'éternel dessein du Père ensemençant l'humanité entière des *semina Verbi*, transformant les cœurs par la puissance de son Esprit.¹¹⁴

5.4. Communion as the Content of Salvation Announced by the Gospel of God

The Gospel of God or *Musterion* proclaims salvation. The biblical and patristic tradition summarises the salvation, prepared by God from the beginning, in a single word, viz. *communion*. To say that salvation is *communion* is to recognise that the Church of God is the

¹¹¹ “...ce qui survient au jour de Pentecôte, dans le rayonnement de la Mort-Résurrection du Seigneur et Christ Jésus, est l’accomplissement (la *teleiōsis*) d’un long dessein de Dieu dont les étapes restent enfouies en la mémoire du Peuple Saint. [...] La communauté de Pentecôte représente l’émergence—enfin !—de «communauté de Dieu» après la faute, à cause de ce qu’il a réalisé dans et par Jésus le Nazôrien. Elle est donc l’œuvre de la grâce de Dieu,” *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹¹² “An ecclesiology which wants to grasp the nature of the Church in its depth cannot easily seek its inspiration elsewhere than in the first chapters of the Letter to the Ephesians,” J.-M. R. TILLARD, “What is the Church of God?” p. 227.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 228; cf. ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 68.

¹¹⁴ ID, “Eglise catholique ou Eglise universelle,” p. 358.

locus of the re-creation of the humanity that God wants.¹¹⁵ According to the New Testament understanding, *koinônia* refers to “l’entrée de tout baptisé et de chaque communauté croyante en l’espace de réconciliation ouvert par le Christ sur sa Croix et que l’Esprit fait apparaître à travers la déchirure de Pentecôte. Et cet espace se trouve enserré dans le mystère éternel de communion qui fait l’existence de Dieu lui-même.”¹¹⁶

5.5. The Church is the Manifestation of Communion

The Church of God, as it manifested itself on the day of Pentecost, was a communion. According to Tillard, there are two faces to this communion: one turned to God and the other turned to man.

In its face turned to God, the Jerusalem Church can be seen as a communion resulting from the reconciliation with God. What happened in Jerusalem was a miracle of reconciliation. The Jerusalem community receives from God baptism along with the gifts of the Spirit and the pardon of sins.¹¹⁷ This pardon is the mark of reconciliation and Paul would see here the supreme manifestation of God’s love (*agape*) which transforms ‘enemies of God’¹¹⁸ into the adoptive children of God.¹¹⁹ This is a basic trait of every local Church: it must be a place of reconciliation with God. This reconciliation takes place in Christ. In him all are made one in one Body, because all partake of the same Bread and the same Cup.¹²⁰

In its face turned to the human community too,¹²¹ the Jerusalem Church is a communion. According to the *Acts*,¹²² the believers of Jerusalem were ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό (together). This expression is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew *Yahad*, which means ‘together in the same place.’ Hence, when the *Acts* describes the first Christians of Jerusalem as ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, it does not separate their ‘being together’ and their ‘being in the same place.’ To the world surrounding it, the Pentecostal community of Jerusalem presented itself as a community without walls: Jews and Gentiles, rich and the poor share in the common goods. The term *koinonia* employed in this context should stand for—thinks Tillard—“*communion* dans le

¹¹⁵ “Dire que le Salut annoncé par l’*Évangile de Dieu* et manifesté dans le surgissement de l’Église de Dieu à Pentecôte est communion, revient donc à reconnaître dans l’Église de Dieu, le lieu même de la récréation de l’humanité-que-Dieu-veut,” J.-M. R. TILLARD, “L’Église de Dieu dans le dessein de Dieu,” p. 41.

¹¹⁶ ID, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 35.

¹¹⁷ *Acts* 2: 37-41.

¹¹⁸ *Rom* 1: 30.

¹¹⁹ “We are children of God,” *Rom* 8: 16.

¹²⁰ *1 Cor* 10: 16-22.

¹²¹ *Acts* 4: 16: “to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”

¹²² *Acts* 2: 42-47; 4: 32-37; 5: 12-16. These passages develop the idea of a common existence led in a *communion*, which is inseparably spiritual and material. All the aspects of this common existence may be resumed in the key word, ‘*koinônia*’. See J. M. R. TILLARD, “*Koinônia*”, in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 8 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974) cols 1743-1769; ID, “*Koinônia*”, in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WWC, 1991), pp. 568-574.

souci du bien de l'autre.”¹²³ The same term is found, a few chapters further, in a second description of the Christian community, viz. in *Acts* 4: 32. Again, we find the term used, this time by St Paul, in the context of the collection for the poor of the Jerusalem.¹²⁴ By this, the Apostle wanted to underline that “le partage ne se limite pas à la vie interne de chaque communauté et ne répond pas seulement à une générosité et une interdépendance suscitées par les besoins du milieu immédiat. Il s'étend jusqu'à inclure une solidarité généreuse des Eglises locales *comme telles*.”¹²⁵

This horizontal communion must be seen as a consequence of what God has accomplished in Christ Jesus. This gift of God, i.e. being caught up in the communion of Christ, always comes first, thanks to which Christians can live in communion. This is the source of all links and action of fraternal solidarity, demanded by this unity.¹²⁶ According to the author of the Fourth Gospel, the unity of the disciples is one that corresponds to the unity between Jesus and his Father, which again is founded on the reality of God. In this sense, the communion of Christians can be seen as sharing in the *communion* of Jesus Christ to the will of the Father, which is, in turn, rooted in the eternal circumincession of the Father and the Son.¹²⁷

It is this divine origin of her communion that the Church proclaims when she assembles around the Table of the Lord. By communing with Christ—who is in perpetual communion with the Father—the celebrating community is caught up in the divine communion. This communion is the result of long and gratuitous economy of God, starting explicitly with the call of Abraham, but had its movement already *ab Abel justo*.

5.6. Catholicity and Division of the world

The New Testament contrasts the catholicity of the Church to the state of division of the world. The *Musterion*, of which the Church is the accomplishment, has to do with the abolition of hatred (*echthra*), which engenders situations of intolerance, division and hostility.

¹²³ ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 194.

¹²⁴ *Rom* 15: 26; *2 Cor* 8: 4; 9: 13.

¹²⁵ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 195.

¹²⁶ “Il y a *communion* parce que tous ont part à cette unique réalité. De là vient pour eux l'exigence d'une vie menée dans la fraternité d'une attention aux autres, d'une responsabilité à leur endroit, d'une dépendance d'eux. La *communion* ou *koinônia* subjective (dans le réseau des relations fraternelles) est la conséquence de la *communion* ou *koinônia* objective, c'est-à-dire de la participation à la même et unique réalité de grâce présente dans le Christ Jésus,” *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹²⁷ Resuming this Johannine perception, Tillard says: “L'Eglise est *devant* Dieu en *communion* à l'être et à l'attitude de Fils *devant* le Père [...] La *communion* des chrétiens n'est pas séparable de celle du Père, du Fils et de l'Esprit. [...] il s'agit d'une communion très concrète, fondée sur la présence en tous d'une unique et même réalité,” *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

Historically it is realised on the Cross,¹²⁸ where Christ re-created the divided humanity into the humanity according to God. In his blood, what was *far off* has become *near*.¹²⁹ Thus, when one is incorporated into the Body of Christ through baptism, one is entering into “the dynamism of a reconciliation which must constantly be actualised, radiated and win over the world, in order to achieve therein the Father’s eternal plan.”¹³⁰ The Church is the place where *reconciled* men and women assemble in Christ. “L’Eglise est ici-bas celle qui ne peut séparer son engagement pour la réconciliation de l’humanité—c’est sa mission, de par sa *communion* au Dieu vivant—de la quête incessante de la gloire de Dieu.”¹³¹

5.7. Catholicity as a Task

According to Tillard, the Church’s situation as the *locus* where the Good News of reconciliation is realised, is not one of passivity. She has an active vocation: all her activity should be viewed as “une épiphanie de l’intensité de l’engagement du Christ pour le Salut du monde.”¹³² In other words, the gift of reconciliation conditions the Church’s mission in the world.

La *communion* des engagements et des tribulations des communautés, leur participation à une commune et unique entreprise qui n’est autre que le Salut du monde, démontrent qu’on ne peut appartenir au Christ sans être habité et poussé par son obéissance à l’amour du Père pour sa Création. La foi chrétienne implique une *communion* à l’intense souci de Dieu pour le monde venu de lui.¹³³

That which happened on the day of Pentecost is perpetuated in and through the Churches that emerge in different parts of the globe. That is to say, the walls of division and hatred are demolished by the Spirit, not only on the day of Pentecost, but also on all other Pentecostal events of history, starting with the one in the house of Cornelius. The Church in this world is none other than that portion of humanity, inscribed into the space of reconciliation opened by the Cross.¹³⁴ When we see the Church in this way, it also reveals the pre-occupying condition of the divided Christianity today.

¹²⁸ Eph 2: 16. “The *musterion*, consequently the Church which is its fulfilment, is the joining together again of humanity by the destruction of hatred, in the Blood of Christ on the Cross,” J.-M. R. TILLARD, “What is the Church of God?” p. 229.

¹²⁹ Eph 2: 13.

¹³⁰ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “What is the Church of God?” p. 230; cf. ID, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 70.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 201.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Cf. ID, “What is the Church of God?” p. 231.

5.8. Church which is always 'Catholic' is born 'Local'

When we consider the Church as *catholic*, we must also know what is meant by this term. Compared to the term *universality*, *catholicity* is not only richer in meaning and extension but even includes it.¹³⁵ Catholicity includes the quantitative expansion in space and time of the Body of Christ; however, this spatio-temporal extension is relative to the interior depth of the Church of God, viz. "la participation qualitative aux biens de la *koinonia* divine, en commun avec tous les membres de ce Corps."¹³⁶

The reason why a Church, which is rooted in a *place*, is catholic is that it is the Church of God. For God is *catholic* in his plan of salvation. Without this catholic character, a local Church will not be the Church of God. Tillard considers *catholicity* as the *katholou* (totality) of the Church of God, which the Spirit offers to any human community that welcomes the communion of reconciliation realised by the Son.¹³⁷ The Church is always *catholic* because she is never separated from that which makes her *catholic*. When the Church takes form in any part of the world, no matter how small or how big it is, it represents the *katholou* of God's gifts offered to that portion of humanity.

This offer of God coincides with the incarnation of the Church in that place. Thus, the Church which is the *katholou* of God's gifts is born *local*.¹³⁸ Here, unlike the notion of *universal*, the notion of *catholic* cannot be perceived as something *abstract*, as a reality waiting for incarnation. In Tillard's view, the Church is *catholic* precisely because she is "dans le concret des lieux de l'homme, avec leurs cultures, leurs terreaux sociaux, leurs traits de grandeur et de pauvreté, leurs problèmes et leurs espoirs."¹³⁹ This incarnation in the concrete life situation of a believing community belongs to the very nature of catholicity. The Church can exist but in the human *flesh*, otherwise it would be only a project existing only in God's mind.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ "...la *catholicité* de l'Eglise de Dieu implique inséparablement, et dans leur constante symbiose, l'*universalité* du dessein du Père présent en lui de toute éternité, la *plénitude* et l'*authenticité* de la vérité révélée, gardée et transmise de façon *orthodoxe*, l'*intégrité* des moyens de Salut offerts à la *totalité* des personnes humaines quels que soient leur race ou leur statut social, l'*ensemble* des lieux et des communautés locales où la *communion* dans le Christ s'accomplit en s'incarnant dans *toutes les cultures*, l'*extension* du temps allant *jam ab Abel justo* jusqu'à la Parousie du Seigneur, la situation *intégrale* de l'humanité à la fois pérégrinant sur la terre et déjà associée à la gloire des élus, chaque personne en son entier corps aussi bien qu'esprit," J.-M. R. TILLARD, "Eglise catholique ou Eglise universelle," p. 353.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 354.

¹³⁸ "Cet *entier* n'existe pas avant d'être incarné dans ce à quoi il est donné. Ainsi naît l'Eglise comme réalité locale." J.-M. R. TILLARD, "Eglise catholique ou Eglise universelle," p. 355.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Here Tillard is drawing inspiration from L. Bouyer who said: "L'Eglise [...] n'existe, n'a jamais existé, et ne peut exister que dans cette "chair", qui est la nôtre. Avant d'y exister, elle n'existait pas, à proprement parler,

However, the Church emerging in a locality is always the *Church One* because “ce qui est donné en un lieu est l’entier qui est donné dans tous les autres lieux.”¹⁴¹ This one and unique Church of God is not “le fruit de l’addition ou juxtaposition d’Eglises nationales, ethniques, en bon voisinage. Elle est communion d’Eglises, diverses et pourtant radicalement unies....”¹⁴² Hence, a local Church may be said to be living its catholicity only when it is open to the richness of other sister Churches and to their needs. *Catholicity* conceived in this way puts the local Churches in a relationship of mutual dependence, as the Council has underlined in *Lumen Gentium* 23.¹⁴³ First, it is declared that the particular Churches are formed after the image of the universal Church. Before drawing any hasty conclusion from this formula—warns Tillard—we must be mindful of its nuance: “On ne dit pas qu’elles viennent de celle-ci. La nuance est importante.”¹⁴⁴ What is conveyed here is instead the following truth:

dans les Eglises particulières et à partir de chacune d’elles il fait exister la *catholica*. Il ne la fait pas exister par l’addition de toutes ces Eglises *particulières* [...]. Il la rend présente en chacune d’elles, selon sa vraie nature *catholique*. Mais de cette présence en toutes, il résulte que c’est par elles qu’elle existe concrètement dans le monde, en cette catholicité.¹⁴⁵

From this, Tillard draws the following conclusions: a) a local Church exists in order that the *catholica* willed by God in his eternal plan takes a concrete form; b) once these local Churches take form, it is in them that the *catholica* is given, i.e. it exists concretely in the flesh of humanity.

Il faut en déduire que cette Eglise surgit inséparablement comme *catholique* et comme *locale*. [...] Dès que la *catholica* existe existent les églises locales car il n’y a pas de *catholica* avant que Dieu fasse naître au moins une Eglise locale. L’infrangible unité de l’Eglise entière, en sa *catholicité* à la fois quantitative et qualitative, est donnée la même où l’offre par l’Esprit de Dieu de l’entier (le *katholou*) de l’Eglise est accueillie et mise en œuvre.¹⁴⁶

The spiritual and the worldly meet in the local Church. By the fact her *Head* (Christ) has already passed on to the ‘other world’ where He is in deep communion with the Father and she herself—in her members—is introduced into this *communion* with the Father, the Church

sinon comme un projet dans la pensée divine: son dessein irréalisé, sa Sagesse inexprimée,” L. BOUYER, *L’Eglise de Dieu*, p. 334.

¹⁴¹ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Eglise catholique ou Eglise universelle,” p. 355.

¹⁴² ID, “La catholicité de la Mission,” *Spiritus*, 117 (1989), p. 356, *hereafter cited as* J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Catholicité de la Mission.”

¹⁴³ “The individual bishops, however, are the visible principle and foundation of unity in their *particular* Churches, fashioned after the model of the *universal* Church, in and from which Churches comes into being the one and only Catholic Church.” (*Episcopi autem singuli visibile principium et fundamentum sunt unitatis in suis Ecclesiis particularibus, ad imaginem Ecclesiae universalis formati in quibus et ex quibus una et unica Ecclesia catholica existit*).

¹⁴⁴ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Eglise catholique ou Eglise universelle,” p. 356.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

can be said to belong to this new world. At the same time, she is in the world running her roots deep into the human reality. Tillard explains this situation of the local Church in different aspects.

First, the local Church may be considered as the meeting point between eschatology and time, ‘the beyond’ and ‘here-below’. In order to be aware of it, nothing is more useful than the participation in the intercessory prayer of a local Church caught up in heavy problems.¹⁴⁷

Second, the local Church can be seen as the meeting-point of the revealed Word and its authentic reading in the context of human existence. This Word aims at transmitting a meaning to human existence. But for this to happen, it has to encounter another word, emanating from the depths of the collective soul of humanity which seeks its authentic finality. Hence the revealed Word should find a suitable language to reach out to the human reality, incarnated in traditional cultures with their symbols, gestures, songs, music, paintings, sculptures, silence, etc., which are intimately linked to the soul of a people or culture. This encounter between the revealed Word and the human word takes place in the local Church, a Church in a given context, caught in a situation proper to it and united to its bishop, through whom it is in communion with other Churches.

5.9. Concluding Remarks

That local Church is fully catholic is a point of convergence between Tillard and Afanasiev. Like the Russian theologian, Tillard also tells us that a local Church is always catholic because it is never separated from that which makes her *catholic*. Notwithstanding this similarity, we also find some difference between them. While Afanasiev understands catholicity uniquely in a qualitative-intensive sense, Tillard—while giving priority to the internal aspect of catholicity—does not exclude the extensive-quantitative sense.

In order to appreciate the breadth and depth of the Church’s catholicity, Tillard sets it in the context of God’s plan (*Gospel of God* or *Mysterion*, as he calls it), which has for goal the salvation realised through the recreation of a ‘humanity according to God.’ From this it is clear that the content of salvation is basically communion. And the Church, manifested on the Pentecost, was precisely this communion, a portion of humanity reconciled to God, where—owing to this communion with God—all walls of division are demolished. This is basically the nature of a Church that is catholic. Catholicity here designates the *katholou* (totality) of

¹⁴⁷ “...lorsque la communauté « catholique » en son entier prie pour une région du monde particulièrement affligée, elle ne peut donner à son intercession toute sa force qu’en disant à Dieu qu’elle fait sienne la prière de l’Eglise de cette région. (...) On n’ajoute pas sa prière à celle d’une Eglise locale. Mais, puisqu’en celle-ci l’Eglise de Dieu est présente, on y adhère et on l’épouse, en en faisant sa propre prière,” ID, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 134.

the Church of God, the totality of God's gifts. This *katholou* in its entirety is given whenever the Church of God is incarnated in a place. The *Catholica*, after its first instance of incarnation is always a concrete reality.

In his reflection on the catholicity of the local Church, Tillard also makes known his position regarding the relationship between local Church and the universal Church, which he designates here by the term *Catholica*. Commenting on *LG 23*, he says that it is not exact to say that the local Churches come from the universal Church. Rather, what is affirmed in this conciliar text is that the local Churches manifest the *Catholica*, that is to say, local Churches exist so that *Catholica* takes a concrete form. Thereafter, only in them does *Catholica* exist, i.e., inasmuch as realised in human flesh.

6. The Missionary Dimension of Local Churches

6.1. Introduction

From Pentecost to Parousia, the Church finds herself in a state of confession; by her very being, she is called to a witnessing mission.¹⁴⁸ This takes her to those who have not heard the Gospel. In Tillard's view, the ultimate *raison d'être* of the missionary task of the Church can be correctly understood only in the light of the theology of the Body of Christ.

Le Seigneur entend graver dans son Corps ecclésial une responsabilité à l'égard de la Rédemption universelle, pourtant accomplie «une fois pour toutes» et de façon plénière en son Corps individuel. Il veut comme l'associer du dedans à cette inclusion du sort de la totalité dans le «représentant» ou le «petit reste», qui dessine de l'économie de sa Pâque.¹⁴⁹

6.2. Mission as a Transformation of Humanity to a Humanity according to God

The ultimate goal of missionary activity is not simply the salvation of the individual, but rather the establishment of Christ's lordship in the entire world, more particularly within the human family. Only when this is realised can one say that the *Gospel of God* is fulfilled. Mission is basically the Lord's act in his Body. Hence, it is impossible to separate the Body and the mission: just as there is no Church which is not also at the same time missionary, in the same way, there is no missionary Church which is not also at the same time welded in the unity of the Body of Christ.

¹⁴⁸ "Pour tout baptisé, le devoir missionnaire est donné dans le baptême et la confirmation qui achève celui-ci. Pour l'évêque, il est conféré dans l'ordination épiscopale. Pour la communauté comme telle, il est célébré et fortifié dans la synaxe eucharistique où l'assemblée se nourrit du Corps et du Sang du Seigneur, dans la puissance de l'Esprit «qui poursuit son œuvre en ce monde»,” ID, “Catholicité de la Mission,” p. 352

¹⁴⁹ ID, “Eucharistie et Eglise,” p. 106.

The mission should go hand in hand with the necessary attention given to culture, historical heritage and to the land.¹⁵⁰ Only when we consider the local Church in the light of the theology of catholicity, can we get a clearer perception about the theology of mission. It, then, ceases to be a ‘theology of the expansion of the Church,’ and becomes, instead, a theology which explains the entry of the total human richness and the whole creation into Christ. It is a penetration of the *pleroma* of Christ in time and place; it is a movement which actualises the ‘once-for-all-ness’ of the paschal glorification, according to the rhythm of history and in the medley of spaces; it is the dynamism of the Spirit by which Christ is filled with this world.¹⁵¹

In fact, the novelty of the Gospel does not spring forth from *nothing* (*neos*, i.e. a radical novelty), but it is always a novelty of salvation (*kainos*), which presupposes the presence of an *already* where grace will act. In other words, the mission’s aim is not exactly “à faire naître l’Eglise là où elle n’est pas encore,”¹⁵² but rather it aims at the fulfilment of the creation, by transforming humanity into the humanity according to God. Thus, the rootage of the Gospel in various cultures or social contexts can take multiform in harmony with their expectations, genius, *memory*, tragedies, etc, which renders the proclamation of faith acceptable to various milieux. This is implied by the catholicity of the Church. But every culture stands in need of an evaluation, judgement and discernment of the Gospel.¹⁵³

La catholicité n’accueille jamais sans discernement ce que véhicule la culture. Car celle-ci aussi est objet du Salut. Et l’«inculturation» de la foi a précisément pour fonction de plonger la culture dans l’efficacité de l’Evangile, en «sauvant» ses richesses. L’Eglise locale n’est donc pas, en sa spécificité, le simple miroir de la société. Et l’Evangile n’apporte pas satisfaction à tout ce que désire ou promeut le milieu culturel, social, ethnique. Entre le Peuple de Dieu et le peuple existe toujours un seuil. Et ce n’est pas simplement celui qui sépare nature et surnature.¹⁵⁴

6.3. Contextualisation / Inculturation and Mission

Tillard has on several occasions dealt with the question of *contextualisation / inculturation*. According to him, by contextualisation¹⁵⁵ we must understand the way in which

¹⁵⁰ See *supra* the discussion under the title, “Lessons from the Magisterium Past and Present.”

¹⁵¹ Cf. J. M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 93.

¹⁵² ID, “Catholicité de la Mission,” p. 348.

¹⁵³ In this context, the missionaries who come from outside the locality can render a great service to evangelization by making a more objective evaluation of the local richness and values in relationship to the Gospel. They can be considered as “l’instrument d’une interpellation évangélique qui interdit l’enfermement myope sur la spécificité culturelle ou ethnique,” *Ibid.*, p. 355.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Contextualisation is one of the distinguishing marks of contemporary ecclesiology; it is an element of the Church’s catholicity. As far as the Catholic Church is concerned, “the emphasis on *context* has been closely bound up with attempts to decentralize and with studies on the theology of the local Church,” (ID, “Ecumenism

...the Christian mystery becomes incarnate: the various contexts form the flesh of this incarnation. [It is ...] an effort to give it an authentic, cultural or 'indigenous' identity [so that the...] doctrinal, liturgical or theological language of faith [emerges...] from a religious language which already exists—a language which faith will assimilate while submitting it to the sole criteria of the Scriptures.¹⁵⁶

Until recently, it was customary to divide the missionary activity of the Church into two successive periods: that of the transplantation of Christianity, inasmuch as it is incarnated in the missionary's local Church, and that of the adaptation. As Tillard formulates it, "on l'importe, puis on l'habillera aux couleurs du pays nouveau; on reproduit le modèle, puis on en fera une copie corrigée."¹⁵⁷ But today—thinks our theologian—missionary effort must be considered as a simultaneous process. Announcing of the Good News and its inculturation should go hand in hand.

Thus, the goal of the mission of the Church is the emergence of a local Church in such a way that that which constitutes the *flesh* of a people, of a religion becomes the *flesh of Christ*,¹⁵⁸ without being absorbed to the point of losing its proper traits.¹⁵⁹ Each local Church could be described as the human space (geographical, cultural, historical, sociological) where the Gospel of God—'accomplished' at Jerusalem in the Resurrection of Christ and the Pentecost which delivers its effect—comes to take hold of the *homo* (man) and the *humus* (the mould) where he grows. Among the elements of this mould, a special importance is to be given to the religious tradition. For the Gospel takes flesh in each local Church in response to the deep religious aspirations of the place.¹⁶⁰ "L'Eglise locale est une greffe de communion sur le corps blessé de la cité et de l'humanité déchirées, où la trace d'un désir de Dieu demeure encore enfouie."¹⁶¹

Here, contextualisation is not at all an *a posteriori* movement. It belongs to the moment of the emergence of the Church of God, because the *local* belongs to the basic mould in which the *Ekklesia tou Theou* is incarnated. It is important to relate this contextualisation to the catholicity of the Church. Catholicity should not be deemed as identical with "the sum total of *contextual* manifestations," which is a dangerous simplification.¹⁶² We cannot reduce

after Bangalore," *OiC* 15 (1979), p. 329). "Contextualisation is a counterweight against the uniformity which "belies the profound nature of the koinonia and makes unity sterile," (*ibid.*, 330).

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 329.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. *Eph* 5, 28-32.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L'Eglise locale*, p. 104.

¹⁶⁰ This is clearly demonstrated by the Areopagus speech of Paul. Cf. P. BOSSUYT and J. RADERMAKERS, "Rencontre de l'incroyant et inculturation, Paul à Athènes", *NRT* 117 (1997), 19-43.

¹⁶¹ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L'Eglise locale*, p. 55.

¹⁶² "Just as the Church is not the sum total of local Churches but their communion, so catholicity is not the sum total of *contextual* manifestations but their communion in unity of faith. It stands for both diversity and unity, unity in diversity, diversity in unity," ID, "Ecumenism after Bangalore," p. 331.

catholicity to the geographical extension of the Christian community. Instead, it is intrinsically bound up with “une incarnation de l’Evangile dans la diversité et donc la «différence» des cultures.”¹⁶³

In this perspective, a local Church may be considered as “un espace d’humanité—avec ses caractéristiques spécifiques, ses racines culturelles, ses traditions, ses déterminismes historiques, ses problèmes—saisi par l’Esprit du Christ ressuscité et, ainsi, passé dans la *Koinônia*.”¹⁶⁴ There is a factor which unites these various local Churches, viz. the communion of each of these communities with the apostolic community. It is this communion which constitutes the Tradition.

Tradition is a communion of all generations and all environments, in their diversities and particularities, in the one faith. This is why Tradition is essential for the Church and ensures her catholicity. [...] Catholicity signifies one of the aspects of communion: on the basis of the apostolic community and with reference to its witness the Holy Spirit gathers together in the unity of the Body of Christ the communities of all places, all times, all environments, all historical situations, all social conditions, and in each of these brings to realization the one Church of God.¹⁶⁵

In the absence of this common memory (Tradition) integrating the multiplicity of traditions, the diversity of this latter can create a situation of *Babel*, i.e. confusion and even division. This gives a new insight into the comprehension of the catholicity of the Church, which can be considered as “the communion of the historical, geographical and cultural diversities in which salvation takes flesh,” or as “the historical, geographical and cultural extension of the koinonia of reconciliation.”¹⁶⁶

6.4. The Local Church as the Starting Point of Mission

According to Tillard, the local Church is the basic level from which the missionary movements should be launched. The Roman decision to entrust the direction of the local Churches of the mission countries to the indigenous bishops must be seen, therefore, as a step in the right direction. For it transformed the mission by giving it an ecclesiological support. In Tillard’s opinion,

...en reconnaissant en la communauté évangélisée une Eglise locale de plein droit, on faisait d’elle non plus d’abord un lieu de réception des dynamismes évangélistes mais aussi un centre de diffusion, d’expansion

¹⁶³ ID, “L’Universel et Local. Réflexion sur l’Eglise universelle et Eglises locales,” *Iren.*, 60 (1987), p. 485 [hereafter cited as J.-M.R. TILLARD, “L’Universel et Local”]. This translation in a variety of human situations manifests the richness of grace.

¹⁶⁴ ID, “Le local et l’universel dans l’Eglise de Dieu,” *POC*, 37 (1987), p. 229, hereafter cited as J.-M.R. TILLARD, “Le local et l’universel.”

¹⁶⁵ ID, “Church of God is a Communion,” p. 123.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

de ceux-ci, donc de mission. D'objet de mission elle devenait sujet de mission. Il appartient en effet à la nature même de toute Eglise locale d'être un point de rayonnement de l'Évangile, *ad extra*.¹⁶⁷

The full recognition of the ecclesiality of a local Church, formerly a mission territory, transforms totally the nature of the relationship and responsibilities. Instead of being a mission undertaken by agents from outside, now the mission is under the responsibility of the local pastors and community: "Les communautés-filles deviennent Eglises-sœurs au sein de la synodalité ecclésiale universelle. Cette évolution n'est pas seulement nominale. Elle est lourde d'effets. Toute une théologie s'y trouve en cause."¹⁶⁸ We know the special role played by Rome in the missionary enterprise of the Church. She provided—through the agency of *Propaganda Fide* and various missionary institutes—missionary personnel and material, which made the emergences of various new local Churches possible in the mission countries. But once a local Church is formed and structured, this aid takes on a different form: it is now transformed into a fraternal aid given to a Sister-Church. This latter now possesses the initiative. The missionary personnel, come from outside, must now serve the mission *in* and *from* this local Church. The whole mechanism should be viewed in the context of a subsidiarity.

6.5. The Local Church's Concern for Christian Unity

As far as a local Church is concerned, unity is both a gift and a task. She should be attentive that whatever she receives from the Spirit and whatever she proclaims and lives in the eucharistic synaxis moves on to her being and action. In other words, she should live the truth of her Eucharist. According to a famous Augustinian vision, she has to be what she receives. She receives the Body of reconciliation, of universal communion. Therefore, she has to be concerned about the communion of all the Churches and of all the baptized. This concern should so penetrate her life that it should be manifested in her prayer, activities and particularly pastoral options.

Disunity and division among Churches is a great challenge to the mission. We find ourselves in a situation in which the baptized, who are incorporated into the Body of reconciliation, are incapable of rendering witness to their reconciliation. The disunited Christians are incapable of constituting the Church that God desires. They form *Churches* or

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

communities, but they do not form a *Church of Churches*.¹⁶⁹ This situation must constantly challenge the bishop in his ministry.

Il est donc impossible que l'évêque chargé d'une communauté qui est l'Eglise existant en ce lieu, cette culture, ce temps, ne soit pas habité par l'inquiétude de l'unité. Celle-ci n'est pas accessoire à sa mission. Elle appartient à sa responsabilité sur l'Eglise de Dieu *en ce lieu*. Lorsqu'il célèbre l'Eucharistie avec son peuple, il ne peut oublier les autres baptisés, membres du Corps du Christ par leur baptême, incapables de clamer le *Amen* qui scelle son Anaphore. Par l'Esprit, il donne aux siens le mystère du Corps de réconciliation, sans pouvoir intégrer à ce don tous les membres de ce Corps.¹⁷⁰

The recognition of this wounded situation, in the *ad intra* life of the Church, must be accompanied by an *ad extra* attitude, a sympathetic regard for the Christian groups which are not in communion with her, and a reception of their critique.

Une Eglise locale qui veut l'unité de tous les baptisés et se prépare à la vivre doit accepter de corriger chez elle ce qui, sans mettre en cause sa fidélité à la grande Tradition, blesse les autres chrétiens. L'unité ne se fera pas sans que, de part et d'autre, on se soit donné des preuves de sincérité dans la recherche de l'entente fraternelle. [...] Lorsque la fidélité à la communion catholique n'est pas en cause, la quête de l'unité doit parfois conduire à la magnanimité, même si celle-ci s'avère coûteuse. A l'évêque d'expliquer clairement à son peuple la situation, au peuple de chercher sérieusement à comprendre. L'Eglise locale a là une responsabilité qu'elle oublie parfois mais que l'expérience révèle très importante pour l'unité.¹⁷¹

Elsewhere Tillard says that the Christian communities should perceive in the *other*—especially in this period of Confessionalism—“une Parole de Dieu qui interpelle, inquiète, dérange et finalement amène à s'interroger sur soi-même.”¹⁷² In this way, other communities help us discover our own limits and poverty.

Another truth is conjoined to this: unity cannot be realised and even the highest of the official decisions will not be concretely effective, if there does not exist in each of the local Churches a climate of desire and awaiting. This climate is created by prayer and is nourished by preaching. The prayer has for object the Church that God desires. It is at the local level that the Christians of various confessions encounter; it is again there that the unity can be re-established. Therefore, occasions must be increased and multiplied to know one another and to be active in common missions. Here, Tillard remarks that, thanks to the ecumenical dialogue, the *other* is no more an enemy we flee from.¹⁷³ However, we must be careful not to let this situation *without walls* degenerate into a climate of indifference. This is where the

¹⁶⁹ Cf. ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 283. “Car le drame de la division affecte le statut de la *catholica* et l'atteint jusque dans sa mission. L'ensemble des baptisés, tous appelés par l'Esprit de Dieu qui les a marqués de son sceau et dont sans nul doute la grâce les travaille, ne rend pas dans le monde le témoignage visible de réconciliation,” ID, “Evêque, le diocèse,” p. 246.

¹⁷⁰ ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 283. Cf. ID, “Evêque, le diocèse,” p. 247.

¹⁷¹ ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 287.

¹⁷² ID, *L'Eglise locale*, p. 379.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

local Churches can play an important role by transforming indifference into an interest for the other Christian groups. Each of the local Churches—living with the *others* and conscious of its ecumenical responsibility—must be such that other local Churches, gathered by the true Eucharist, must be able to recognize themselves in her. According to Tillard, this is one of the key points of an ecclesiology sensitive to the ecumenical problem.

6.6. Concluding Remarks

Unlike the Afanasievan ecclesiology, where the missionary dimension of the local Church is missing, in Tillard's ecclesiology mission is an integral part. He seems to be inspired by the conciliar teaching that "Church is missionary by her very nature."¹⁷⁴ This signifies that ecclesiology implies the study of missiology and *vice versa*.¹⁷⁵

Tillard conceives the mission of the Church in the context of the *Gospel of God* and its goal, which is the re-creation of 'a humanity according to God.' The humanity in question is to be taken in its living context. Here, the theology of catholicity and theology of mission mutually complement. Mission is concerned with the entry of the total human richness and the whole of creation into Christ. That is to say, mission does not start from a *tabula rasa*, but from the 'already' of God's grace, active in humanity and creation as a whole. In this perspective, the goal of the mission and that of the *Gospel of God* coincide: it is the transformation of humanity into 'a humanity according to God.'

It is here that we perceive the meaning and importance of inculturation or contextualisation. Inculturation is needed so that the *flesh* of a people becomes the *flesh* of Christ. It does not constitute a subsequent stage in the *ecclesiogenesis*, but rather the *local* belongs to the basic mould in which the Church of God is incarnated. Hence, *ecclesiogenesis* and inculturation together form a simultaneous event. Once this event has taken place, the Church of God in all its potentiality exists there; hence this new Church should constitute a base from which missionary dynamism should proceed. This mission theology is based on the ecclesiology of communion, which calls upon the Churches, new and old, to relate to each other as sister-Churches; any collaboration extended to another Church, especially in the field of evangelisation, should not be used to subordinate the receiving Church in any way whatsoever.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *AG 2*.

¹⁷⁵ "Le problème de l'élaboration d'une critériologie [...] de la mission n'apparaissait pas du tout comme un chapitre particulier de l'ecclésiologie, mais bien comme central à l'ecclésiologie elle-même. En effet, si le concept de la mission dépend de la conception qu'on a de l'Eglise, il est vrai aussi que la conception de l'Eglise dépend de la façon dont on en conçoit la mission," S. DIANICH, "Où en est l'ecclésiologie?" *Conc(F)*, 166 (1981), p. 150.

Being an ecumenist for the most part of his theological career, it is only natural that Tillard underlines the ecumenical dimension of the mission of the local Church. According to him, disunity among the Churches is a great challenge to the mission of the Church. Churches are called upon to realise the goal of the *Gospel of God*: the reconciled humanity; as such Christianity should be a *Church of Churches*. But the present situation is far from this reality: we have several communities and Churches, not *Church of Churches*. Born from the dynamism of Pentecost, every local Church should always strive to take concrete steps so that reconciliation among Christian Churches becomes a reality.

7. Dynamism of Communion within the Local Church

7.1. Introduction

Tillard underlines time and again that the Church of God is a communion in all its aspects, levels and realizations. This is true of the Church as a whole and each of its members. In other words, nothing in the Church is outside communion. Hence, according to the perspective of an authentic ecclesiology of communion, any ministry should be seen as situated within a symphony of charisms. That is to say, every member of the Church is caught up in the dynamism of communion, for every one of them has one or another service to accomplish within the communion that is a local Church.

7.2. Osmosis of Charisms and Services

7.2.1. The Communal Structure of the Ministry

If everything in the Church is communion, the ministry should have also a communal structure. The *raison d'être* of ministry is related to communion. Communion is at once a gift of God and the visible actualisation of it in human beings. This necessitates that it should be always kept in contact with the source of grace and be maintained there. This function of maintenance, guidance, overseeing in the name of Christ, is what is meant by ministry. Since each of the local Churches is *catholica*, the ministry—in its diverse forms—will have for object both the local community (a communion) and the *communion of communions*, and both of these should recognise in each other.

All ordained ministers are Christians who are themselves formed by the local Church to guide its life.¹⁷⁶ As Tillard explains, “on est ministre dans la condition chrétienne, dans la

¹⁷⁶ As St Augustine has said, “en ce qui nous concerne il faut considérer deux choses: d’abord que nous sommes chrétiens, ensuite que nous avons l’autorité; ayant l’autorité nous sommes compté parmi les pasteurs si

tissu de l’Eglise locale, dans la «*communio fidelium*», ministre ayant besoin de ministre. Même si l’on est l’évêque de Rome.”¹⁷⁷ One is chosen and ordained for a special role within this *whole*, which are a priestly people of God. The priesthood of the people is a communal gift. “Les personnes ne participent à ce *sacerdoce commun* que dans la mesure où elles appartiennent à la *communio qui constitue* l’Eglise de Dieu”¹⁷⁸ Dogmatically and in the register of finality, “ministère demeure second face à la vie du sacerdoce baptismal. Il n’existe que pour elle et jamais sans elle.”¹⁷⁹ At the same time, the priestly people of God “ne peut vivre que de la *communio* des charismes, des dons et des *offices* dont le ministère ordonné lui signifie la source unique: le Christ.”¹⁸⁰

But by the passing of time, the ministry came to be understood in the light of the levitical institution. This led to a distinction between the clergy and the laity. The hardening of this demarcating line between the *ordo* of the clergy and the laity will gradually lead to the loss of the view of the People of God as a whole, called to service by the Holy Spirit. With the clergy assuming most of the important tasks in the Church, the whole life of the community became dependant of them.

Vatican II has tried to restore the relationship between the faithful and the hierarchy as envisaged and practised by the great Tradition, according to which “l’Eglise de Dieu se révèle comme modelée à l’image de la *societas* du Père, du Fils et de l’Esprit, par la puissance de l’Esprit (LG 14)”¹⁸¹ It is this Trinitarian rootage which gives to the hierarchical institution of the Church its *raison d’être*. It is for the life of the Church that the ordained ministry—including that of the bishop—exists and the Church lives in synergy of its members. The ordained ministry must be necessarily integrated to the necessary complementarity of all the ‘energies’ of the Spirit. It finds its applicability in the lived reality of the local Churches.

7.2.2. The Ministry of the Bishop within the Priestly People of God

The hierarchical ministry of the bishop is bestowed with a charism which is absolutely necessary for the edification of the Church. This is because “l’Eglise n’est Corps du Christ qu’en recevant du Christ, dont son ordination l’a fait le *diakonos*, le *sacramentum*.”¹⁸² At the

nous en sommes de bons, étant chrétiens nous sommes avec vous, nous aussi des brebis,” *Sermo* 47, 2 (CCSL 41, 573).

¹⁷⁷ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, pp. 221-222.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 218.

same time, his charism is inserted into a *communio* of charisms, given to all the baptised. The charism of the minister should find its place within the charisms of the community.

Il n'est pas au-dessus des autres charismes mais avec eux, en communion avec eux et à leur service. [...] il s'agit d'un service inscrit dans un noeud de services, tous ordonnés au bien non seulement des personnes mais de l'Eglise en son ensemble, ce qui implique intelligence de la foi, mission, culte, sainteté, témoignage commun. Comme tel, donc dans sa spécificité, ce charisme exige d'être intégré à la nécessaire complémentarité de tous les charismes, et non confronté à un jeu de majorité démocratique.¹⁸³

The symphony of charisms of the bishop and the rest of the people of God is manifested in the sacramental life of a local Church. This is particularly visible at the eucharistic synaxis, when “«le Corps du Christ en ce lieu» se tourne vers le Père afin de le glorifier [...] et l'implorer [...] en *communio* avec toutes les Eglises locales dispersées dans les lieux et les temps.”¹⁸⁴

Il se fonde sur le dynamisme sacrificiel de la réception du don de Dieu, qui fait de *tous* un *unique* Corps, et de la réponse de *tous* à ce don en un *unique* Sacrifice offert au Père. Réception par tous et réponse de tous, dans le Christ, sont comme la systole et la diastole de la vie de l'Eglise locale, Corps vivant du Seigneur.¹⁸⁵

Quite early on, the ministry of the bishop appears to be essentially oriented towards the eucharistic synaxis. This is for a reason: the eucharistic synaxis is the central act of the community. Gathered for the partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, the synaxis is the *sacramentum* not only of the communion of the faithful in the unique Body of Christ, but also of the communion of charisms, states, function, and services within the unique and indivisible Church of God. At the synaxis, the minister is neither above nor outside the community, but within it. The ordained ministry exists in view of the sacerdotal act of the whole community.¹⁸⁶ Ever since the time of St Justin, the function of the one who ‘presides over’ has been seen as interwoven into those of the ‘one who reads’, ‘the deacon’ and ‘the whole people who breaks into the exclamation, *Amen*’.¹⁸⁷

This symphony of various charisms and functions is true not only of the Eucharist but also of other sacraments such as baptism or the sacrament in which the community is given its minister (ordination). In the administration of baptism, although the minister plays a central role, it is the community which receives a new member into its fold. In the case of ordination, not only had the community a say in the choice of the candidate, but also he is ordained in a

¹⁸³ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Autorité et mémoire dans l'Eglise,” *Iren.*, 61 (1988), p. 338-339, *hereafter cited as* J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Autorité et mémoire.”

¹⁸⁴ J.-M.R. TILLARD, *L'Eglise locale*, p. 151-152.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, pp. 220-221.

¹⁸⁷ ST JUSTIN, *I Apol.*, 65: 3.

eucharistic synaxis in which the community had a key role to play.¹⁸⁸ This community is constituted of the *presbyterium* and the rest of the people. The descent of the Holy Spirit takes place during the prayer of the community. This prayer of the community is, in some way, an extension of the role it played in the attestation of the faith of the candidate. It is to this prayer that God would answer through the mediation of the epiclesis and gesture of the bishops. Besides, the very first act of the new bishop is to preside over the eucharistic celebration where the community will express and nourish its proper reality. Thus, we see that the ordained ministry remains inseparable from the priesthood of the community as such.

7.2.3. Communion among Various Hierarchical Ministries

Among the various ordained ministries, that of the bishop is the most important. Yet he does not exercise his ministry in isolation. Most of the earliest Christian writings¹⁸⁹ group the bishop and the deacon together. The *Presbyterium*, in fact, started as a college of councillors around the bishop. Gradually, in certain particular circumstances (e.g. persecution), they were accorded the right to preside over the Eucharist assisted by a deacon.

The rise and expansion of rural parishes only accelerated the evolution in this direction. Consequently, the role of *Presbyterium* as a collegial body of councillors around the bishop was practically forgotten. Here, Vatican II has brought in some corrective. Today, the presbyteral council forms part of the structure of the local Church.

La relation évêque-*presbyterium* est à double sens: de même que le presbytre ne saurait se passer de l'évêque, l'évêque ne saurait se passer de son *presbyterium*. Une telle corrélation est aujourd'hui accentuée du fait que depuis plusieurs siècles l'Eglise locale dont l'évêque a l'*episkopè* est elle-même *communion* de communautés, d'organismes pastoraux confiés aux membres du *presbyterium*. Bien qu'en dernière analyse il soit le seul à décider, l'évêque ne saurait jamais le faire à la lumière de son seul point de vue.¹⁹⁰

But unfortunately, in many a local Church, the dynamical relation that should exist between the bishop and *presbyterium* is all but healthy.

Tout se décide souvent d'en haut et le conseil presbytéral—dont en quelques lieux certains membres «fuient les réunions parce qu'ils les trouvent sans effet»—possède dans le diocèse une maigre influence. Il arrive que l'évêque argue de «l'inévitable ignorance des dossiers par un si grand nombre de membres» pour éviter de consulter son conseil sur les questions brûlantes. Il préfère pour celle-ci des consultations individuelles. D'autres craignent une démocratisation du ministère, brimant la liberté de l'évêque et violant sa fonction officielle de «premier responsable». Ailleurs, l'évêque résidentiel préfère chercher conseil chez l'évêque

¹⁸⁸ «Il ne se réduit pas à un acte interpersonnel qui impliquerait uniquement l'évêque prononçant la prière d'ordination et ordonné. Il se déroule entre le groupe des évêques—témoin de la présence vivante de la Tradition apostolique en leur propre communauté et chargés de transmettre la «puissance de l'Esprit souverain» pour le ministère apostolique—et la communauté,» J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 223.

¹⁸⁹ *1Tim* 3,2; *Didache* 15, 1; *Clement of Rome* 42, 4-5; *The Shepherd of Hermas*, vision III, 5, 1-13,1.

¹⁹⁰ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L'Eglise locale*, p. 203.

auxiliaire, «[son] frère évêque ayant, lui, un vrai charisme épiscopal». Ce sont des situations regrettables. Elles brisent la *communio* de la *diakonia*.¹⁹¹

It is needless to say that such a practice amounts to a neglect of the ‘presbyteral charism’ that the local Church receives from the Holy Spirit.

Deacons also played an important role in the ancient Church. While the presbyterium advised the bishop, the deacon assisted him. He was considered his ears, eyes and hands.¹⁹² Being a close confidant of the bishop, it was his duty to brief the bishop on the real state of affairs of the local Church. Often he acted as the official emissary of the bishop to other Churches. It means that, in the primitive Church, the deacon was not a ‘mini-presbyter’, an auxiliary of the priest, but rather, his ministry stood in relation to the bishop whose ministry he was supposed to assist. He thus rendered present the bishop among his people.

7.2.4. Hierarchical Ministries and other Services of the Gospel

From the early period onwards, we can see developing—along with the three ordained ministries—also what Tillard calls ‘other services of the Gospel,’ according to the needs of the time and situations. These ministries include those of the widows, lectors, sub-deacons, confessors, teachers, virgins, etc. The ordained ministries of the bishop, priest and deacon, by their origin and purpose, have a permanent structure and have not known much evolution in history. This is not the case with other evangelical services, which are—as Tillard puts it—“plus mobiles, suscitées selon les nécessités des temps ou des lieux, non à causes de leur lien avec l’institution héritée des Apôtres. Ils varient donc en fonction des contextes, souples devant les situations.”¹⁹³ These services, in fact, allow the Church to incarnate herself in the flesh of humanity. These services emerge normally (although not exclusively) in the laity. In the Church of the first decades we see several such services emerge, which were not dependent on a formal apostolic mandate, but were only recognised by the community and its leaders. There is a relationship of communion between the more stable and structuring ministries and the more mobile services of the Gospel.

Les premiers visent à ce que toutes les activités tournent au profit de tous, dans l’unité et la fidélité à la tradition évangélique; les seconds visent à ce que tout don de l’Esprit fait pour la communauté y porte son fruit. Tout le service de l’Eglise et de sa mission ne repose alors ni en droit ni en fait sur les mêmes; les

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹⁹² “...que le diacre soit l’oreille de l’évêque, [qu’il soit] sa bouche, son coeur et son âme, parce que vous êtes deux en une seule volonté et, dans votre unanimité, l’Eglise aussi trouvera la paix,” *Didascalica*, trans. F. NAU, 101, cited in *Ibid.*, p. 208.

¹⁹³ *Id.*, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 270.

responsabilités s'exercent en une *communio*n qui non seulement respecte les charismes personnels mais fait droit à l'imprévu de l'Esprit.¹⁹⁴

According to Tillard, ecclesiology must take seriously the status of these evangelical services.

Les ministres ordonnés (évêques, presbytres et diacres) débordés par les besoins croissants de la communauté chrétienne et de surcroît fort diminués dans leurs effectifs n'y peuvent suffire. D'ailleurs, ils ne sont pas appelés, de par leur *munus* propre, à y suffire. Aujourd'hui comme toujours—mais sans doute plus qu'autrefois—leur ministère ne peut, et, ne doit s'accomplir qu'au sein d'une symphonie d'autres ministères ou services de l'Évangile. [...] Il s'agit d'entrer dans ce dynamisme de communion des fonctions. Et là les services évangéliques non ordonnés retrouvent la place essentielle qui leur revient.¹⁹⁵

This place is based on the right which belongs to every baptised. He/she—as member of Christ by his/her baptism—has the right and duty to take part in the mission of the Body to build itself up by the articulation of all the functions and charisms. We cannot fix *a priori* all possible forms of the evangelical services. It should be adopted in function of the varying situations. In general, the services of the competent laity can and should be made use of in several areas of pastorate. The services accomplished by the non-ordained ministers are not to be treated as some sort of *delegation* or *concession*, as if it were to be normally exercised by the ordained ministry.¹⁹⁶ Tillard is of opinion that much corrective has to be made in the pastoral practice today.

La fidélité d'un pasteur à sa vocation ne requiert pas qu'il chapeaute tout. Autre est le fait de porter *devant Dieu* la responsabilité du troupeau, d'avoir à veiller soigneusement à ce que les biens de l'Évangile passent en lui, autre le fait de n'avoir pas à faire confiance, avec toute la communauté, à ceux ou celles qui ont le sérieux voulu pour qu'on se fie à eux en certains domaines. Dans toute cette question, si l'on demeure attentif à ce que les tâches soient en *communio*n, dans une responsabilité solidaire, en dialogue franc, l'attribution à des fidèles non ordonnés de certaines fonctions actuellement concentrées dans les pasteurs ordonnés ne contredit pas l'intention qui commande dans l'Écriture l'institution du ministère. L'essentiel est la communion avec l'évêque et sa propre communion au témoignage apostolique.¹⁹⁷

7.2.5. Practice of Synodality at the Level of the Local Church

The osmosis between charisms and corresponding functions, of which we have discussed above, manifests itself in the synodal institutions existing in the local Churches. The canonical stipulation that the decisions taken by such institutions (synod, council, etc) can become valid only when they are 'received' by the bishop or the pastor¹⁹⁸ shows the dependence of the manifestations of *sensus fidei* (hence, of *sensus fidelium*) on the bishop or the pastor. And this dependence is essential to the life of the local Church.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 281.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 280-281.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. CIC 465-466; 500§1, §2, §3; 514 §1, §2; 536 §1, §2; 537.

Although the canon law demands that the ‘superior’ should respect the view of the faithful, nothing in the law can juridically prevent him from taking a decision contrary to the common opinion. “Telle est la liberté que le ministre ordonné tient de la responsabilité reçue avec le sacrement.”¹⁹⁹ He possesses this liberty in order to be able to avoid taking decisions contrary to his mission of being the guarantor of communion within a local Church or of the communion with the other local Churches.²⁰⁰ Briefly, the life of the local Church “se règle selon le mode dit synodal où, à tous les échelons, la communauté entière se trouve active mais dans le respect des fonctions propres, dont certaines sont données avec le sacrement de ministère.”²⁰¹ In this synodal dynamism of the local Church we can see two levels: in the first level, Christ is heard in his members; in the second level, Christ is heard in the *sacramentum* of the transcendent function of the Head, vivifying and unifying his members.

Cette articulation proprement synodale est essentielle à la vie de l’Eglise locale. [...] Droits et devoirs de tous les fidèles fondés dans le sacrement de l’Initiation chrétienne d’une part, responsabilité spécifique du ministre ordonné fondée dans le sacrement de l’Ordre d’autre part tissent ensemble, dans leur communion, la structure sacramentelle de l’Eglise locale. [...] Ce que manifeste l’Eucharistie, que tous célèbrent mais où un seul est le *sacramentum* du Christ Tête, doit se vérifier, analogiquement, sur tous les plans de l’existence ecclésiale.²⁰²

7.3. Ministry at the Service of Koinonia

7.3.1. From the Unitive Function in the Local Church to the Eucharistic Presidency

As we know from the New Testament and the patristic tradition, the presidency of the eucharistic synaxis was assumed by the one who was in charge of the faithful keeping of the Apostolic deposit. Thus, from the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, we learn that the ministry of the eucharistic president is central to the comprehension of the local Church. According Tillard, if we need to correctly interpret the thinking of Ignatius, it is important to underline that the minister, whom he calls bishop, is a personality at the centre of the life of a local Church. Nothing which has reference to the Church could be done without him. Since the eucharistic synaxis is the gathering of the whole community around Christ, its head,²⁰³ it is

¹⁹⁹ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, pp. 330-331.

²⁰⁰ But it can sometimes happen that the responsible person in question (bishop or pastor) can in his decision-making dispense with the *vota* of the community, without sufficient reason and by invoking the hierarchical principle according to which all decisions should come from him. This difficulty, in Tillard’s opinion, comes from a weakness inherent to all possessions of authority, viz. confusing of authority with power and the latter’s desire to be absolute and solitary and to have everything under its control.

²⁰¹ J. M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 331.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 330-332.

²⁰³ *Kephalè* is here taken as both source of life of the body, and as having authority over it.

only normal that it is presided over by the one who presides over its unity and charity.²⁰⁴ As Tillard formulates it, “Ignace va de la fonction « unitive » de l’évêque à sa présidence « eucharistique », et non *vice versa*.”²⁰⁵ Ignatian writings indicate the reason why the presidency of the eucharistic celebration is attributed only to the minister charged with the function of maintaining and consolidating the ecclesial communion in the wake of the apostolic mission.²⁰⁶ From the Ignatian point of view, the eucharistic synaxis embodies the very moment where the reality of the local Church is manifested in all clarity. Church comes from God, who gives Salvation by restoring the *communion*. The first responsible person for this *communion* is at the summit of his function when he presides over the celebration of the Body and Blood of Christ. Following Ignatius, Tertullian and Origen also attest to this tradition.

La présidence eucharistique est inséparable de la charge de garder l’Eglise locale dans son être sacerdotale, c’est-à-dire dans la *communion* que la première Tradition qualifie de « sacerdotale » au sens de la lettre de Pierre.²⁰⁷

Whatever the bishop accomplishes in his Church is a ‘*diakonia*’: a ministry. It is a mandate linked to a mission given by God and implying a special position within the communion. It is a responsibility coming from ‘above’ and, therefore, carries with it a corresponding authority. In the New Testament, the verb *episkopeô* contains the idea of a gratuitous visit to a person to whom one has some responsibility.²⁰⁸ In LXX, ‘*episkopè*’ is a translation of the Hebrew word *paqad* which means ‘visit of God,’ the event which puts the community in the presence of God. Seen in this perspective, Jesus is the supreme visit of God.²⁰⁹ There is an apparent link between this ‘visit’ (ἐπεσκέψατο-*epeskepsato*) and the charge (*episkopè*) given, for instance, to Mathias²¹⁰ and the function of *episkopoi* of the Church of Ephesus.²¹¹ The same link may be established between the ‘visit’ of God, the title given to Christ²¹² and the function of the elders to take care of the flock of God.²¹³ The bishop, in the local Church, echoes the presence

²⁰⁴ Cf. IGNATIUS, *Smyrn.* 6: 2; *Tral.* 3: 1-2; *Phild.* 2: 1; 7: 2; *Magn.* 7: 1-2.

²⁰⁵ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 237.

²⁰⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 238.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

²⁰⁸ It is ‘watching on’ someone, envelope him with a look full of comprehension and affectionate attention. *Episkopè* designates this ‘watching over’, ‘giving attention to’, which the Spirit accomplished in the Church since the Pentecost.

²⁰⁹ *Lk* 1: 68: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people.”

²¹⁰ *Acts* 1: 20: “For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his habitation become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it’; and ‘His office (ἐπισκοπήν) let another take’.”

²¹¹ *Acts* 20: 28: “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (ἐπισκόπους), to care for the Church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son.”

²¹² Cf. 1 *Pt* 2: 12; 2: 25.

²¹³ 1 *Pt* 5, 2: “Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly.”

of Christ and, in him, the presence of the Father. This is the reason why the term *episkopos* is used to designate the most important form of diakonia. It ties the function of the one who leads the local Church to God's visit, hence to the Christ-event whereby the people of God is set in the presence of the Father.

Seen in this perspective, the *diakonia* of the bishop is inseparable from the Eucharist—the memorial of the Christ event—which is the heart of the life of the local Church. The bishop is not the 'lord' of the Church, but its *diakonos*, with the duty to keep her in the 'presence' of God. For the accomplishment of this task, he has received the gift of the Spirit. The bishop is the *episkopos* in the *episkopè* (visit) of Christ and, in him, of the Father.

By his *diakonia* to the 'visit of God' the bishop places the local Church within the realism of God's love for the poor and the miserable.²¹⁴ He has the mandate to remain within his Church as the echo of Christ's mercifulness and readiness to serve. He has to preside over with authority the necessary correlation between the two meals of the Lord: meal in which Christ gives himself as the Bread of Life and the meal in which the hungry are fed. In this way, he is in his Church the *sacramentum* of the divine *agape*.

7.3.2. The Ministry of the Bishop and the Apostolic Ministry

In this discussion on the relationship between the episcopal ministry and the apostolic ministry we have to distinguish between *apostolic continuity* and *apostolic succession*. Continuity is broader than succession. The apostolic succession exists only in function of the apostolic continuity. The apostolic witness (*martyria*) constitutes the axis of the ecclesial life and faith. The Church can be said to remain

...faithful to its proper nature and mission when from generation to generation it remains in continuity with what was attested and handed on 'once-for-all' (*ephapax*) by the apostolic group. In this context, to speak of *continuity* is to speak of permanence of the same kerygma of the same central truths about God and Christ Jesus, the same view of human destiny, the same conception of the finality of the Church, the same essential and indestructible means of grace, the same *koinonia* in prayer and mission.²¹⁵

A grasp of the biblical notion of *memory* is necessary to correctly understand the nature and implications of apostolic continuity. Continuity is not simply a fact of enduring; in an ecclesial context, it refers to the fact that the Church continues to live in the *memory* of its origin. The Spirit, who makes this possible, perpetuates the Church in the *memory* not only of "the *acta et dicta* of Jesus but also of the significance which, under the influence of this Spirit,

²¹⁴ Cf. J. M. R. TILLARD, *L'Eglise locale*, p. 189.

²¹⁵ ID, "The Eucharist in Apostolic Continuity," *OiC*, 24 (1988), p. 17, hereafter cited as J. M. R. TILLARD, "Eucharist in Apostolic Continuity."

the apostolic community perceived in them. [...] It is the Spirit who bridges the distance between the events which were at the foundation of the faith and the present day.”²¹⁶

It is in this essential relation to the apostolic tradition (i.e. to the faithful succession in the apostolic deposit) that we must situate the institution of ministry in the Church. According to Tillard, we must seek the *raison d'être* of ministry in the Church's need to be faithful to the Revelation in Jesus Christ, known only through the *communion* to the Apostles.²¹⁷ Thus, the *diakonia* of the bishop can be authentically accomplished only as a *memory* of the apostolic *diakonia*, because only the apostolic community could, in an authentic manner, transmit the content and meaning of the ‘visit of God.’ The apostolic cell is much more than an instrument which proclaims the Good News or brings the means of salvation. It is also the sign, the *memorial* of the rootage of Salvation in the *diakonia* of Christ.²¹⁸ It is, by definition, the memorial of the Church's constituent relation to Jesus. This witness of the apostolic community has an essential ‘once-for-all’ (*ephapax*) character. Therefore, in order to know what, in fact, was God's visit in Jesus Christ, the Church of God has got to always return to what the apostolic witness has engraved in her *memory*. It is not enough for the Church to take the point of departure in the apostolic witness, but she has to perpetually live in the *ephapax* of the faith proclaimed by Peter (in the midst of the Eleven) in the centre of the *kairos* of Pentecost, and of the *koinonia* which the Spirit creates there.

According to Tillard, there is but one Word: the apostolic Word, ceaselessly received and retold in the living tradition. There is but one Baptism: the apostolic baptism of Pentecost in which the Spirit plunges all generations into the *ephapax* of the Easter. There is but one Eucharist: that of the Paschal Christ, which the Spirit renders perpetually present in all the local Churches. There is but one ministry: the apostolic ministry, to which the Spirit incorporates new members by the imposition of hands of those who are already incorporated.²¹⁹ Therefore, the *diakonia* of the bishop stays in an encompassing relation to the *Ekklesia* of Jerusalem. This *diakonia* is the function which, in the absence of the apostolic group, has the task to ensure that the local Churches remain in the *memory* which makes present, by actualising it, the content of the unique and unrepeatable witness of those who have known ‘the visit of God’ (his *episkopè*) in Jesus Christ.²²⁰ The bishops do not replace the apostolic group. They are their vicars. The vicar, however, is not simply the one who repeats.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²¹⁷ Cf. ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 230.

²¹⁸ “Les baptisés ne sont Corps du Christ qu'en demeurant dépendants de ce qu'a fait et été le Seigneur, en se recevant de lui, de sa vie, de sa Croix et de sa Résurrection,” *Ibid.*, p. 226.

²¹⁹ Cf. ID, *L'Eglise locale*, pp. 174-175.

²²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 175.

He has to actualise, inculturate, and incarnate the apostolic witness in a particular people and time, and to supervise it by giving heed to whatever newness the Spirit of God brings in. Thus, we can observe a tension between the ‘once-for-all’ and the ‘each time’.

However, communion between the apostolic Church and the present-day Church should not be reduced to the mere ministerial line, but rather it finds its substance in “la coïncidence de l’Eucharistie locale avec l’Eucharistie apostolique.”²²¹ In this way, the apostolic Church is made present in each of the local Churches. Hence, it does not suffice for a local Church to have validly ordained ministers; they should be also in the ‘apostolic continuity,’ in such a way that this Church—in its particular historical situation—remains in the ‘apostolic Tradition.’ This apostolic continuity must be visible in its teaching of faith, sacramental life, inspiration for the mission, in the keeping of the community in her preferential option for the poor, in the solidarity with other Churches, in the faithful handing of whatever she has received from the Apostles. In brief, a local Church needs ministers who see to (*episkopein*) that the local Church remains in *communion* with the apostolic community. The *truth* and *validity* of the ordination of the minister is situated within this *ensemble*. It is a guarantee in view of this continuity. “Les ministres *se succèdent*, mais dans la « continuité apostolique » des Eglise locales.”²²² This brings us to the bond between the bishop and his see.

7.4. The Bishop and his Sedes

The bishop and his *cathedra* are closely related. *Sedes* has a rich ecclesiological signification. Generation after generation, it remains the same as the bearer of faith, tradition and history. This large data (of faith, tradition and history) precedes the bishops who come to occupy the see one after another. In this way, we can say that the bishop depends on the see he occupies. As Tillard formulates it, “dans la grande Tradition, une fois fondée une Eglise locale, c’est elle qui donnera à l’évêque sa *sedes*, sa *cathedra*, son siège, d’où il présidera sa vie.”²²³ He is called upon not only to watch over the faithful, but also to keep intact the heritage of the local Church he presides over. Ensuring the continuity of the living Tradition is an important task of the bishop. Thus, the see (*cathedra*) represents—much more than the pastoral ring—the realism and the completeness of the union between the bishop and the local Church. The occupation of the *cathedra* by the new bishop signifies, on the one hand, that he is ‘received’ by the local Church and, on the other, that he ‘receives’ her along with the tradition she lives by.

²²¹ ID, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 240.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 241.

²²³ ID, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 222.

The *sedes* also signifies the eschatological scope of the ministry of the bishop. It is a sign and pre-taste of the ‘*Thronos*’ of glory, around which the eschatological Church would be gathered for the eternal liturgy in the Kingdom.²²⁴ It signifies equally the close link the local Church has to her origins. As Pope Leo the Great has formulated, ‘le très béni apôtre Pierre ne cesse pas de présider sur sa *sedes*.’²²⁵ The importance of the *sedes* is further indicated by the fact that across the centuries all who were being ordained to a ministry had to be ordained to a *see*. Once wedded to a Church, a minister could not quit it.²²⁶ But this ancient practice was interrupted during later times, especially in the West.

Dans plusieurs cas, on sera ordonné évêque (comme nonce, membre de la curie romaine, recteur d’université) puis longtemps après désigné pour une Eglise locale. Sous cette pratique, s’actualise la vision d’une Eglise universelle transcendant les Eglises locales, et pour laquelle, *comme telle*, «de façon absolue», on est ordonné. On appartient d’abord comme évêque au «collège épiscopal» auquel agrège l’ordination. Ensuite on deviendra pasteur d’une Eglise locale, de laquelle d’ailleurs on pourra passer à une autre.²²⁷

This practice is not without ecclesiological difficulties: How can one be a minister in the ecclesial body without being a minister of a local Church? As an attempt to circumvent this problem, the practice of attributing fictitious *sees*—which do not any more exist—to those who are ordained bishops in an absolute manner was started. But this was no solution to the ecclesiological difficulty we face. Tillard explains the situation as follows:

...l’ecclésiologie «universelle» avec sa conception d’un «collège épiscopal» qui ecclésiologiquement d’une certaine façon transcende la *communio* des Eglises locales—puisqu’on peut être ordonné évêque titulaire, sans appartenance à une Eglise locale existant concrètement (par l’attribution d’une *sedes* qui n’existe plus)—blesse l’authentique nature de l’épiscopat. [...] On est dans la logique du glissement de l’«*Ecclesia ex* (ou in) *Ecclesiis*» aux «*Ecclesiae ex Ecclesia universali*».²²⁸

7.4.1. Role of the Local Church as a whole in the Designation of its Bishop

The relation between the *sedes* and the *sedens* is manifested also by the role recognised—in the ancient tradition—to the local Church as a whole in the election of its bishop. The

²²⁴ Cf. *Rev* 4, 1-11; 5, 1-14; 7, 9-17; 19, 1-10; 21, 1-8; 22, 3-5.

²²⁵ *Sermo* 5, 4 (*PL* 54, 153-155; *Sermo* 3, 2-3 (*PL* 54, 145-146), cited in *ibid.* p. 22.

²²⁶ In 314, the Council of Arles had demanded the deposition of all those who leave the see for which they were ordained, cf. *MANSI* 2, 472 (can. 21). We read in canon 6 of the Council of Chalcedon (451): “Nul ne doit être ordonné de façon absolue [*apolehumenôs*], ni évêque, ni diacre, ni en général pour une fonction ecclésiastique, s’il n’est assigné en particulier à une église de ville ou de village, à une chapelle de martyr, ou à un monastère. Le saint concile a décidé que, pour ceux qui seraient ordonnés de façon absolue, cette ordination serait sans effet, et que, pour la honte de celui qui les aurait ordonnés, ils ne pourraient exercer nulle part [leurs fonctions] [*mèdamou*], trans. P. Th. CAMELOT, *Ephèse et Chalcedoine*. coll. «Histoire des conciles oecuméniques», t. II (Paris: 1961), cited in J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 226.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

patristic witness²²⁹ clearly shows that a local Church—its clergy and the faithful—not only ‘receives’ the bishop whom God gives her, but also actively participates towards this ‘gift.’ Ecclesial conscience—as expressed in the rites of ordination—is profoundly marked by this necessity of the implication of the local Church in the choice and even in the ordination of its ministers.²³⁰ In Tillard’s opinion, the slow disappearance of ‘election by the people’ is a wound to the ecclesial truth of *diakonia*. For all the baptised, thanks to the gifts they have received from the Spirit, are not only the beneficiaries, but also responsible, in their role, to build up the Church of God.

The practice of direct nomination of the bishop by Rome²³¹ was the result of various factors. Often, the frequent *impasse* in arriving at a consensus in the electoral college necessitated appeals to Rome. At other times, when political conflicts prevented a free election, the pope used to nominate a bishop on his own, drawing support from a theology of *plenitudo potestatis*, which allows the ‘principal cause’ (here applied to pope) to intervene in exceptional cases by by-passing the ‘secondary causes’ (here applied to the electoral college). Financial factors also played their role, for the nomination of bishops was effectively a source of income too. Tillard, however, thinks that

Le dialogue œcuménique pourrait apprendre à l’Eglise catholique des façons équilibrées, et longuement éprouvées, d’associer l’Eglise locale au choix de son évêque. D’ailleurs, désirant aller même au-delà de ce que prescrit le nouveau code pour les Eglises orientales en communion avec Rome, la plupart des partenaires œcuméniques font de cette participation à l’élection épiscopale une exigence de toute union avec le siège de Rome.²³²

²²⁹ In his letter to the Corinthians, Clement of Rome mentions that “Those who have received their charge from the Apostles’ have received it ‘with the consent of the whole Church’ (I CLEMENT, 44: 3). Some time later *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (200 A.D.) stipulates that “the one who was chosen by the people as a whole be ordained bishop” (N° 2 (SC 11 bis 41). Towards the middle of the 3rd century, Cyprian—recounting the election of Pope Cornelius—says that it happened by “unanimous witness of the clergy, by agreement with them of the portion of the faithful people who were present, by the community of venerable bishops... (CYPRIAN, *Epistle*, 55, 8, 2-4). A similar witness to the role played by the faithful in the election of bishop available in *Apostolic Constitutions*, compiled in 380 (Cf. VII, 4 (SC 336, 141-143). Sulpice Sévère—in his *Life of St Martin*, written in 397—recalls that the people of Tours had a great say in the election of the monk Martin to their see (Cf. SC 133, 270-273). In the same vein, Pope Celestine († 432) stipulates that “no bishop be given against the will of the people” (*Ep.* 4, 5 (PL 50, 434). A similar formulation can be seen in Pope Leo the Great (450) also: “Nobody shall be ordained against the will of the people, except that he was asked for” (*Ep.* 14, 5 [PL 54, 673]).

²³⁰ See our discussion above under the title, “Symphony of Charisms in Sacramental life.”

²³¹ In 1363, Urban V reserves to the Holy See the nomination to abbeys, episcopal and metropolitan sees. From this period onwards, it is the pope who nominates a bishop in the Latin Church (except for a few dioceses which have conserved their ancient practice of cathedral chapters: e.g., Basel in Switzerland). It is evident that this drift in the West should be considered more the result of historical circumstances than the fruit of doctrinal evolution.

²³² J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 240.

7.4.2. Ministry and 'Representation'

A local Church's place and function within the communion of Churches have their personification in the person of her bishop.²³³ She considers him as the organ of her fraternal relationship with other Churches. It is also by him that she will be later represented in the councils.²³⁴ It is because of this representative character of the relationship between the bishop and his community that the schism or rupture of communion as well as reconciliation or re-establishment of relationship between Churches takes place through their pastors. The recognition of the apostolicity of the ministers of a community was considered as equivalent to the recognition of her ecclesiality.

The nature of the relationship between the community and its bishop was compared in tradition to the presence of the river in its source, the child in the father, people in the king, effect in the cause, etc. At least, that was the position of St Cyprian who wrote—in the height of his contestation with Florentius Puppianus—that “the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop,”²³⁵ to such a point that “if someone is not with the bishop, he is not in the Church. The idea of *Bishop as the Husband of the local Church* is also a powerful image which evokes the solidarity between the bishop and his Church.”²³⁶

In the light of this discussion, Tillard draws the conclusion that there exists between the bishop and his Church “un dynamisme d'inclusion mutuelle qui fait que dans la voix de l'évêque s'entend celle de l'Eglise locale entière.”²³⁷ Probably there is some link between this inclusion or representativity and the law of any society according to which a people or a nation project themselves in their head. It is also close to the phenomenon of ‘corporative personality,’ by which is meant the concentration of a *social whole* in one of its members in such a way that it can recognise itself in him. This demands that this individual has had some influence in the origin of the group. In the case of the Church, the apostolic cell is at her origin. The bishop is attached to this apostolic cell. According to Tillard this relationship of

²³³ Cf. Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus.

²³⁴ “D'une part il en est le porte-voix et le représentant au sein de la communion des Eglises (synodalité) et des évêques (collégialité), faisant qu'elle joue son rôle dans les conseils et que sa tradition propre est toujours présente et active dans la symphonie ecclésiale. D'autre part, il a la garde de la foi de sa *plebs* et la mission de la nourrir en la maintenant, surtout par l'Eucharistie, dans la communion de toutes les Eglises,” J.-M. R. TILLARD, “La Présence de Pierre dans le ministère de l'évêque de Rome,” *Nicol*, 19 (1992), p. 70, *hereafter cited as* J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Présence de Pierre dans le ministère....”

²³⁵ *Epst.* 66: 8.

²³⁶ In the ancient societies wife was entirely dependent on the authority of the husband: in public life, she was represented by her husband. This is the context in which the bishop, the ‘husband’, is seen as representing the local Church, his wife. Although this imagery of husband-wife relationship is unacceptable to the modern societies, the basic intuition it communicates regarding the relationship between the bishop and the local Church is still valuable.

²³⁷ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 245.

the bishop to the apostolic cell should be deemed as the foundation of his representativity.²³⁸ This representativity was further accentuated by the ancient practice, referred to above²³⁹ and according to which, when a new bishop is chosen for a see, the community had to attest to the conformity of his faith to that of his Church, a faith he will have to safeguard, protect and transmit.

Here we find ourselves not in the register of a juridical relationship, but in that of *communion*. First, it underlines that the local Church—through her bishop who bears her—is welded to the apostolic group, whose faith she confesses. Through this relationship with the apostolic group and thanks to it, Church also enters into communion with Christ. The representativity of the minister has also another face: he is the representative, not only of the community, but also of Christ whose icon he is before his community. Thus, we see that a nuptial imagery is precious in bringing out this aspect of the relationship between the bishop and the community.

7.5. One Bishop per City

The nuptial imagery suggests yet another idea: that there can be but one bishop in a local Church and his attachment to her is indissoluble; otherwise it will result in infidelity. That is why canon 8 of the Council of Nicaea stipulates that there cannot be two bishops in the same city. Owing to this reason, a bishop in primitive times would not consecrate his successor.²⁴⁰

Nevertheless, we can also see cases in ancient period which seem to compromise this rule. Thus, at the 411 Carthage Conference,²⁴¹ it was decided that the Donatist bishops, who would be coming back to the Catholic Church, would not lose their dignity or their power of order and their episcopal responsibilities, provided the faithful accept this co-existence of bishops. However, it was stipulated that the two bishops had to hold office alternatively, avoiding thus the division of community. In this arrangement, as we can note, the ancient law of ‘one see and one bishop’ was not violated effectively.

But later, when the Crusaders conquered many episcopal towns of the East, it naturally gave rise to the co-existence of the Eastern and the Western Christianities in the same place. It was difficult to unite these two traditions under one pastor. But the option of having two independent bishops in one place was still considered as equal to introducing schism. Hence,

²³⁸ See our discussion above on “Ministry of Bishop and Apostolic Ministry.”

²³⁹ See our remarks under the title “Bishop and his Sedes.”

²⁴⁰ For instance, in 357, when Emperor Constantine II—in the midst of a conflict in the Roman Church—proposed to give two bishops to this Church, the faithful there rejected it by crying out: ‘One God, one Christ and one bishop.’ In the same way, St Augustine refused to ordain Hippolytus who was chosen to succeed him.

²⁴¹ Cf. *Actes de la conférence de Carthage en 411*, t. I, SC 194, (Paris, 1972) p. 42.

the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) ordered²⁴² to appoint responsible officers for each of the peoples. If it was necessary to ordain a bishop, the main bishop had to choose him and the latter would function like the former's vicar, subordinated to him in everything.

The scenario has further evolved today, when the existence of parallel jurisdictions is a fact in many areas of the world. It can occur when, for instance, more than one Church *sui iuris*²⁴³ is represented in the same territory.²⁴⁴ A similar situation—but more complex—is created by the prelatures. The 1983 *CIC* made a clear distinction between the territorial prelate and the personal prelate. The former constitutes a particular Church, often, with a bishop at its head. But juridically it is not a diocese and its bishop is not considered a diocesan bishop according to *CIC* 376. At the same time, he is not a titular bishop either. In the case of personal prelatures, as exemplified by *Sainte Croix* and *Opus Dei*, the lay members still remain incorporated to their respective local Churches. Only the clerical members are incardinated to the prelate. However, the prelate, who can be a bishop, has ordinary power over all the members. As a result of this complex situation, we have in the territory of a single local Church a constellation of parishes or communities without any explicit reference to the bishop of that see. Practically, these parishes do not have any contact between them. This situation, in Tillard's opinion, creates several ecclesiological problems.

Ces Eglises mèneront une vie sacramentelle parallèle, sans point d'intersection visible. Dans la pratique, on sera souvent fort loin de «l'admirable communion [...] manifestant l'unité de l'Eglise» dont parlait Vatican II (OE 2). En effet, alors que selon le vieux principe patristique—«une cité, un évêque»—le rattachement de toute la diversité humaine d'un lieu ou d'un espace géographique à l'évêque de la sedes manifeste la réalité de l'Eglise de Dieu comme fruit de la réconciliation universelle, on insère en ce lieu des communautés distraites de la diakonia de cet évêque.²⁴⁵

It is however true that, thanks to their communion and that of their bishops with the bishop of Rome, these communities are, at least, indirectly united. Once this basic communion is ensured, can we consider the multiplicity of jurisdiction in the same geographical territory as secondary? Tillard is unwilling to accept this argument.

Pour plusieurs, dans cette question, la référence à la communion avec le siège de Rome semble dispenser de la communion visible (et non pas seulement juridique) de tous catholiques d'un lieu avec un évêque de ce

²⁴² Lateran IV, canon 9 (*De diversis ritibus in eadem fide*). Cf. N. P. TANNER (ed.) *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol I: Nicaea I – Lateran V, (Sheed & Ward/ Georgetown University Press, 1990), p. 239.

²⁴³ What OE of Vatican II called by the expression 'particular Churches or rites' is now named by CCEO by the expression '*Ecclesiae sui iuris*'. For in the actual legislation, 'particular Church' designates a diocese. In an *Ecclesia sui iuris*, however, we have several bishops and eparchies.

²⁴⁴ Cf. J. M. R. TILLARD, *L'Eglise locale*, p. 280.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

lieu. On se trouve ainsi confronté à une anomalie ecclésiologique. La référence à l'«universel» ne saurait englober, en une saine ecclésiologie de la Tradition, la référence au local.»²⁴⁶

According to the Dominican theologian, it is necessary to link our respect for the diversity of rites with the importance of a concrete sign of the real communion between ritual groups. Hence, as solution, he proposes that the parishes or communities of *sui iuris* Churches, without prejudice to their proper rites, particular discipline, spirituality and theology, should maintain a relationship with the bishop of the place. In this context, he asks: “...ne pourrait-on pas imaginer une présentation à l'évêque local, et une «réception» par lui des noms de ceux auxquels un métropolitain entend confier une charge pastorale sur le territoire de l'évêque latin? La même chose vaudrait, évidemment, dans le sens inverse là où l'Eglise orientale est la plus anciennement établie.»²⁴⁷

7.6. The Local Church's Openness to Communion

In every local Church—however poor it might be—all the essential elements, which constitute the Church of God, can be found. These elements include “communion in faith, in charity, in the objective riches of grace, in the diversity of charisms, in mission, in reconciliation, in hope, and in ministry.”²⁴⁸ Since, thanks to these constitutive elements, the Church of God is present and manifested in every local Church, “it follows that all the Churches scattered through the world and deployed along the course of history constitute one and the same Church.”²⁴⁹ However, the Church of God cannot be confined to a particular local Church. Rooted as it is in the *mysterion* of God, which knows no limit, it has to transcend local limits. Hence, the Church of God, even when it is realised in a place, is always the Church of God in the totality of its nature and the fullness of the means of salvation. The various local Churches are at once *Churches* and *the Church*. As Tillard formulates it, “Des Eglises différentes mais non pas autres.”²⁵⁰ The Church of God is a communion of all human communities which are reconciled ‘in Christ,’ with their riches and poverty, their history and plans. In the mystery of *agape*—which has its source in God’s own heart—the multitude of local Churches is assembled into a communion. This fact should forbid any local Church to consider its *difference* as an absolute value in function of which everything in it should be judged.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 282-83.

²⁴⁷ J. M. R. TILLARD, *L'Eglise locale*, p. 283.

²⁴⁸ ID, “Church of God is a Communion,” p. 126.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

²⁵⁰ ID, *L'Eglise locale*, p. 89.

Sans l'ouverture radicale aux autres Eglises, elle ne serait plus l'*Ekklesia tou Theo*, la communauté de Dieu en *communion* avec le dessein de réconciliation de tout l'humain selon toute vérité de l'Évangile de Dieu (Ep 1, 13; 3, 6; 6, 15.19), qui s'accompli en elle. [...] Une communauté ne peut être Eglise locale que dans la *communion* aux autres Eglises.²⁵¹

A local Church can exist truly as the Church of God only when she has solicitude for all the local Churches existing throughout the world. For every one of them is a Sister Church to this Church. Life, which is in this Church, is not different from the life which exists in all other Churches. "L'Eglise de Dieu est, à travers la suite des générations et dans l'immense Variété des lieux, cette communion des Eglises-sœurs. Son universalité est dans la *communion* du local."²⁵²

1 *Cor* 1: 1-9 clearly underlines that that which makes the community of Corinth the Church of God and the Church of saints—in the fullness of God's gifts and in the fellowship to Christ—links it to the *totality* of those who, in all places, belong to Christ. That is to say, the plenitude of the Church of Corinth is not an isolated one. Rather, it exists in communion; it is the Church of God together with others which also possess, just as she, the *plenitude* in order to be the Church of God. When this relation to other Churches disappears, she is no more "the Church of God [...] called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours" (1 *Cor* 1: 1). It is in the context of this communion that we must seek to understand the meaning of Paul's visit to Jerusalem after fourteen years of ministry among the gentiles. The aim of the visit, as Paul explains, was to lay before the 'pillars' of the Jerusalem community—James, Cephas and John—the Gospel he preached in order to avoid that "I should be running or had run in vain" (*Eph* 1: 2). That is to say, he was moved by the desire to ensure that he was not breaking the communion by preaching a Gospel which the mother Church judged as suspicious. In response, the leaders of the Jerusalem community gave him "the right hand of fellowship" which signified the existence of *communion* between the Churches of the Gentiles and the Churches of the circumcised. This is manifested in a mutual give and take. As St Paul himself explains, "if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings" (*Rom* 15: 27). "Au mouvement qui a porté la foi de Jérusalem à Antioche répond celui qui a porté la générosité d'Antioche à Jérusalem."²⁵³

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90. "Parler ici de communion, c'est signifier que le lien entre toutes les Eglises locales est bien autre chose que celui d'une coalition, d'une fédération, d'une coexistence amicale, d'une juxtaposition de groupes semblables mais indépendants," ID, "Le local et l'universel," p. 230.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 36.

If the fellowship among Churches was clearly manifested by the sharing of material goods, the first Christian generations lived this fellowship also at a spiritual level. That is clearly demonstrated, for instance, by the Letter of Clement to the Corinthians (A.D. 95). We see here one local Church intervening in another local Church in order to re-establish unity in the latter. During the same period, Ignatius of Antioch also, through his correspondences, tries to reinforce the *koinonia* called for by the common belongingness to Christ. This openness to other Churches, this openness to the *catholicity* is not anything imposed on the local Church from outside; rather it belongs to it from that which constitutes it. Wherever there is a Church of God, there is also this openness to go beyond its proper limits. This openness is dictated by the nature of the Church.

According to *Lumen Gentium*, the Church of God *subsists in* the Catholic Church²⁵⁴ which exists in and from the particular Churches.²⁵⁵ This means, no Church can be the Church of God in isolation. “Elle l’est, par nature, avec d’autres, en *communio*.”²⁵⁶

La diversité des Eglises locales n’équivaut en rien à une partition de l’Eglise de Dieu, à son découpage selon appartenance aux nations, ethnies, races, ou classes. [...] Elle est l’Eglise de ce lieu. Pourtant, elle n’est pas que l’Eglise de ce lieu. En effet, la communauté de ce lieu est Eglise parce qu’en elle se «reconnait» l’intégralité, l’authenticité, le *Katholou*, de la *communio* que Dieu offre à toute l’humanité déchiré.²⁵⁷

Communion of local Churches is true only if all the local Churches mutually recognise one another as *Church of God*.²⁵⁸ This means that a Church is bound to maintain her identity in such a way that other Churches can really recognise themselves in her. This mutual recognition is an essential category of the ecclesiology of *communio*. By this recognition is meant, “...l’attitude par laquelle une Eglise discerne sous les diversités d’expressions ou de rites et sous la pluralité des traditions la foi et la pratique évangéliques qui sont les siennes.”²⁵⁹ The Church of Jerusalem made such an act of *recognition* with regard to the Gentile Churches, which helped her accept the diversity that troubled her initially.

Les Eglises locales manifestent qu’elles sont *vraiment* en *communio* quand en toutes se retrouvent la Parole de Dieu proclamée, confessée et mise en oeuvre, le baptême, la prière, la sollicitude mutuelle, le partage,

²⁵⁴ LG 8.

²⁵⁵ LG 23.

²⁵⁶ J. M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 394.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

²⁵⁸ “«Reconnaître», c’est constater: identité de foi et de fondation sur le témoignage apostolique, d’économie sacramentelle et d’Eucharistie, de mission, de conception fondamentale de vie «dans le Christ», avec le service d’un même ministère apostolique,” *Ibid.*, p. 92. For details, cf. ID, “Reception-communion,” *OiC*, 28 (1992), pp. 307-322.

²⁵⁹ ID, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 284.

l'unité des esprits et des cœurs et l'inquiétude missionnaire, le témoignage rendu au Christ, l'Eucharistie célébrée dans la fidélité à la tradition apostolique.²⁶⁰

Another element of the visibility of the communion among local Churches is the permeability of their frontiers. "C'est ce qui fait d'abord qu'elles se communiquent mutuellement leurs problèmes importants, leurs décisions majeures, leurs orientations pastorales, leurs listes épiscopales."²⁶¹ To these must be added another element viz. that every local Church must be ready to give an account of its faith and Christian *praxis* to any local Church which might demand it.

...il est requis que chaque Eglise locale—dans la *communio* de l'évêque et du peuple fidèle qui la constitue—se montre extrêmement limpide sur le contenu de sa foi et le sens que lui donne son attachement à la Tradition apostolique.²⁶²

In fact, it is not the recognition that creates unity. Rather 'this recognition' states or takes note of the unity, which comes from the Spirit. It is here that we have to situate the margin of liberty and initiative enjoyed by every local Church within the ecclesial *communio* as well as her duty to explain and justify her choices and options before others.²⁶³

The mutual recognition among Churches is vital as far as witnessing is concerned. As long as the leaders of the Christian communities are incapable of giving 'the right hand of communion,'²⁶⁴ faith itself cannot avoid being affected. It cannot be proclaimed in a convincing manner by communities which, while confessing their communion to Christ, refuse to take necessary measures for the full fraternal *communio*. In this context, it must be affirmed that wherever *communio* takes shape locally—despite remaining wounded, especially since the dimension of universality is missing there—it renders manifest in its own degree the content of faith. Any effort to live locally the fraternal communion—although 'confessionally'—of compassion, mutual aid, sharing, prayer, liturgy, etc. is already an escape—in that human space—from the desolation of Babel. Although wounded, communion is still existent there. The Spirit can make use of this spark of communion to encompass the whole universe.

²⁶⁰ ID, "Le local et l'universel dans l'Eglise de Dieu," p. 231.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 232. cf. ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 284.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ As an example, Tillard alludes to the practice in some Churches of 'Sunday worship without priests.' He insists that "toute autre Eglise locale catholique puisse, en dépit de l'absence d'un ministre ordonné, reconnaître en ce culte dominical—qui n'est pas une Eucharistie bien qu'il soit vécu dans une référence eucharistique—un culte dans la tradition catholique, traduisant comme il le peut, en fonction des circonstances, l'intention du Jour du Seigneur," (J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 285). At the same time it should clearly show the limits of such Sunday worships as well as their link with the bishop and their communion of all Sunday Masses or worships without priests of the diocese.

²⁶⁴ *Gal 2: 9*.

7.7. Bishop: Meeting-point of two Communions

We have seen above that, despite the scattering and the diversity of local Churches, there is an identity between them. “Catholicity represents the necessary making explicit of this identity through numberless manifestations.”²⁶⁵ One of the principal functions of the bishop is to open his Church to this catholicity. Traditionally, the bishop as the eucharistic president is entrusted with a twofold function: that of transmitting to his Church all the means of salvation and that of linking his Church with the apostolic community and other local Churches across the world.²⁶⁶ First, the bishop links his community with the primitive community, in virtue of his insertion into the apostolic succession. This vertical communion guarantees the communion of the local Church with the apostolic community. Second, thanks to his belongingness to the episcopal college, the bishop allows his local Church to enter into communion with all local communities celebrating the true Eucharist throughout the world.

Thus, the episcopal function is at the junction between two co-ordinates: the temporal (linking the present moment with the whole history of salvation) and the geographical (linking this place and its context with all human *loci*). In Tillard’s view, the bishop’s *episkopè* “stands at the meeting-point of two communions both of which are the radically necessary guarantee of ecclesial identity.”²⁶⁷ In this context, his primary function is to allow the catholicity of the Church to reveal itself in a certain place according to its two dimensions. Whereas the apostolic succession enables him to carry out his *munus* with regard to the vertical dimension of catholicity, his communion with the *centrum unitatis* enables him to carry out his *munus* with regard to the horizontal dimension of catholicity.²⁶⁸ That is why it is said that providing a

²⁶⁵J.-M. R. TILLARD, “The Horizon of the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome,” *OiC*, 12 (1976), p. 23 [*hereafter cited as* J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Horizon of the Primacy”]. This fact is clearly taught by Vatican II: “This variety of local Churches with one common aspiration is particularly splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided Church,” *LG* 23.

²⁶⁶ Usually before entering into communion with a particular local Church, other Churches enquire about the authenticity of its bishop. This is to make sure that the communion which they are entering into is indeed *true*. “La «reconnaissance» de la «vérité» (validité) du ministère d’une communauté n’est rien d’autre que le discernement de l’insertion de tout ce qu’elle est (avec ses particularismes, sa différence, ses traditions) dans l’universalité de la communion des Eglises: elle n’est ni historiquement, ni géographiquement coupée de cette *Koinônia* universelle. Celui qui préside à sa vie lui transmet donc *et* la Parole *et* les moyens de Salut qui sont ceux de *toute* l’Eglise de Dieu (qui ainsi peut être en elle dans sa plénitude), et au sein de la communion des évêques, il la représente comme Eglise s’abreuvant *pleinement* à travers les méandres de l’histoire à la grande source apostolique,” J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Le local et l’universel,” p. 234.

²⁶⁷ ID, “Horizon of the Primacy,” p. 23.

²⁶⁸ “It will be noted that both insertion into the apostolic succession and communion with the *centrum unitatis*, on this level of the ministerial structuring of the Church, are for the benefit of the bishop’s *episkopè*, that is to say, in order that the bishop, as pastor of the local Church, may authentically carry out his task,” *Ibid.*, p. 24.

local Church with a bishop amounts to salvaging it from solitude and inscribing it into catholicity.²⁶⁹

A bishop is not a loner. He is a member of the college of bishops, which is rooted in the *ephapax* of the college of Apostles. This implies not only that “the bishops should be united among themselves in faith, charity, mission, and reconciliation, but also that they should commune in the same responsibility for and the same service to the Church. Because the universal Church (universal in the sense of catholicity) comes to fruition in his own local Church, no bishop may separate his concern for his own Church from concern for the universal Church.”²⁷⁰ He exercises the *sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum* in communion with other bishops.

According to St Augustine, all bishops are united because they exercise the same ministry.²⁷¹ If so, the communion all the Churches has its basis in this communion of all the bishops in the same *diakonia*, which refers back to God’s plan to gather all the believers. In other words, the communion of Churches demands a communion of the *diakonia*. This is the greatest concern and the challenge of ecumenism.

7.8. Collegiality and Synodality of Churches

Episcopal collegiality may be properly grasped only in conjunction with the synodality of the Church, which is rooted in the Church’s identity as a community that lives and acts as communion. If nothing in the Church escapes from communal dynamism, then the Church cannot be but synodal. Every aspect of ecclesial life is penetrated and conditioned by synodality. As Tillard formulates it, “[l]a vie ecclésiale est inconcevable en dehors du dynamisme qui lie Eglise et évêque, les Eglises entre elles, les évêques entre eux et au primat romain, le primat romain aux évêques et à leurs Eglises.”²⁷² It is, perhaps, here—thinks the Dominican theologian—that *Lumen Gentium* made an important omission; while emphasising rightly the collegiality of bishops, it failed to connect or situate it within the synodality of Churches.²⁷³ According to the perspective of an ecclesiology of communion, collegiality of bishops is based on the communion of Churches. Collegiality manifests (*sacramentum*) and is at the service of the synodality of the local Churches.²⁷⁴ “S’il y a *collégialité* épiscopale, dans

²⁶⁹ “...donner à une «nouvelle Eglise» son évêque revient dans le même moment à l’arracher à une solitude. On l’inscrit dans la catholicité,” *Ibid.*, “Catholicité de la Mission,” p. 356.

²⁷⁰ ID, “Church of God is a Communion,” p. 126.

²⁷¹ “Tous les bon pasteurs se trouvent en un seul et ne sont qu’un,” *Sermo* 46, 29-30; CCSL 41, 556.

²⁷² ID, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 483.

²⁷³ Cf. ID, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 273.

²⁷⁴ This is the reason why the Church of God expresses herself normally in the plenitude of her being only in an ‘ecumenical synod/council.’

un collège, groupe unifié et structuré d'évêques ne faisant qu'un corps épiscopal, c'est parce que l'Eglise de Dieu a pour nature d'être une communion d'Eglises locales."²⁷⁵

Collegiality—from within the perspective of communion ecclesiology—cannot be reduced to a question of a collegial exercise of power. A synodal or conciliar gathering of bishops is not simply a summit of heads; rather it must be seen as an event in which the actualisation of *koinonia* in the level of the government or *episkopè* takes place. That is to say—restating what we have said earlier in the context of the communal dynamism of the local Church—nothing in the Church is outside communion, not even the *exousia*.

The law of communion is applicable to all levels of ecclesial life, beginning with the level of the local Church to that of the communion of all the local Churches.²⁷⁶ Building up a conciliar life in the local level is the first building block towards its realization in the universal level. A local Church can remain in fidelity to the Gospel only when she is bound together by the instances of communion and dialogue. It calls for a proper relation and coordination between ministries of the laity and the hierarchy. According to Tillard,

...si l'Eglise locale est la cellule fondamentale où tout ce qui touche à la communion s'enracine nécessairement, la paralysie de la conciliarité à ce niveau ne peut-être que difficilement surmontée aux autres niveaux. Il y va de la nature même de l'autorité ecclésiale, blessée dans l'une de ses fondations essentielles [...] il y a une circumincession de l'évêque et de l'Eglise, le premier étant dans la seconde et la seconde dans le premier. Et ce qui vaut de l'évêque vaut *a fortiori* des autres ministres.²⁷⁷

In the opinion of our theologian, *conciliarity* as it is exercised in the Catholic Church is marred by a vision which is too little marked by the *koinonia*. In his words,

L'autorité y est trop peu intégrée à ce que nous appelons la symphonie des charismes et des fonctions. Cette situation fait que l'autorité y est comprise comme un service, une *diakonia* impliquant souvent une générosité et un dévouement intenses, un don de soi héroïque, mais peu fondés dans l'interaction concrète d'une synergie.²⁷⁸

7.9. Concluding Remarks

The discussion in this section was meant to acquaint ourselves with the Tillardian interpretation of the dynamism of communion as a moving force within the local Church. According to him nothing in the Church can escape the all-encompassing dynamism of communion: the everyday life of the local Church is a theatre of the symphony of charisms

²⁷⁵ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 273.

²⁷⁶ "L'Eglise universelle est *communion* parce que l'Eglise locale est *communion*," ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 274.

²⁷⁷ ID, "La tension entre primauté...", pp. 276-277.

²⁷⁸ J.-M. R. TILLARD, "La tension entre primauté...", p. 277.

and their corresponding services. This calls for a practice of synodality in the local level. So far the view of Tillard coincides with that of Afanasiev.

But when Tillard explains the special function of the bishop as the leader of the community, we discover a shift in emphasis. According to the Afanasievan exegesis of Ignatius of Antioch, it is the role of *proéstôs* as the eucharistic president which makes him the head of the local Church. Quite opposite is the interpretation of Tillard. According to him, “Ignace va de la fonction « unitive » de l’évêque à sa présidence « eucharistique », et non *vice versa*.”²⁷⁹ In other words, it is his leadership in the local Church which makes of him its eucharistic president. From the point of view of Tillard, the ministry of the bishop or of any other ministry can be properly understood only in the context of the apostolic tradition. For the apostolic *martyria* constitutes the very axis of the ecclesial life and faith. The need of the ministry, particularly that of the bishop, is bound up with the need of the Church to be in communion with the Apostles, to live in the memory of its origins. The *diakonia* of the bishop is meant to maintain the local Church in the memory of its origin by making present the witness of the Apostles. That is to say, he is the one who actualises and incarnates the *martyria* of the Apostles in a given place and time. In Afanasiev too, as we may recall, *proéstôs* is a successor of the Apostle. But for him, apostolic succession must be understood as a topological succession, a succession to the place occupied by the Apostles in the first eucharistic assembly.²⁸⁰

Concluding chapter three, we had remarked that the question of *sedes* and *sedens* is an area in which Catholic Ecclesiology must make further progress. In this context, Tillard’s interpretation of the relationship between the bishop and his see attracts our attention. According to him, *sedes* has a rich ecclesiological significance. Once a local church has been founded, its *sedes* precedes the *sedens*. *Sedes* here stands for a local Church and its apostolic deposit. While acceding to the see of a local Church, the bishop becomes also the guardian of its apostolic deposit. It is because of this close bond between the see and the bishop that bishops were always ordained to a specific see, that is, the ordination was always relative. In their election, the local Church had a significant role to play. It is in this context that we discover the anomaly of the present practice of episcopal ordinations without relation to a concrete local Church. The bishops, thus ordained, are often subsequently given the charge of a local Church. According to Tillard, it is undoubtedly a sign of the predominance of the universalist ecclesiology, according to which the episcopal college is seen as transcending and

²⁷⁹ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 237.

²⁸⁰ See *supra* our discussion on “Proéstôtês as successors of Apostles” in chapter two.

preceding the communion of Churches. It is totally incompatible with the ecclesiology of communion. As he put it, “[o]n est dans la logique du glissement de l’«*Ecclesia ex (ou in) Ecclesiis*» aux «*Ecclesiae ex Ecclesia universalis*».”²⁸¹

Tillard’s interpretation of the ancient canonical principle of ‘one bishop per city’ must be read in the context of the importance he gives to *locality* in his ecclesiological system. According to him, the *local* is the basic mould in which the *Ekklesia tou Theou* is incarnated. It is the framework in which he develops his theology of catholicity, where the notion of reconciliation plays a key role. A local Church is catholic when it realises the goal of the *Gospel of God* in a given place, viz. the reconciliation and transformation of a divided humanity into a humanity willed by God. This context permits us to grasp the logic of the following words of Tillard cited above: “le rattachement de toute la diversité humaine d’un lieu ou d’un espace géographique à l’évêque de la *sedes* manifeste la réalité de l’Eglise de Dieu comme fruit de la réconciliation universelle.”²⁸² This position taken by Tillard seems to be close to the views held by Schmemmann, Meyendorff and Zizioulas. However, the fact that they were speaking in the context of the same ecclesial tradition must be also taken into account. On the basis of the principle, stated above, Tillard emphasizes the desirability of the unification of jurisdiction in every place, or when that is not possible, he insists that the local bishop must be associated in the pastoral care of the faithful belonging to an ecclesial tradition different from his. We may note that Tillard here deals mainly with the presence of parishes belonging to other *sui iuris* Churches within the territory of a local Church. His position, however, is not clear regarding the presence in the same place of eparchies belonging to various rites. But it is not difficult to imagine, within the framework of his view expressed here, that this should be also considered as an anomalous situation. However, the fact remains that only in this way can the Catholic Oriental Churches—whose members find themselves in ever increasing numbers in the *diaspora*—safeguard their venerable traditions and preserve themselves ecclesially.²⁸³

Unlike Afanasiev and in convergence with the Orthodox theologians discussed in chapter three, Tillard insists on the absolute necessity of communion as far as the ecclesial identity of a local Church is concerned. His words—“sans l’ouverture radicale aux autres Eglises, elle ne serait plus l’*Ekklesia tou Theo*”²⁸⁴—reminds us of Schmemmann and others. The bishop has an

²⁸¹ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 228.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 282.

²⁸³ For further details on this point, see *infra* our discussion in chapter six under the head, “Place of Catholic Oriental Churches within the Catholic Communion of Churches.”

²⁸⁴ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 90.

important role to play here. He links his Church with the apostolic community as well as with the other Churches.

The topic discussed in the article “Collegiality and Synodality of Churches” is not unrelated to one of the points raised in the conclusion of chapter three. There we had noted that a disincarnated conception of the episcopal college is quite unintelligible to the East, as though this college would be poised above the communion of Churches and independent of them. Tillard is aware of this lacuna of the Catholic theology, as embodied in *Lumen Gentium*. For the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church failed to connect the collegiality of bishops with the synodality of Churches. Rooted as he is in the communion ecclesiology, Tillard can see the collegiality of bishops only as the *sacramentum* of the synodality of the local Churches.

8. The Church of Rome and the Communion of Churches

8.1. Introduction

In this section, our attempt will be to present Tillard’s view on the special position of the Church of Rome within the communion of Churches. According to him, only a proper understanding of the position of the Church of Rome in the *communio ecclesiarum* will permit us to discover the ministry and authority of the *sedens* of the Roman see within the communion of bishops and Churches.

8.2. ‘Principalitas’ of Rome

Throughout the history, the Churches which trace their origin back to the Apostles themselves were understood to have a *principalitas*,²⁸⁵ and they formed a group apart. Within this group of *apostolic* Churches, that of Rome had a privileged position: “...siège apostolique pouvant se réclamer de Pierre à un titre particulier sera le porteur de ce qu’Irénee nommera la *potentior principalitas*, privilège encore accru par le martyre de Paul sur son propre sol.”²⁸⁶ This precedence of Rome was an uncontested fact during the first centuries. Where does this *principalitas* of Rome come from? In Tillard’s view, “[e]lle ne vient pas fondamentalement de la reconnaissance d’un pouvoir de juridiction. Celle-ci en sera plutôt une conséquence qui, d’ailleurs, ne se précisera que de façon chaotique.”²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ “Elles formeront la couronne des sièges apostoliques (*apostolikai thronoi*) autour desquels se rassembleront les autres Eglises locales,” ID, “Présence de Pierre dans le ministère...,” p. 61.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62. The writings of St Cyprian are evidence enough to show that even in the *pars Latina* (Africa, Gallia and Spain) of the 3rd century Church, acknowledging someone as ‘the bishop of bishops’ was hardly

During the early period, “la primauté n’est pas d’abord de l’ordre de la juridiction, bien qu’elle ne puisse se dispenser d’y participer.”²⁸⁸ Yet, it is undeniable that the Church of Rome was deemed as a guarantor of truth. The fact that many appeals were flowing to the ancient Rome is itself an indicative of the high standing of this Church. What was resisted then was not *all* Roman interventions in the affairs of the local Churches, but—as Tillard formulates it—“*une certaine intervention de Rome, précisément celle qui paraît se situer au dessus ou même en dehors de la cohésion de tout le corps episcopal.*”²⁸⁹ There was no difficulty in accepting Rome’s power to put a seal of catholicity to the decisions of a council. In doing so, she integrated these decisions to the tradition of the *catholica*. But it was not accepted that Rome, on her own, reaches a decision concerning an important issue in a local Church, disregarding a differing position of a large number of the members of the episcopate. This does not, however, rule out that Rome takes initiatives for a common solution to a problem, to which it will put its seal of authority.

8.3. The Petrine and Pauline Roots of the Roman Primacy

Historically, it is undeniable that the primacy of Rome was conditioned by the fact that, at the beginning of evangelisation, it was the capital city of the Roman Empire. But the Church of Rome, on her part, always refused to see things only in this angle. According to her, the real source of her primacy is to be traced back to the martyrdom in her soil of the Coryphaeus of the Twelve and the Apostle of the Gentiles.²⁹⁰ The arrival of Peter and Paul in Rome was not accidental, but an expression of a divine *oikonomia*.²⁹¹

The witness of these Apostles, like that of any other Apostle, has a once-for-all character and, therefore, must be re-proclaimed and transmitted in their full truth. It is an *ephapax* to which the Church should always return, if she wants to remain in *communio*. Since Rome bears on her soil and in her flesh the marks of the ultimate witness of the two of the greatest Apostles, she has a special responsibility as far as the proclamation of their apostolic witness

thinkable. Cf. CYPRIAN, *L’unité de l’Eglise*, (trans. by V. SAXER) «Les Père dans la foi» (Paris, 1980), p. 17. Typical in this regard is the non-reception by Cyprian of the Roman decision to re-instate the Spanish bishop Basilidus.

²⁸⁸ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Présence de Pierre dans le ministère...,” p. 63.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

²⁹⁰ “The local Church of Rome is first among the Churches because the martyrdom of Peter and Paul there made it the supreme place of apostolic witness, not because it was established before the others,” ID, *Bishop of Rome*, p.75.

²⁹¹ “Rome et la place de Pierre dans la confession de foi du groupe apostolique sont de ce fait intrinsèquement liées, de par le plan de Dieu. Sans Rome et le martyr qu’il y subit, Pierre ne serait pas le *primus* que prophétisait la parole du Christ à Césarée. Sans Pierre—auquel Paul est joint—Rome ne serait pas l’Eglise locale à laquelle tous peuvent recourir pour que justice leur soit faite et que la vérité soit garantie ou rétablie,” ID, “Présence de Pierre dans le ministère...,” p. 68.

is concerned. Thus “the weight of authority enjoyed by the local Church in Rome within the communion of Churches” is “a weight of faith more than of powers, of example in witness more than jurisdiction.”²⁹² This authority concerns the safeguard of the link between apostolicity and unity.

Un *seul* siège dans lequel tous sont visés, honorés, dotés de l'*exousia* apostolique. Non pas *un* qui s'annexe ou concentre en lui l'honneur et la charge des autres; mais *un* grâce auquel sont garantis aux autres l'honneur et la responsabilité, comme le dira — mais de l'évêque de ce siège — *Pastor aeternus* de Vatican I. Cette Eglise et sa *cathedra* ont pour fonction, dans l'*oikonomia* divine, de garantir à la *communion* de toutes les autres Eglises et de toutes les autres *cathedrae* son fondement dans l'unité apostolique: unité de foi, de mission, d'envoi, de responsabilité, d'*exousia*, d'honneur.²⁹³

8.4. Rome within the Communion of Churches

From the earliest time onwards Rome was acknowledged to have “a power of *effectually* representing the mind of the whole towards a part.”²⁹⁴ Hence, when a Church or a region of the Church felt the need to know the mind of the whole Church on a delicate question of faith or discipline or to know how far it can adapt itself to the life and thought of its cultural environment without endangering its fidelity to essential dogmas and the common faith, they used to solicit the help of the Church of Rome. This power was not, however, seen as “a domination extinguishing local responsibilities but as a fraternal service aimed only at maintaining all in fidelity to the one faith and thus in ecclesial communion.”²⁹⁵

Thus, the role of the Roman Church is that of ‘a touchstone’ of faith.²⁹⁶ It is her duty to watch over that the apostolic witness remains all throughout the history the authentic norm and source of *communion*. Since this *depositum fidei* is the very axis of *communion*, the Church of Rome, for the same reason, is the servant of *communion*. Her primacy is, therefore, a primacy of the service of communion.²⁹⁷ Of this service, the Church of Rome was aware from the beginning, even when she was deprived of its bishop, as it happened in 250.²⁹⁸

²⁹² ID, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 84.

²⁹³ ID, “La Présence de Pierre dans le ministère de l'évêque de Rome,” p. 69-70.

²⁹⁴ G. DIX, *Jurisdiction in the early Church: episcopal and Papal* (London: Faith House, 1975), p. 124.

²⁹⁵ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “The Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” *TS*, 40 (1979), p. 21, *hereafter cited as* J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome.”

²⁹⁶ “The Church of Rome is the one which calls to mind the great and glorious confession of apostolic faith of which she had been the place and remains the guardian,” ID, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 85.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Y. M.-J. CONGAR, “‘Ecclesia romana’,” *Cr St*, 5 (1987), 225-244.

²⁹⁸ Between January of 250 A.D. and the Spring of the following year, when the emperor Decius prevented election to the see of Rome, a group of Confessors and the Clergy took over the running of this Church and they even sent four letters to Carthage in the name of their Church. Commenting on this, Harnack wrote: “What makes this Church so great is that she knows her duty in a more universal way and carries it out with more assurance than do the other Churches.... The college of priests and deacons feels and speaks as a bishop; for it is not upon the bishops only, or at least not in one particular way, that the incomparable authority of Rome rests; but on her origins and history, on the faith and the love, on the sincerity and the devotion of the entire *Ecclesia*

The role of the Church of Rome can be considered also in the context of the catholicity possessed by each of the local Churches. In fact, the catholicity of a local Church does not come from Rome.²⁹⁹ Rome has the mission to serve the catholicity and promote it.

La catholicité se réalise dans la *communio* active des Eglises locales et c'est à celle-ci que Rome renvoie. Car cette catholicité n'est pas abstraite. Elle est une réalité qui se vit, se perçoit, se juge dans les faits, dans le déploiement concret des «richesses de la grâce».³⁰⁰

8.5. Notion of Sister Churches

In order to grasp the relationship between Rome and other Churches, the notion 'sister Churches' can be helpful. It was Patriarch Athanagoras who for the first time employed this term to underline the relationship between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. In a letter addressed to Cardinal Béa, on the 12th April 1962, the Patriarch wrote:

Il n'était pas possible que nous ne lisions sans une profonde émotion tout ce que Votre Eminence vénérée écrit au sujet du désir qu'elle exprime de manière générale de voir se rapprocher les Eglises sœurs et se rétablir l'unité dans l'Eglise du Christ.³⁰¹

Later, in the Brief *Anno Ineunte*, given to the same Patriarch on 25 July 1967, Pope Paul VI wrote:

En chaque Eglise locale s'opère ce mystère de l'amour divin, et n'est-ce pas là la raison de l'expression traditionnelle et si belle selon laquelle les Eglises locales aimaient à s'appeler Eglise-sœurs (cf. Décret *Unitatis redintegratio*, III, 14). Cette vie d'Eglise-sœur nous l'avons vécue pendant des siècles, célébrant ensemble les conciles œcuméniques qui ont défendu le dépôt de la foi contre toute altération. Maintenant, après une longue période de division et d'incompréhension réciproque, le Seigneur nous donne de nous redécouvrir comme Eglises-sœurs malgré les obstacles qui furent alors dressés entre nous.³⁰²

Unitatis redintegratio had made use of the expression, *sister Churches*, to evoke the fraternal relation that should exist between the local Churches.³⁰³ But the actual use of this expression, in the context of an ecumenical dialogue amounts to a *reception* by Rome of a vision, laden with implications. Its use to describe the relationship between the Roman Church and the Orthodox Churches is of particular significance, especially in the background of the Roman Church's interpretation in the past of its relationship with other Churches. At

Romana. The documents relating to the period of the vacancy in the see provide one of the most illuminating pages in the story of how her primacy developed," A. HARNACK, "Die Briefe des römischen Klerus aus der Zeit der Sedisvacans im Jahre 250," *Theologische Abhandlungen Carl von Weissacker gewidmet*, 36 (Freiburg 1892), translated from G. BARDY, "L'autorité du Siège romain et les controverses du IIIe siècle," *RSR* 14 (1924), p. 265.

²⁹⁹ See *supra* our discussion in the section, "Catholicity and the Local Church."

³⁰⁰ J.-M. R. TILLARD, "L'Universel et Local," p. 34.

³⁰¹ *Tomos Agapis* (Rome et Istanbul, 1971), p. 40.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 389-391.

³⁰³ "Hence a matter of primary concern and care among the Easterners, in their local Churches, has been, and still is, to preserve the family ties of common faith and charity which ought to exist between sister Churches," *UR*, 14.

the beginning of the 13th century, for instance, Patriarch John X Cameteros wrote to Pope Innocent III—for whom the Church of Rome was *Mater et Magistra* of all the faithful—in the following words:

Il y a cinq grandes Eglises patriarcales, l'Eglise romaine est première au milieu de sœurs (*adelphais*) d'une égale dignité... Première selon l'ordre (*taxei*) elle n'a de prérogative que celle-là: elle est la première des autres Eglises qui sont comme des sœurs d'égale dignité et de même Père, celui dont il est dit que procède toute paternité au ciel et sur terre.³⁰⁴

The claim of the Orient has always been that the martyrdom of Peter does not suffice to make of the Church of Rome the 'Mother of other Churches, the mistress and head,' considering the others merely as daughters or servants. In this context, the expression *sister Churches* hides behind its positive connotation also a negative one, viz. a certain refusal to consider another Church as a daughter. Shedding further light on the question, Tillard writes:

A la lumière des vues de Vatican II sur la collégialité et sur la situation des Eglises-sœurs en Orient (dans le décret sur l'œcuménisme), l'usage de la formule implique alors les deux points [...]. D'abord que l'épiscopat qui—éminemment par l'eucharistie—structure ces Eglises vient de l'Esprit de Dieu lui-même et tient de lui seul ses «pouvoirs», d'autre part que la primauté du siège de Rome n'est pas constitutive de l'ecclésiologie à un degré aussi essentiel que l'épiscopat local. La communion déjà authentiquement ecclésiale, avec les Eglises reliées par leurs évêques à la communauté apostolique—communion qui traverse l'histoire, des apôtres jusqu'aujourd'hui—mais coupées du siège de Rome est, d'une priorité métaphysique, antérieure à la situation que créera la «pleine communion». [...] Affirmer cela c'est reconnaître à l'épiscopat où qu'il soit, s'il est dans la succession apostolique, une fonction constitutive fondamentale.³⁰⁵

This does not mean that we should undermine the importance of the communion with Rome. It is undeniable that the horizontal communion of all the Churches in one single confession of Christ and in one Eucharist is always in need of a relation to the see of Rome. But what is shown here is another truth, viz. the necessity of communion with Rome does not take away anything of the fundamental function of the episcopate.

8.6. Concluding Remarks

Going through the discussion in this section, we are struck by the similarity of views between Tillard and the Orthodox theologians we compare him with. In the second chapter, we had occasion to point out the irenic attitude of Afanasiev vis-à-vis the role and authority of the Church of Rome in the communion of Churches. What he cannot accept is a juridical understanding of this authority. For him it is a question of *priority*, based on the authority of witnessing. Tillard too, based on his historical research, comes to the conclusion that the

³⁰⁴ M. JUGIE, *Theologia dogmatica Christian. Orient.*, vol 4 (Paris, 1934), pp. 386-387.

³⁰⁵ J.-M. R. TILLARD, "La primauté romaine," p. 323.

principalitas, attributed to Rome, does not come from a juridical power, rather it is based on the weight of faith and example in witness. It is an authority which enables the Church of Rome to represent the mind of the *whole, communio ecclesiarum*. It was a fraternal service so that all Churches in communion may remain in fidelity to the *depositum fidei*. Briefly, the Church of Rome is a servant of communion and its primacy is a service of communion. Afanasiev also holds that the goal of the authority of Rome is a service—to come to the aid of other sister Churches, to oversee the communion of Churches. The Orthodox in general consider communion with Rome as relevant to the *bene esse* rather than the *esse* of the Church. We find an echo of it in the following words of Tillard: “la primauté du siège de Rome n’est pas constitutive de l’ecclésialité à un degré aussi essentiel que l’épiscopat local.”³⁰⁶ Tillard, however, clearly recognizes³⁰⁶ the importance of communion with the see of Rome: it is necessary for the horizontal communion of Churches. According to what we have seen in the preceding sections, the ecclesiality of a Church is closely bound up with its communion with other Churches; hence, also the vital importance of the see of Peter and Paul.

The theology of sister Churches, as developed by Tillard is particularly significant in the context of a recent document of the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*,³⁰⁷ entitled “Note on the expression «Sister Churches»,” distributed to the episcopal conferences on 30 June, 2000.³⁰⁸ According to this document, the expressions like «theology of sister Churches» or «ecclesiology of sister Churches» are “characterized by ambiguity and discontinuity with respect to the correct original meaning of the expression as found in the documents of the Magisterium.” It goes on to say, that we can use the expression of ‘sister Churches’ in a proper sense only on the level of local Churches and grouping of Churches. But the Catholic Church as such is not a sister of any particular Church or group of Churches.³⁰⁹ That is to say, on the level of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, we cannot use the expression sister churches, as it would—to use the expression of CDF—“imply a plurality not merely on the level of particular Churches, but also on the level of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church confessed in the Creed, whose real existence is thus obscured.”³¹⁰ Strictly speaking—such is the impression given by the Note from the CDF—Catholic Church is not “another Church body’s sister but its *mother*.”³¹¹ It amounts to a regression and a return to the pre-Vatican II triumphalistic ecclesiology. It is far from the

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ Hereafter cited as CDF.

³⁰⁸ It is available from <http://www.ewtn.com/library/curia/cdfsisch.htm> (21.5.2002).

³⁰⁹ Cf. CDF, “Note on the expression «Sister Churches»,” no. 11.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ Cf. M. A. FAHEY, “Am I My Sister’s Keeper?,” *America*, (October 28, 2000).

ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis redintegratio* of Vatican II and *Anno Ineunte* of Paul VI. Instead of the theology of *subsists in*³¹² of *Lumen Gentium*, the *Note* has preferred the theology of *Mystici Corporis* which identified the Catholic Church with “the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church confessed in the Creed.” In this context, we may note that Tillard is clearly inspired by *Lumen Gentium*, *Unitatis redintegratio* and *Anno Ineunte*. According to him, the use of the expression ‘sister Church’ amounts to a refusal to consider another Church as a daughter.

9. The Bishop of Rome and the Communion of Churches

9.1. Introduction

A proper articulation of the relation between the bishop of Rome and the communion of Churches and their bishops remains one of the unresolved problems of the contemporary ecclesiology and ecumenism.³¹³ Knowing from close quarters the ecumenical process of the last century, Tillard is aware that much of the aggressiveness in the views of other Churches and ecclesial groupings on the question of primacy has died down. We are now living in a period, when many among them come “to regard some exercise of primacy by the Roman see as ‘normal’, ‘desirable’, ‘useful’, or ‘to some degree required’.”³¹⁴

9.2. Primacy of the Bishop of Rome as an Ecumenical Problem

If we were to ask an orthodox theologian, says Tillard, as to whether the Roman primacy—as formulated in the two Vatican Councils—is acceptable in orthodox ecclesiology, we may get only a negative response. Nevertheless, many are among them who could join S. Harkianakis in stating that rejecting the present form of Roman primacy

³¹² “This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him, although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure,” *LG* 8,2. “Si l’Eglise du Christ subsiste dans l’Eglise catholique, elle n’est pas absente en dehors de celle-ci (sous forme de nombreux éléments); si l’unité de l’Eglise une du Symbole est dite subsister dans l’Eglise catholique, elle n’est pas pour autant pleinement réalisée dans l’histoire (les chrétiens sont divisés entre eux [des éléments nombreux de l’Eglise du Christ se trouvent en dehors de l’Eglise catholique] et il existe des tensions plus ou moins graves au sein de chaque Eglise), aussi l’unité de l’Eglise doit-elle se comprendre dans un sens dynamique et doit-elle croître indéfiniment: l’Eglise doit être une et doit l’être chaque jour davantage (ad unitatem catholicam). Sur cette base, n’est-ce pas la tâche du dialogue œcuménique, d’un point de vue catholique, de pouvoir reconnaître toujours davantage l’Eglise du Christ en toute Eglise chrétienne?” J. FAMEREE, “Ecclésiologie catholique. Différence séparatrice et rapprochements avec les autres Eglises,” *RTL*, 33 (2002) 1, p. 35, *hereafter cited as* J. FAMEREE, “Ecclésiologie catholique.” See also our discussion below on “Primacy of the Bishop of Rome as an Ecumenical Problem.”

³¹³ In the first pages of his *The Bishop of Rome*, Tillard wrote: “The theological problem of papacy stands out today as one of the most complex chapters in the doctrine of the Church. [...] In fact the question has a freshly sharpened edge both at the level of the Catholic Church (...) and at the ecumenical level,” *ID*, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 3; cf. *ID*, “The Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 3.

³¹⁴ *ID*, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 4.

...does not, however, mean rejecting the idea of primacy within Orthodoxy. On the contrary, recognizing the ideas of synodality and collegiality leads directly towards recognizing one bishop as the first among the bishops, that is, to attribute the primacy to him; never, however, in the sense of ‘supreme pontiff’ but always as ‘first among equals.’ [...] When the bishop of Rome understood his primacy in the sense of *primus inter pares*, he had the possibility of expressing a decisive opinion on questions of concern to the whole Church and of being respected by all; he was thus able to provide effectively a service essential to the whole Church. But as soon as he started to understand his own episcopal power as fundamentally different from the power of all other bishops, he forfeited the possibility of being in communion with Orthodoxy.³¹⁵

Here, Tillard esteems that the Orthodox refusal to accept the papal primacy is not total. It has to do more with the present exercise of primacy and its justification given by the Catholic Church. Hence, he takes this refusal “less as a covert locking of the door” and more as “an opening towards a passionately desired communion.”³¹⁶

A similar sentiment can be detected in the 1974 *Lutheran-Catholic Declaration* (March 5), which opens by declaring that “[t]here is a growing awareness among Lutherans of the necessity of a special Ministry to serve the Church’s unity and universal mission, while the Catholics increasingly see the need for a more nuanced understanding of the role of the papacy within the universal Church.”³¹⁷ In no. 21 of the same document we read: “The Lutheran theologians, although in the past chiefly critical of the structure and functioning of the papacy, can now recognize many of its positive contributions to the life of the Church.”

In the 1976 *Venice Agreement*, ARCIC also maintained a similar view: “If God’s will for unity in love and truth of the whole Christian community is to be fulfilled, this general pattern of the complementary primatial and conciliar aspects of *episcopo* serving the *koinonia* of the Churches needs to be realized at the universal level” (No. 23). Thus, the Commission which considers primacy as a ‘service of unity’ on a universal scale wishes to keep this service in tension with conciliarity of the Churches. That is to say, in order to correctly understand the position of the bishop of Rome in the Church of Christ, it must be set in the background of the conciliarity of Churches.³¹⁸

In the face of these reactions and suggestions from the Eastern Churches as well as from the ecclesial communities issuing from the Reformation, what should be the attitude of the Catholic Church? Tillard thinks that we must see in them a positive questioning to which the Spirit of Christ invites the Catholic Church. Drawing inspiration from the *subsistit in* found in

³¹⁵ S. HARKIANAKIS, “Un ministère pétrinien dans l’Eglise,” pp. 107-108.

³¹⁶ J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 6.

³¹⁷ “Introduction,” in *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V*, Minneapolis 1974.

³¹⁸ “This will involve the presence both of a universal primacy to ensure cohesion (and that, says the Report, can only come from the Roman see) and by a healthy conciliarity to guarantee the diversity which catholicity requires,” J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 12.

Lumen Gentium 8, he observes that while affirming that the unique Church of God, in all that is needed for her fullness, resides in the Catholic Church, it is equally necessary to admit that “this Church can exist outside her boundaries, although without that fullness.”³¹⁹ Consequently, we need to “to take with all seriousness what ecclesial groups beyond the Catholic frontiers say when they declare their will to recover universal *koinonia*, especially when the particular wishes of different groups coincide.”³²⁰

This demands some attitudinal changes from the part of the Catholic Church. In Tillard’s view “l’exercice concret de la primauté est un des domaines principaux où l’Eglise catholique doit évoluer si, dans le plan de Dieu, les Eglises ont à retrouver l’unité visible et si elle a un rôle particulier à jouer dans cette unité.”³²¹ In the event of a communion between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches, they would always demand “l’espace de liberté nécessaire pour exercer leur ἐξουσία épiscopale, relativement «aux besoins propres à la partie» du troupeau du Christ qui leur est confiée» (selon l’expression de Paul VI en 1967 dans le *Tomos Agapis* n° 172). Autrement, ils seront absorbés, non pas unis.”³²² It is also difficult to see how the communities issued from the Reformation would accept the Roman power, which is more hardened than at the time of the rupture in the 16th century. In this context—thinks Tillard—the Catholic Church has the duty to present the special role of the bishop of Rome within the communion of Churches in such a way that other Churches can discover its living link with the Gospel. In other words,

The Catholic Church must ask herself whether her own way of understanding the primacy does not need to be reviewed, especially in so far as it has developed in isolation, its balance unchecked by the Eastern tradition or by critical voices insisting on a return to the purity of the gospel.³²³

This new situation calls upon the Catholic Church to make a re-reading of the declarations of Vatican I and Vatican II. These declarations—although made with the guarantee of the Holy Spirit—were nonetheless those which the other ecclesial groups have so far been unable to ‘receive’. They are to be taken for what they are: “they are decisions of the Church *as* she subsists within a state of violence and abnormality which has been hers since the Great Schism between the East and the West, soon to be followed by the divisions within the West itself.”³²⁴ It is undeniable that “the state of ‘subsistence’ of the Church of God in the Catholic

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ ID, “La primauté romaine,” p. 297.

³²² ID, “Retour sur Vatican II: à propos du livre de Mgr J. R. Quinn, «The Reform of the Papacy»,” *Irén.*, 73 (2000), pp. 87-88, *hereafter cited as* J.-M.R. TILLARD, “Retour sur Vatican II.”

³²³ ID, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 14.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

community is a state of expectation” or even “a provisional state.”³²⁵ If it has to become definitive, the solemn decisions taken by the Catholic community alone (through the solemn definitions of its general councils and of the bishop of Rome) “must be ‘received’ by the whole body of the Churches, in an act which would remake the universal *koinonia*. But this reception will not come about without changes in the shades of meaning, in emphasis or balance, changes which themselves belong to the dynamics of this reception.”³²⁶ What is needed from the part of the Catholic Church is to ask how far “the truth of dogmatic definitions guaranteed by the Spirit encloses the whole truth.” This will reveal to her how important it is to set beside them “the positions taken by other partners, especially those who are admitted to be sister Churches, who care as much as she does about faithfulness to Christ and his Spirit.”³²⁷

9.3. *Pastor Aeternus* and the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome

Here, our attempt will be to give an account of Tillard’s re-reading of *Pastor Aeternus* of Vatican I in the context of the demands of the contemporary ecumenical situation.

9.3.1. Limits of *Pastor Aeternus*

One of the notable limits of *Pastor Aeternus*—often pointed out—is its failure to give a precise statement about the rights of the episcopate to match those claimed for the Roman pontiff. It is true that we have a precious passage in the Constitution of 1870, which says that the power of the Supreme pontiff, instead of standing in the way of the ordinary and immediate episcopal jurisdiction—by which the bishops feed and rule individually, as true shepherds, the particular flock assigned to them—indeed promotes, asserts and confirms it (DS 3061).³²⁸ But, unfortunately, we lack a clear statement about the manner in which the power and jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff is to promote—instead of stifling it—the power and jurisdiction of the individual bishops.³²⁹ This lack of a clear and practical articulation of the two jurisdictions was thought—particularly by the minority at the Vatican I³³⁰—to lead to

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

³²⁸ The Constitution here quotes the following words of Gregory the Great: “My honour is the honour of the whole Church. My honour is the firm strength of my brothers. I am truly honoured when due honour is paid to each and every one,” GREGORY THE GREAT, *Epistola ad Eulogium Alexandrium*, cf. DS 3061 (= ND 827).

³²⁹ “...on the one hand, a categorical assertion that two ordinary and immediate episcopal jurisdictions are not in competition, though both are exercised over the same subjects and one is primatial; on the other hand, no indication of the way in which these two jurisdictions are articulated,” J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 7.

³³⁰ “The schema seems to envisage nothing less than ... that the pope should really become the single bishop of the whole Church, the others being bishops in name but in reality simply vicars ... this is very much what an assertion of episcopal, ordinary, and immediate jurisdiction over the whole Church sounds like ... the pope is

the reduction of the local bishop into a mere shadow of the bishop of Rome. In their view, “if the jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome appears as a ‘concurrent’ jurisdiction with that of the bishops in their own dioceses, it makes him in fact the only bishop in the full sense of the word....”³³¹ In airing their concerns—thinks Tillard—these Fathers were not so much defending the prerogatives of the bishops over against that of the pope as they were defending a traditional vision of the Church in which the episcopate was central.

9.3.2. A primacy Measured by the Episcopate

Tillard is of the view that *Pastor Aeternus* lends itself to a moderate interpretation when finer points in the discussion surrounding it are taken into account.³³² For according to the mind and spirit of the First Vatican Council, as emerged at the time of the final vote, it is clear that the exercise of the primacy is measured by the very nature of the episcopate.³³³ As the *Disputatio de fide* underlined then, the power of the bishop of Rome is *ad aedificationem non ad destructionem ecclesiae*. So it is an essential limit imposed by the nature of the power of the Roman Bishop and the intention of Christ for his Church. This would mean that anything against the building up of the Church, as Christ willed it and along the ways attested by the living Tradition, is contrary to the truth of the papal function. As Mgr. Zinelli himself remarked when Vatican I was in session, although the supreme power of the successor of Peter cannot be limited by a greater human power, it is indeed subjected to the natural and divine law.³³⁴ As we know, “the bishops are of divine right (*ex institutione divina*), they have ordinary and immediate power in their diocese, and it is not in the power of the pope or the ecumenical council to destroy (*destruere*) the whole episcopate or anything else in the Church

immediate [Latin] ordinary bishop of every diocese—that of Gubbio as much as that of Rome,” From the speech of Mgr. Felix de Las Cases, given on May 30, 1870, MANSI 52, 338. A similar concern was expressed by Mgr. Bravard, the bishop of Coutances, on June 14 1870: “...the bishops will appear as nothing but vicars of the Roman pontiff, removable at his will, though Christ chose twelve whom he called his apostles, and though all of us who have been assigned to a see have believed that when we received the fullness of the priesthood we were truly and irrevocably espousing that see in the sight of God, and were bound to it as to a married partner,” MANSI 52, 678.

³³¹ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 7.

³³² It is true that these finer points were blurred by ‘Roman theology’ under the influence of Ultramontanism. The interpretation of this theology was presented and accepted as the ‘Church’s opinion’. It was the mould in which ‘Catholic awareness’ was formed until Vatican II. “The way in which *Pastor Aeternus* has been received in the life of the Church gives what may be a typical example of the influence which the habit and temper of the time can have on the actual effect made by a carefully weighed document. A theological vision has been injected into the conciliar text and, in Catholic understanding, has become indistinguishable from the doctrine which is there defined.” ID, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 34.

³³³ Accordingly, “whatever is said about the ‘primacy’ of the Bishop of Rome cannot conflict with what the Church’s Tradition considers as of divine right for the episcopate. This is true not only as regards the existence of the latter, but also as regards the functions assigned to it and the powers it is recognized as possessing. The proclamation of the ‘primacy’ must therefore be understood within the whole content of the traditional data concerning the episcopate. The primacy is limited, judged by the episcopate,” ID, “Horizon of the Primacy,” p. 11.

³³⁴ Cf. MANSI, 52, 1108-1109A.

which is of divine right.”³³⁵ Hence, it is necessary to assert that the primacy of the bishop of Rome is measured by everything that comes from the will of God. Besides, according to *Pastor Aeternus* itself, the affirmation of the ‘primacy’ of the bishop of Rome must be set within a vast background of “the ancient and constant faith of the universal Church” (cf. DS 3052) manifested in the acts of the Ecumenical Councils and sacred canons (cf. DS 3059).

According to the teaching of Vatican I, the bishops assembled with their head in an ecumenical council or dispersed but in union with their head truly have *vere plenum potestatem*. Although one may be tempted to think of two supreme powers here, Tillard insists that

[t]he whole question of the bishop of Rome’s jurisdiction ought to be scrutinised in the light of the relation within the one episcopate of body to the head and head to the body. Only then can the dialectical link be perceived between the kind of power attached to the *officium* of the head (*adnexurn officio*) and its measure (or “limit”), which is set by what the episcopal body requires (*a jure divino*) in order to be truly the body of those who are ‘established by the Holy Spirit as successors of the apostles, to feed and govern as true pastors each one of the flock entrusted to him’ (DS 3961), in the words of *Pastor aeternus* itself.³³⁶

9.3.3. Nature of *officium* of the Bishop of Rome

What comes out clearly from the conciliar debates is the following: it is the *officium* that determines the *potestas jurisdictionis*. Hence, “the right method would be to start from the nature of that *officium* in order to qualify the *potestas*, and not *vice versa*.”³³⁷ What remains to discover, therefore, is the exact nature of this *officium*.

In Tillard’s opinion, insufficient attention has been given to the manner in which the Dogmatic Constitution *Pastor Aeternus* reckoned the *service of unity* as the essential reason for the primacy of the Roman bishop (DS 3050). Although this ministry is a matter of power (*potestas*), it still remains a power in relation to a service, a function (*munus*). As the one who has the responsibility for the unity of the Church, his jurisdiction has as its field “*omnes et singulas ecclesias, omnes et singulos pastores et fideles ... tam seorsum singuli quam simul omnes*” (DS 3064, 3060). Yet it is not a “power over the bishops as a whole (as the minority feared)”³³⁸ but is one that places him in the ensemble of bishops. The charge of the bishop of Rome is basically *episcopal* in nature.³³⁹

³³⁵ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 8; cf. MANSI, 51, 955, no. 37.

³³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 12.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³³⁹ According to Mgr Zinelli, “it must be admitted that the power of the sovereign pontiff is in reality (*realiter*) of the same kind as that of the bishops (*esse eandem speciem ac potestatem episcoporum*),” MANSI, 52, 1104.

It is [...] because of the episcopal nature of his charge that the bishop of Rome has over the entire Church and hence over each diocese a jurisdiction which, though not doubling either that of the episcopal body as a whole or that of any single bishop, is nevertheless authentically episcopal.³⁴⁰

Hence, the primacy of the bishop of Rome must be “understood within the nature of the episcopal *officium* as such, which is identical in kind for him and for every other bishop. There is nothing to allow this ecclesial *officium* to go beyond the field of what is connoted by the episcopate as understood in tradition.”³⁴¹ What is specific to the office of the bishop of Rome is that his *episkopè* is immediately concerned with the universal dimension of *koinônia*. This means the following:

Vatican I refuses to turn the episcopate into a body of functionaries or delegates of the Pope, an army of shadows carrying out as doubles what in fact the supreme head would more fittingly do by himself. The Council does not consider (in fact it refuses to do so) the ‘primacy’ of the Bishop of Rome as an omnipresent ‘power enveloping all episcopal activities. The Pope’s jurisdiction cannot be an obstacle to that of each individual bishop. And unanimously ‘the Fathers (of the Council) reject the idea that the Roman Pontiff would intervene in their diocese *ordinarie*, in their own manner, for the daily, habitual and ordinary government of all the dioceses. Considered according to this mode of exercise, the jurisdiction over a particular Church belongs to them properly and, in a certain sense, exclusively, but always, of course, under the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff.’³⁴²

Despite this, there is no denying the fact that Vatican I spoke little about the concrete coordination between the *potestas ordinaria* of the pope and the *potestas ordinaria* of the bishop of a local Church, which in ecclesiological terms is a lacuna. This is where the re-reading and reception of *Pastor Aeternus* by Vatican II is helpful.³⁴³

9.4. Reception of *Pastor Aeternus* by Vatican II

When we come to the time of Vatican II, we observe a marked change in perspectives and attitudes.

While Vatican I looks at the Church from the starting point of the bishop of Rome, Vatican II starts from the bishops, whom it calls “successors of the apostles” (*LG* 18, 20, 22, etc.), who taken together are the foundation of the universal Church (*LG* 19). [...] the Council affirms quite clearly that it is to the episcopal body of bishops as a whole, following in the wake of the mission of the apostles, that there belongs the fullness of ministry which builds up, governs, and leads the Church (*LG* 20, 21).³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 11.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 12-13.

³⁴³ “At Vatican II *Pastor Aeternus* was ‘received’ in the dogmatic sense by the minority of Vatican I after nearly a century of deepening study and fresh thought. (...) Vatican I and Vatican II together form a dialectical unity in which one should be interpreted by the other,” ID, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 35.

³⁴⁴ ID, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 14-15.

Thus, in the light of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on episcopate, it is possible to place ‘primacy’ in its proper setting, viz. the common mission of the body of bishops. According to the Council, the *munus* of the bishop of Rome must be understood in reference to the *munus* of other bishops and *ad aedificationem Ecclesiae*.

It is clear that by re-situating primacy within the collegiality of bishops, Vatican II has opened a new chapter in the history of primacy. In the light of this new awareness in the Catholic Ecclesiology, Tillard presents some of the important axes of the theology, dealing with the relation between the bishop of Rome and the episcopal college. *Lumen Gentium* 22 acknowledges that the *collegium*—in union with its head and never without it—has supreme and full *potestas* over the whole Church. At the same time, in order to placate the minority which held on to the pre-conciliar position, it had to maintain, in a parallel line, the affirmation that the head of the college—in virtue of his office (*vi muneris sui*)—has “full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And he is always free to exercise this power.” The expression, ‘always free to exercise’ (*semper libere exercere*) remains unclear.³⁴⁵ The most important point here is whether or not the head of the college, in his *full and supreme* power can sideline the college. *Lumen Gentium*, which insists that the college cannot act without the head, affirms that the latter can always act *freely*, without clarifying the kind of relationship the head maintains while acting thusly. If we hold that the head possesses a power transcending the college, how is his power delimited by the power of college, which also possesses supreme power? The theological commission of the Council gave the following clarification: the primacy is delimited by the demands of the Gospel, justice, the decisions of the councils and the structure of the Church, the sacraments, etc. Nevertheless, nothing in *Lumen Gentium* allows us to imagine that collegial solidarity can put in place some limit to the primatial acts of the bishop of Rome.

Briefly, we still lack a clear statement about the primatial function in its relationship to the episcopate. What needs to be underlined is the fact that his primatial function “fait de l’évêque de Rome non face à ses frères évêques mais au sein même de leur communion collégiale.”³⁴⁶ But *Lumen Gentium* speaks of the “devoir de dépendance des autres d’évêques face au Primat,” but does not speak of the “devoir de respect de la solidarité collégiale de la part du Primat. [...] On sait les droits du Primat, on ne connaît pas ses devoirs. On ne sait pas

³⁴⁵ “Le *libere exercere* signifie-t-il que le Primat peut agir selon sa propre intuition, sans devoir vérifier l’harmonie de celle-ci avec la vision ou le désir de ses frères évêques, surtout s’il s’agit de matières les touchant de près? Ou signifie-t-il qu’il peut lui sembler bon d’exprimer ce que tous pensent, sans besoin de les en informer au préalable? La nuance est d’importance,” ID, “Retour sur Vatican II,” p. 89.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

comment sa primauté affecte spécifiquement sa grâce et ses fonctions épiscopales.”³⁴⁷ Thus we see that *Lumen Gentium* did not settle difficult questions of the practical boundaries between the authority and power of the bishop of Rome and that of the other bishops.

However, we have two indications which can shed some light on the question: (1) The Theological Commission of the Council rejected in July 1964 an amendment which Paul VI wanted for LG 22, which read as follows: ‘the Roman pontiff ought certainly to take account of the collegial power of all the bishops, but that he himself owed account to God alone (*uni Domino divinctus*)’. Rejecting this amendment, the commission replied in the following words: ‘The Roman pontiff is bound by Revelation itself, the basic structure of the Church, the sacraments, the definitions of the first councils, etc; (2) In the *Nota praevia* or preliminary note of explanation appended to *Lumen Gentium*, the Commission insists that the pope has to take his decisions *intuitu boni Ecclesiae*, in consideration of the welfare of the Church.

We have to take these indications for what they are worth; they allude to the possible limits of primatial powers; but they are neither firm juridical norms nor canonically formulated limits, which would make it quite clear how far pope’s powers can be extended. In the final analysis, the Council puts its trust in the activity of the Holy Spirit and the personal judgement of the pope. Here comes in the importance of the role played by the *sensus fidelium* which is a *conspiratio* of the faithful and the bishops. As Tillard puts it,

If it should happen that the Roman Pontiff oversteps the limits which his office of maintaining the Church in communion imposes on his actions, the bishops and the laity, nudged by the Spirit, will know how to react: assuming, of course, that they really know what are the mission and nature of the primacy.³⁴⁸

9.5. Tillard’s Interpretation of the Relation between Primacy and Episcopacy

In elaborating the theology of the relation between Primacy and Episcopacy, it is necessary that we first fix the identity of the person who holds the supreme primacy in the Church.

9.5.1. Pope is a Bishop of a Local Church with a Special Vocation

In an audience given to the Roman clergy on 24 June 1963, Paul VI declared that ‘the title par excellence of my mission and authority is that of the bishop of Rome.’³⁴⁹ That is to say, he is one bishop among other bishops. His being the primate does not sever him from the solidarity of the episcopal college. He is primate, but he is so insofar as he is the head of a local Church. Thus, whatever powers or prerogatives that the pope enjoys, they come

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ ID, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 42.

³⁴⁹ Cf. ID, “Retour sur Vatican II,” p. 91

basically from his being the bishop of a Church which has a special role in the communion of Churches.³⁵⁰

A) Primacy of the Bishop of Rome: From 'Sedes' to 'Sedens'

According to the long Tradition held both in the East and the West, a bishop, after taking possession of his see, is considered as the one who personifies and represents his Church in the communion of Churches and bishops. He is also seen as the custodian of the faith of his people whom he maintains in the communion of all the Churches.³⁵¹ This basic ecclesial law concerning the relationship between the *sedes* and *sedens*—applicable to every local Church—is true also of the local Church of Rome and its bishop.³⁵²

The link between the bishop and his *see* is so close that a bishop cannot be without his *see* and a *see* without its bishop. This is applicable to *sedes* of Rome and its *sedens*: “La Tradition ancienne ne sépare pas l'évêque de Rome de sa *cathedra Petri*.”³⁵³ It is worthwhile to note here that the paragraph of *Pastor Aeternus*, which asserts that the Pope possesses *potestas quae vere episcopalis est*,³⁵⁴ begins not by asserting the primacy of the *bishop of Rome*, but by stating the primacy of the *Church* of Rome. According to Tillard, the Council of 1870 was thereby manifesting its anchorage in the Tradition of the undivided Church, according to which “the primacy that Rome is recognised as possessing comes primarily not from the bishop of this see but from the importance of the local Church of Rome in the midst of the other local Churches.”³⁵⁵

Whatever prerogatives or primatial functions, possessed by the bishop of Rome, they come from his being the bishop of the Church which has the *potentior principalitas* among the Churches and ‘which presides over in love.’ Thus, in the words of Tillard, “[h]is primacy

³⁵⁰ “Ce sont la primauté et l'autorité de cette Eglise et de ce siège qui expliquent celles de l'évêque, non l'inverse,” ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 356. Cf. pp. 69-70.

³⁵¹ “D'une part il en est le porte-voix et le représentant au sein de la communion des Eglises (synodalité) et des évêques (collégialité), faisant qu'elle joue son rôle dans les conseils et que sa tradition propre est toujours présente et active dans la symphonie ecclésiale. D'autre part, il a la garde de la foi de sa *plebs* et la mission de la nourrir en la maintenant, surtout par l'Eucharistie, dans la communion de toutes les Eglises,” ID, “Présence de Pierre dans le ministère...” p. 70.

³⁵² This close link between the Bishop of Rome and his See was reiterated by Paul VI in his apostolic constitution, *Romano Pontifici eligendo* of 1st October 1975, in which he underlined that the pope is elected not as the universal bishop but as the bishop of a local Church. Hence the procedure of the election should be in function of that. As he put it, “...l'élection de l'évêque de l'Eglise de Rome a été de la compétence exclusive de l'Eglise de Rome. [...] Le collège électoral du pontife romain, parce que destiné à élire l'évêque de Rome, doit être composé de membres qui sont liés d'une façon substantielle à l'Eglise de Rome.” Cf. DC 72 (1975) pp. 1001-1011, for Eng. trans. see www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul06/p6elect.htm (20.07.2004)

³⁵³ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Dialogue autour d'une thèse sur «Le primat de l'évêque de Rome» [A. Carrasco Rouco],” *CrSt*, 13 (1992), p. 198, *hereafter cited as* J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Dialogue autour d'une thèse.”

³⁵⁴ Cf. DS, no. 3060.

³⁵⁵ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Horizon of the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome,” pp. 19-20. Cf. ID, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 69.

came to him from his Church, which in turn owed it to what the glorious witness of Peter and Paul had brought about in her. He has no personal authority apart from the prerogatives (*presbeia*) of his local Church.”³⁵⁶ “Il est serviteur et signe de l’universalité de la *communio* à cause de la spécificité—de la «différence»—de son Eglise locale de Rome.”³⁵⁷

B) Pope: Vicar of Peter in the See of the Church of Peter and Paul

It is generally admitted that the pope occupies the see of the Church of the Apostles Peter and Paul. “It does not, however, follow that the bishop of Rome’s relationship to Peter is of exactly the same sort as his relationship to Paul.”³⁵⁸ The personalities of the two Apostles are not identical. If the pre-eminence (*excellencia*) of Peter within the college of Apostles was essentially a matter of leadership, that of Paul was essentially charismatic and prophetic. It is interesting to note that the Tradition mentions both Peter and Paul in relation to the Roman Church, but when the leadership of that Church is spoken of, Peter alone is mentioned.

According to Tillard, since Paul’s mission is more charismatic than institutional,³⁵⁹ it is difficult to have a successor of the Apostle of the Gentile in the strict sense of the term. Nevertheless, as the *sedens* of Church which was founded also on his witness, the bishop of Rome “receives a quality which should mark his ministry: permanent openness to the Spirit, the care of non-believers, the priority of the Spirit over the letter, the total transcendence of the Word over all structures. He is made by Paul more than he succeeds Paul.”³⁶⁰

But in relation to Peter, the bishop of Rome is usually called *successor of Peter*. In Tillard’s view, this appellation needs some clarification lest we distort the truth. The basis of this appellation is the comparison between the Roman Bishop’s primacy and that of Peter within the apostolic group.³⁶¹ Hence, the key to understanding the nature of the primacy of the bishop of Rome is to fix the nature of the primacy of Peter.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86-87. “L’un des apports les plus importants de l’ecclésiologie des dernières décennies a été précisément de montrer comment la primauté de l’évêque de Rome est conséquence d’une primauté débordant sa personne, primauté de la *sedes* qui a la *potentior principalitas* parce que «fondée et constituée par les deux glorieux apôtres Pierre et Paul à Rome» (*Irénée, Adv. Haer.* III, 12) dont elle garde l’héritage,” ID, “Dialogue autour d’une thèse,” p. 198.

³⁵⁷ ID, “L’Universel et Local,” p. 32. *See supra* our discussion in “Church of Rome and the Communion of Churches.”

³⁵⁸ J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 93. Moreover the link which binds each of the Apostles to the Church of Rome is not identical.

³⁵⁹ “Paul seems indeed to have been raised up by the Spirit of the risen Lord to bear witness above all to the primacy of an inward communion of faith and love, the perpetually new work of the Spirit,” *Ibid.*

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ The earliest community saw him as the *first* of the twelve; he is shown as the first to be called; he is the first to be named in the list of the apostles. (*Mat* 10: 2); he is the first of the apostles to see the risen Lord (1 *Cor* 15: 5); he is the first to proclaim the *kerygma* of good news (*Acts* 2: 14); his companions recognized a certain authority in him even during the life of Jesus: he stands first in a number of incidents that involved the whole group of disciples (*Mk* 1: 36; *Mat* 14: 28-29; 15: 15; 16: 16; *Jn* 6: 68); there are various instances in the New Testament which show that Jesus had special intentions for Peter, and these intentions were made known to Peter

What should have given Peter his primacy? The answer is his confession of the apostolic faith.³⁶² According to Tillard, the words of Jesus spoken to Peter in response to his confession³⁶³ reach out, in fact, to all the Apostles, whose spokesman he is. That is to say, the faith expressed in the confession of St Peter was not different from that of the other Apostles. “And it is in his act of confession that he becomes the first among those upon whom the Lord founds his Church.”³⁶⁴ “Simon became Peter only as a member of the apostolic group. [...] His outstanding part remains within the apostolic function.”³⁶⁵ Peter is *first (prôtos)*, but not unique! And “[t]he first (*prôtos*) does not absorb the others.”³⁶⁶ The other Apostles, similar to Peter in everything except in holding the first place, benefited from an equal share in honour and power.³⁶⁷ The Apostles, insofar as they are first-hand witnesses of Christ, cannot have successors in the strict sense. Others can have only a vicarious position vis-à-vis the Apostles in their function of “shepherding and teaching in order to guard the Churches founded on the power of their witness.”³⁶⁸ What is true of the Apostles should be also true of the head of the apostolic group. Hence, according to Tillard, it is “impossible to speak of a ‘Petrine succession,’ to use a clumsy phrase, without qualification.”³⁶⁹

But we know from history that the preferred ways of referring to the pope was ‘Vicar of Christ’ and ‘Successor of Peter’. In the words of Pope Innocent III, “The supreme pontiff is not called vicar of a mere man but is truly vicar of true God.”³⁷⁰ In the same logic, Cardinal Bellarmine would later define Church as “an assembly of men [...] under the authority of lawful pastors and above all (*praecipue*) of the only vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman

in the presence of the other apostles; he is the only disciple, according to the Gospel accounts, declared by Jesus as ‘blessed’ (*makarios*) in the context of his confession, etc.

³⁶² In response to his confessed faith Jesus said, “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church” (*Mat* 16: 18). There are different ways of interpreting ‘rock’ found in this passage: For Origen in the East and Augustine in the West, the rock upon which the Church is built is Christ as he is confessed. Another interpretation, especially in the West, took the rock (*pietra*) to be the person of Peter (This line of interpretation can be seen in Hilary of Poitiers, Jerome and Leo the Great). A third exegesis, often known as ‘Antiochean exegesis’ (John Chrysostom, Theodoret, John of Damascus, Theodore of Mopsuestia). holds that the rock (*pietra*) is the faith confessed by Peter. Giving further shade to this Eastern interpretation, it was held in the West that the *pietra* in question is neither Peter alone nor his confession of faith alone, but rather it is Peter in so far as he confesses the apostolic faith and the apostolic faith in so far as it is expressed by Peter.

³⁶³ Cf. *Mat* 16: 16-19.

³⁶⁴ J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Bishop of Rome*, p.111.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

³⁶⁷ If Peter is rock, epistle to *Ephesians* (2: 20) deems all the apostles and the prophets as foundations of the Church. In the Book of Revelation we see the twelve apostles occupying the twelve thrones of the New Jerusalem (21: 14).

³⁶⁸ J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 96. Jesus called the twelve and involved them in his mission so that the once-for-all efficacy of this work could bear fruit to the ends of the earth. But death did not allow the apostles to complete this mission. So they had continuators (they were not their ‘replacements’) of their responsibility.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ *PL* 214, 292 A.

pontiff.”³⁷¹ But Tillard prefers the title ‘Vicar of Peter’ to ‘Successor of Peter’ in referring to the bishop of Rome.

Peter has vicars in the see of Rome rather than successors. The once and for all nature of his office remains present through the vicars who successively occupy his seat. [...] Peter’s once-for-all authority attached to the Church and see of Rome is what becomes effective through all those who succeed each other in this see but who never really succeed him. [...] In this way Peter’s witness, thanks to his vicars, lives on.”³⁷²

9.5.2. Pope is a Servant of Communion

Having discovered the identity of the pope as the ‘bishop of Rome,’ our preoccupation in the present section will be to find out the purpose of his primacy. Tillard thinks that it was thanks to Pope Leo the Great that the purpose of the Roman primacy got clarified. In the opinion of this great pope, the bishop of Rome is called upon to serve the communion of the Churches by supporting them “in their confession of the true apostolic faith, and ensuring respect for the privileges proper to each of the Churches.”³⁷³ This view on the purpose of the Roman primacy corresponds to the true nature of the primacy of the Roman Church and her bishop. In what follows, we will be detailing the different aspects of this primacy.

A) Pope as the Visible Foundation of the Unity of Faith and Communion

In order to elucidate the role of the bishop of Rome as servant of communion, we have to return, once again, to the nature of the Petrine primacy. *Acts of the Apostles*, in its report on the holding of what is generally called the Council of Jerusalem, sheds clear light on the nature of this assembly. Undoubtedly Peter’s voice carried weight and he used it to bring about unanimity. But “Peter does not have to create unity—that comes from the Spirit of the Lord—but only to keep the community in *koinonia*.”³⁷⁴ According to Tillard, this is an example to be followed by the bishop of Rome as the servant of communion.

His role is to guard, defend and promote the visible communion of believers. [...] the bishop of Rome is not the one ‘starting from whom’ the Church of God is built but one who allows the ministry of his ‘brothers and fellow-bishops’ to open out into the communion of their Churches.³⁷⁵

*Pastor Aeternus*³⁷⁶ and its re-reading in *Lumen Gentium*³⁷⁷ are careful to underline that the service of unity is the essential mission of the Church of Rome and her bishop. The bishop,

³⁷¹ *Prima Controversia generalis Liber III, De Ecclesia militante, caput 2.*

³⁷² J.M.R. TILLARD, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 96-97.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

³⁷⁶ “...in placing blessed Peter at the head of other apostles, he thus established his person as a lasting principle and visible foundation of this double unity,” DS 3051; “Thus in keeping the unity both of communion and of a single profession of faith with the Roman Pontiff, the Church of Christ would be a single flock under a single shepherd,” DS 3060.

overseeing the witness on which all the Churches live, receives as responsibility among bishops to watch over the faith and communion of the entire Church. He is, in a way, the ‘vicar’ of the Apostles, in relation to the *ephapax* of their confession. He is like their voice. At the council of Chalcedon, the Fathers received the *Tomus* to Flavian because Peter had spoken through Leo; the same thing happened in the third Council of Constantinople, when the Fathers accepted the letter of Agathon because Peter had spoken through him.

Si l'évêque de Rome a fonction de signe et gage de l'unité, c'est avec la charge d'unir «dans la foi commune» ses frères évêques, de garantir les droits de chacun face aux aspirations des autres, de les garder dans la concorde, de faire que ce que chacun accomplit pour son Eglise locale serve au bien de tous, de les aider à s'engager dans la cohésion pour le service de l'Evangile, de leur fournir les moyens de s'entraider mutuellement dans leur mission, de communiquer à chacun ce qui concerne l'ensemble, de leur signaler les nécessités de certaines Eglises locales, parfois de les rassembler pour des décisions communes concernant la doctrine ou la discipline, de non seulement les écouter mais les consulter.³⁷⁸

An intelligent believer can and should distinguish between the one who sits on the see of Peter and Paul and what the Roman see signifies in the communion of Churches. Regardless of his personal qualities and limitations, the *sedens* of Rome “continues to direct the mind of the Church towards the once-for-all (*ephapax*) confession of Peter and Paul.”³⁷⁹ That is, whether a sinner or a saint, the bishop of Rome is the bishop of a *holy* see, and hence bishop of the Holy See.

B) Sentinel of Faith and Communion

The most basic function (*munus*) of the bishop of Rome, in the light of what we have seen so far, is “to work out the calling of touchstone, point of reference and memorial of the apostolic faith, the proper calling of the Roman Church.”³⁸⁰ In carrying out this function, his role is that of a trusted sentinel or a watchman for his brother bishops. As such he needs “to keep one eye on the content of the apostolic faith and the other on the people of God as they grapple with the problems of their mission in the heart of the world, in danger of getting bogged down there.”³⁸¹ A sentinel or watchman is not the commander who gives orders and

³⁷⁷ “In order that the episcopate itself, however, might be one and undivided he put Peter at the head of the other disciples, and in him he set up a lasting and visible source and foundation of faith and of communion,” *LG* 18.

³⁷⁸ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “La catholicité de la Mission,” p. 356.

³⁷⁹ *Id.*, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 166.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 167. According to Tillard, the insistence on the power of *Magisterium*, as does *Pastor Aeternus* (DS 3065), represents a shift from the dynamic image of a watchman who prevents you from sinking into mortal sleep to a more static image of a master who teaches. However, the underlying intention is the same: as the teacher of the universal Church he has (a) to remind the Churches of those points about which there can be no fiddle if we are to remain in the unity of faith and communion; (b) to declare—in difficult times—the conditions

decides on the attitude to be taken. His duty is rather to sound alarm at the proper time. “The well-being of the group depends on confidence in his warning; too many false alarms and they will stop taking him seriously.”³⁸²

However, the one who exercises the function of watching over all the Churches is in a genuine position of leadership. It may not be reduced to a primacy of honour, which is an empty symbol devoid of real authority. For there are times when this bishop must intervene authoritatively.³⁸³ “The immediacy attributed to his power allows him to do so especially if the local episcopate lacks clarity of mind or is unable to control a situation where some problem has put in peril the apostolic faith and the communion of the Churches.”³⁸⁴ In doing so, he does not consider himself cut away from his fellow bishops.

He will not act in isolation, stating a doctrine, expressing a tradition, or giving an interpretation of what is revealed, which are not of the Church. [...] the authority of the watchman does not rest formally on the *right* to impose obedience—except in particularly serious cases—but on the *duty* to question the Churches in what concerns the demands of truth and of fidelity to the apostles’ teaching, entrusted to them by the Spirit. This spiritual requirement means that they in their turn must ‘receive’ the warnings, the advice, the reprimands, even the directives of him whom the Spirit has made bishop of the Church ‘which presides in love’³⁸⁵

In this context, we can see the papal encyclicals as issuing from a sentinel, who is quick to alert pastors and the faithful on matters touching faith and communion. In Tillard’s view “it would be much wiser as well as consistent with episcopal responsibility for encyclicals to be addressed to bishops, whose duty it then becomes to pass on the message with suitable explanation.”³⁸⁶ As the centre of unity, it must be also considered as a duty of the Roman bishop to pass on to all the Churches major decisions of interest to all, even if it is taken in a particular Church, because it is the duty of the *centrum unitatis* to weave the concerns of each bishop into a truly catholic pattern of care. For the Spirit speaks to the Churches by other channels than the ‘primate’ only.

C) Confused Understanding of the Role of Servant of Communion

History of the early Church informs us that episcopal sees were quite early on grouped regionally under such centres as Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, etc. Among the bishops of each

required for a unanimous confession of apostolic faith to be recognized in all the varied ways of expressing it; (b) to make solemn declarations (*definitio*) on a point of faith.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

³⁸³ For instance, Leo the Great intervened at the Chalcedon Council, because the safety of faith was at risk.

³⁸⁴ J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 169.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 171. This raises the thorny problem of the ordinary magisterium (day-to-day teaching) of the Roman primate. Tillard here underlines that “the acts of the ordinary magisterium are often theological texts bearing the marks of a particular school of thought. They should be assessed more for the quality of their content than from the standing of whoever signed them (and who in many cases had not himself written them),” *ibid.*

such region, there was a ‘first one’ (*prôtos*) heading it and who was invested with powers required by his office. These ecclesial groupings developed in the course of history into patriarchates and their *prôtos*, patriarchs. Among these patriarchs, the one of Rome—besides holding a regional primacy—was also recognised as possessing “a primacy of quite different type in relation to the Church as a whole.”³⁸⁷

Traditionally the Roman pontiff, as the bishop of the Church which possesses *potentior principalitas*, enjoyed three types of primacies: (a) a regional primacy as the bishop of the Church of Rome, (b) a patriarchal primacy as the Patriarch of the West,³⁸⁸ and (c) an apostolic primacy within the episcopal college. But unfortunately, acting under the pressure of circumstances, the Church of Rome combined into one single whole this threefold primacy. Building on the confusion of roles, the Roman see came “to consider that even those sees outside her patriarchal zone, for which indeed she held responsibility of another kind, fell within her absolute control.”³⁸⁹ She would gradually claim that the authority of other primates, including that of the patriarchs, only derived from it or at least a concession from it.³⁹⁰ Consequently, we come to a situation in which we cannot distinguish between the authority which properly belongs to the specific function (*munus*) of the bishop of Rome within the communion of Churches, and the claims produced by the confusion between multiple primacies enjoyed by the Roman see. Before long we will see the Roman bishop attributing to himself the outward marks of sovereignty. With Boniface VIII (1294-1303) and his *Unam Sanctam*, the lordship of the Holy See is no longer subject to any limit: “We declare, state and define that it is absolutely necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff.”³⁹¹ According to the same document, “the Church and

³⁸⁷ J. RATZINGER, *Le Nouveau Peuple de Dieu*, Paris, 1971, p. 54. Thus Ignatius of Antioch speaks of Rome’s ‘presidency of love.’ Irenaeus traces the special position of Rome to *Potentior principalitas* (that of having been founded by Peter and Paul). Cyprian, on his part, refers to the Roman Church as *Ecclesia principalis*. It is in this role that Rome was recognized as a centre to which doctrinal questions might be referred.

³⁸⁸ The patriarchal authority is by nature “administrative and centralising.” It involves taking decisions for the sake of the Churches under its jurisdiction.

³⁸⁹ J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 52. “Rome’s wish to become *Mater et Magistra* of the whole of the West spilled over into the particular function (*munus*) which the bishop of Rome has in relation to the Church as a whole. Much more was claimed for this function than really belongs to it when it is considered strictly for what it is,” *Ibid.* p. 52.

³⁹⁰ Cf. M.-J LE GUILLOU, “L’expérience orientale de la collégialité épiscopale et ses requêtes,” in: *La collégialité épiscopale. Histoire et théologie. «Unam Sanctam»* – 52 (Paris: Cerf, 1965), pp. 167-181 (originally published in: *Ist.*, 10 (1964), 111-124); W. DE VRIES, “The Origin of Eastern Patriarchates and their relationship to the Power of the Pope,” *OiC*, 2 (1966) 50-59; 130-142 [“Die Entstehung der Patriarchate des Ostens und ihr Verhältnis zur päpstlichen Vollgewalt,” *Schol.*, 37, 1962) 341-369].

³⁹¹ *DS* 875.

indeed the whole design of God is riveted to the papacy, dependent upon it, concentrated on it. Apart from God himself, nothing can escape the *plenitudo potestatis* of Christ's vicar."³⁹²

The East always resisted such encroachment. (Even in the West, some major regions affirmed with force their right to relative autonomy: e.g., Carthage, Milan, etc.³⁹³). According to the Eastern view, the groupings of local Churches headed by their patriarchs translated—as M.-J. Le Guillou wrote in 1964—"the awareness that the college of bishops, united with Rome, regulates its own affairs in a given area."³⁹⁴

In Tillard's judgement, the present day Catholic Church—the heritage of the second millennium weighing on her and eclipsing her perception of the ecclesial life of the first—is suffering from the consequences of the confusion we have mentioned above. If we take, for instance, the case of the *Latin Church*—since the frontiers of the Patriarchate of the West and the totality of the local Churches (of the Latin Church) in communion with the See of Rome coincide—it is difficult to work out an osmosis between the bishop of Rome and the other bishops. This is because, practically, the exercise of the primacy and patriarchal authority comes to be identified.

This confusion penetrates into the relation between the Roman See and its bishop with the Catholic Oriental Churches, which have their patriarchs (or equivalent authorities that head the Church) and synod of bishops. These latter have often been complaining about the Roman centralisation and Rome's moves, especially in the past, to latinise them. Tillard's view in this regard seems to take into account the Oriental sentiments on the subject:

Il est de plus en plus clair pour beaucoup qu'en ce qui concerne la structure interne de ces Eglises d'Orient, héritée de la plus ancienne Tradition,³⁹⁵ leur réglementation liturgique, leur discipline courante, surtout leur discussion synodale, l'évêque de Rome n'a pas à s'immiscer d'une façon telle qu'il se comporterait comme un super-patriarche. Sa primauté doit s'inscrire dans le réseau des fonctions épiscopales et des hiérarchies propres à ces corps ecclésiaux, sans violer leur dignité et la conscience qu'ils portent d'être les responsables de leur propre fidélité à une longue tradition. Ils ne sauraient vivre sous tutelle.³⁹⁶

³⁹² J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 57. This is because, as interpreted by Augustine of Trionfo (†1328, also known as Augustine of Ancona), the power of the pope came *a Deo immediate*.

³⁹³ This shows that "On a senti que la nature même de la *communio*, si elle exigeait l'unité, s'opposait à ce que le ministère chargé de veiller sur celle-ci à un titre particulier se confonde peu à peu avec l'exercice d'un impérialisme sourcilieux. Car qui dit *communio* dit aussi respect de la pluralité et, en particulier, de ce que l'on pourrait appeler la « pluralité fondamentale », celle des membres du collège apostolique d'où dérivent le témoignage et l'autorité des divers « sièges apostoliques », J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 340-341.

³⁹⁴ M.-J. LE GUILLOU, "L'Expérience orientale de la collégialité épiscopale et ses requêtes", *Ist.*, 10 (1964), p. 117.

³⁹⁵ Il ne s'agit plus ici d'inculturation, comme pour les jeunes Eglises, mais de respect de l'ancien héritage ecclésial, aussi ancien que l'héritage de l'Occident, qu'elles ont gardé, n. 59, p. 342.

³⁹⁶ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 342.

Here, Tillard makes a fine distinction between the type of relation a local bishop of an Oriental Church and his brother bishop in Latin Church maintain with the See of Rome. Accordingly, when we talk about the relationship between the authority of the local bishop and the primatial authority, it does not suffice

...d'affirmer que celle-ci n'étouffe pas l'autorité et la responsabilité de l'évêque de chaque Eglise locale. Il faut ajouter qu'elle respecte les droits et les privilèges de ceux des sièges épiscopaux que leur histoire rattache plus directement aux Eglises apostoliques. En d'autres termes, elle ne fait pas fi de l'histoire.³⁹⁷

One of the pressing theological tasks of our time is, therefore, to disentangle the apostolic primacy, possessed by the bishop of Rome, from this confused situation. We should distinguish between the authority which properly belongs to the specific function of the bishop of Rome within the universal communion of Churches and the claims produced by the confusion of the multiple primacies enjoyed by the Roman see. The special place of the see of Rome in the communion of Churches cannot usurp the places of other sees, especially the apostolic ones.

D) Function of the Bishop of Rome: That of a Bishop among other Bishops

The function of the bishop of Rome is basically episcopal and the Church knows no hierarchical degree, which is higher than that of the episcopate. Therefore, the bishop of Rome is not a 'Super-Bishop',³⁹⁸ but a bishop like all other bishops, placed on the *cathedra* of a local Church (Rome), which—because of its special relationship to Peter and Paul—is invested with a special responsibility (a *sollicitudo*) for the communion of all the Churches in faith, service and witness. In fact, the primacy he enjoys is that of his Church. Hence,

Just as the prerogatives (*presbeia*) of the Roman Church do not place her outside the shared ecclesiality of the Churches, so the primacy of her bishop does not put him outside the shared episcopate. The primacy can be exercised as an episcopal function conferred by the general sacrament of episcopacy.³⁹⁹

Primacy is in fact at the service of episcopal collegiality.⁴⁰⁰ In the context of the collegiality of bishops and the communion of their Churches, the function of the bishop of

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

³⁹⁸ "Lorsqu'aux îles Fidji il [évêque de Rome] préside le rassemblement eucharistique de milliers de fidèles venus de tous les coins de la terre, il le fait non comme un plus-évêque dominant les Eglises locales et absorbant le pouvoir des autres évêques mais comme l'évêque de l'Eglise de Rome, agissant selon la «différence» de cette Eglise locale qui est parmi les autres Eglises locales et avec elles," ID, "L'Universel et Local," p. 32.

³⁹⁹ ID, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 89.

⁴⁰⁰ "The mission of the bishop of the apostolic see does not stand above the mission of bishops generally, but exists within it with the purpose of serving it," *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126. "Bien que toutes les Eglises lui soient confiées à un titre spécial, l'autorité de l'évêque de Rome est à comprendre à l'intérieur même de l'autorité du collège épiscopal. Elle est à son service et non au-dessus d'elle, même lorsque comme primat cet évêque est seul à intervenir, au nom de sa fonction," ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 341.

Rome is to be seen as a special modality of the *sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum* bestowed to every bishop through the sacrament of episcopal ordination.⁴⁰¹

The special power that he possesses and which marks him out can therefore only be explained within the episcopal prerogatives. And in addition, he does not have an object exceeding the limits of what the whole of Tradition (especially where ‘East and West met in the union of faith and charity’) considers as the very object of the episcopal *munus*. To state the opposite would be completely to change the nature of the Church by placing on top of it a principle of cohesion that as such does not come under sacramental reality.⁴⁰²

Elsewhere Tillard adds:

Évêque parmi les évêques, mais évêque de Rome et pour cela chargé du pouvoir *singulier* attaché au siège de la *potentior principalitas*, tel est le statut épiscopal du Primat dans le collège épiscopal et face à la *communio* des Eglises confiée à celui-ci. Rien dans sa fonction, et le pouvoir qui lui répond, n’échappe à la grâce épiscopale. Mais celle-ci—qui en tout évêque est toujours donnée pour la *communio*—est proportionnée à la place de son Eglise au sein de cette *communio*.⁴⁰³

The solicitude of the Church of Rome and, hence, of its bishop—in the level of the unity of faith—has for object the ‘recognition.’⁴⁰⁴ Inculturated as they are, each of the local Churches should live and act in such a way that any other local Church can ‘recognise’ in it the true faith, inherited from the Apostles and safeguarded in the Church of God. The bishop of Rome—owing to his special mission within the communion—should see that the faith in every local Church is in communion and harmony with that which was inherited from the Apostles and lived ever since. It is his duty to be the *memory* of his brother bishops and their Churches. In the level of the openness of each Church to the needs of other Churches, the task of the bishop of Rome is again to see that ecclesial solidarity is promoted and harmonised.

E) Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome and that of the Heads of Local Churches

According to *Lumen Gentium* 23, each individual bishop is for his Church what the bishop of Rome is for his Church, viz. the visible source and foundation of unity. In the same Constitution, at no. 27, it is added that bishops have over their Churches a power (*potestas*) which is proper, ordinary and immediate—adjectives *Pastor Aeternus* used to describe the power (*potestas*) of the bishop of Rome over all Christian communities and the faithful.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰¹ “La fonction de l’évêque de Rome n’est pas autre chose qu’une modalité très spéciale de cette *sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum* donnée avec la grâce épiscopale, donc une forme particulière d’exercice du sacrement commun de l’épiscopat,” ID, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 328. “Pourtant elle est autorité de *service dans et pour* le collège de *ministerium*, et non de *dominium sur* le collège. On reconnaît ici l’idéal de Grégoire le Grand. Il s’agit de confirmer et d’aider, non d’absorber ou de supplanter,” *ibid.* p. 341.

⁴⁰² ID, “Horizon of the Primacy,” p. 18. In this context, the formulation of Vatican I—*potestas quae vere episcopalism est*—is a happier one than it was first thought of.

⁴⁰³ ID, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 333.

⁴⁰⁴ See *supra* our discussion on “Local Church’s Openness to Communion.”

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. DS, no. 3060 and 3064. Its echo is found in *Christus Dominus* 2, where it is said that the pope is “endowed with the primacy of ordinary power over all the Churches.”

Now, in this context, it may be asked which of the two is the one with whom one must remain in communion in order to be in the Church of Christ. In Tillard's opinion, there is but one answer: "You share in ecclesial communion in so far as you are in communion with the bishop of your local Church, who is himself in communion with all his brother bishops because he and they are in communion with the bishop of Rome."⁴⁰⁶ For, according to him, to speak only of communion with the bishop of Rome while considering the communion with the local bishop as incidental and secondary is to take a stance *ad destructionem Ecclesiae*.

For if the power of the bishop of Rome appears as a force (or jurisdiction) 'concurrent' with that of bishops in their own dioceses, he is made to be the only bishop in the full sense; for he is the primate and this primacy is said to be exercised on 'pastors and the faithful of whatever rank or rite, whether individually or together' (DS 3060), on 'all and each of the Churches as on all and each of the faithful' (DS 3064). This is to destroy the *ordo Ecclesiae*. (...) For everything that distorts the episcopal function affects the nature of the Church itself.⁴⁰⁷

Because the Church of Christ is founded on the Apostle with Peter among them and not outside them, the bishop of Rome can only exercise his power "by safeguarding the episcopate of those who have charge of local Churches."⁴⁰⁸ If, on the other hand, he were to consider the universal Church as a vast diocese where he is the only bishop and the other bishops were merely his auxiliaries or vicars apostolic, then he would be acting *ad destructionem Ecclesiae*. Hence, the function of the pope in the *urbs* (in the city of Rome) should be distinguished from his function in the *orbis* (the universal Church), arising from the communion of local Churches. In the *urbs* he has to exercise that *potestas ordinaria et immediata* which belongs to every bishop in his local Church. In the case of the *orbis*, it is required of him to be the sentinel, the 'watchman', the memory of the apostolic faith among his brother bishops, to keep them in faithfulness to their mission and to keep them open to the universal aspects of salvation and the Church of God.⁴⁰⁹

According to *Lumen Gentium*, the episcopal authority and its juridical institution is founded on the sacrament of episcopal ordination. Consequently, "all hierarchical power in the Church comes from the sacrament, not from an *ordo jurisdictionis* distinct from the

⁴⁰⁶ J.M.R. TILLARD, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 129.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. *Ibid.* This was already made clear by the intervention of German Bishops in reaction to the circular letter of Bismarck (14.5.1872). According to the German Bishops, "the pope is the bishop of Rome, but not the bishop of another diocese or another town [...]. In his quality as the bishop of Rome, he is at the same time pope, that the pastor and supreme head of the universal Church, the head of all bishops and the faithful..." *ibid.*, p. 139. This position of the bishops was praised and confirmed by Pope Pius IX himself. Cf. O. ROUSSEAU, "La vraie valeur de l'épiscopat..."; J.-M. R. TILLARD, "Horizon of the Primacy," *OiC*, 12 (1976), 5-33. See also our *Introduction* to this study.

sacrament and having its source in the pope.”⁴¹⁰ If local bishops are the “visible source and foundation of the unity of their particular Churches,” which are constituted after the model of the universal Church and from which the one and unique Church of God exists, “then everything which they need for the discharge of their office comes to them in their sacramental ordination. If it were otherwise, the Catholic Church could not be formed out of these local (particular) Churches, for its constituent principles belong to the realm of the Spirit and the sacraments.”⁴¹¹

The full weight of this assertion from *Lumen Gentium* needs to be brought to bear on the theology of papacy. For it is clear that whatever is founded upon a sacrament must have priority within the Church of God: the Church comes about by faith and sacraments and all its essential marks are to be found within the osmosis of faith and sacraments.⁴¹²

Therefore, any view or move which tends to put the pope “above the bishops in a sort of pseudo-sacramental halo which makes him transcend the episcopal order in ‘dignity’ makes him [...] something *more than and different from a pope*.”⁴¹³ It will not leave the nature of the Church unaffected, for “it would put the Church of God in a totally false relationship with the mystery of the sacraments, thus affecting its own true nature.”⁴¹⁴ In this context, what we need is a new vision in which

...everything will be seen as held in dynamic tension within a single mission (that of the episcopal college as such, with its head) and a single power (given in the sacrament). Since the universal Church is in the local Church, the mission and power of the bishop who has charge of the local Church have necessarily a universal dimension—it belongs to them naturally; “solicitude for the universal Church” is not something added from outside to the pastoral charge of a diocesan bishop (LG 23). Conversely, since the local Church is open to the universal Church, the mission and power of the one who is specially responsible for the Church universal must of their nature have a local impact.⁴¹⁵

Thus, according to Tillard, the major contribution of Vatican II is the “reaffirmation that there is only one and the same sacrament, the episcopate, one and the same mission to build up and maintain the Church in communion, one and the same power given for this mission but expressed differently in practice according to the *officium*.”⁴¹⁶ The ministry of episcopate is set in a situation of dialectical tension between two poles:

⁴¹⁰ ID, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 16.

⁴¹¹ ID, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 39. Cf. ID, “The Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 16; See also A. SCHMEMMANN, “La notion de primauté,” p. 122: If [non-sacramental] power existed, it would be of another nature than the power of grace and so its source would be elsewhere than in the Church.”

⁴¹² J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 38.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ ID, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 16-17.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

that of unity of communion and that of plurality, that of the universal and that of the particular, but always so as to make possible the presence of the *ecclesia catholica* in the *ecclesia particularis* and the building up of the *ecclesia catholica* from the starting point of the communion of *ecclesiae particulares*. Impossible to let one of the poles be taken away; you would no longer have the Church of God. Impossible also to make the power belonging to one pole spring from the one belonging to the other—in other words, to make the power of the local bishops (separate or combined) find its origin in the power of the bishop of Rome; this would be to reject the sacramental equality of the two powers.⁴¹⁷

F) Articulation of the Power of Pope and that of the Individual Bishops and the Episcopal College

It is important to clearly articulate the extent and limits of papal power vis-à-vis the individual bishops and the episcopal college. As we have noted above, there is a close link between the particular and the universal. This link is characterised not only by relation but also by a tension. “Or cette tension, aux graves conséquences, est pour une grande part le résultat d’un large flou dans la conception que Lumen Gentium a proposée de la collégialité.”⁴¹⁸ The ministerial collegiality is ordained to the synodal communion of local Churches.⁴¹⁹

Et si dans le «collegium» les évêques enseignent tous l’unique et indivisible foi, célèbrent en dépit de la diversité des rites et des langues la même et indivisible Eucharistie, c’est qu’ils forment un unique ministère où l’on s’entraide, se concerte, se regroupe, [...] parfois se corrige mutuellement. La collégialité fait que le ministère est catholique. Elle est dynamisme d’unité avant d’être exigence juridique. Elle est la dynamique d’un ministère catholique.⁴²⁰

The episcopal college in its *ensemble* and each of its members maintain an indispensable link with the Bishop of the Church which has primacy among the communion of Churches. This relation is forged at the entry of each bishop into the episcopal college.⁴²¹ The role of the bishop of Rome in one’s entry into the episcopal college is evoked by the distinction between *munera* and the *potestates*. Although the sacraments give all the *munera*, ordained to produce the action for which they exist, this action is concretely possible, i.e. *munera* become actually *potestates*, only through the *canonica determinatio*. This canonical determination is related “to the see that has special responsibility for what is universal in the Church and for its unity.”⁴²² It is essential because,

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁸ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Retour sur Vatican II,” p. 85.

⁴¹⁹ “La solidarité ministérielle s’ordonne cependant à la communion, synodale, des Eglises locales elles-mêmes,” ID, “Catholicité de la Mission,” p. 356.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴²¹ Cf. LG 22 and *Nota praevia*.

⁴²² J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 18.

In some fashion it weaves the bishop into the fabric of that communion which is proper to the college. It does not give the *munus*: the *munus episcopale* comes from God. It gives the bishop the place which will enable him to play his part in the communion of the Churches, and to play it just where the Spirit appears to need him. Perhaps it has not been sufficiently emphasized that the hierarchical communion in question is “with the head and the members,” not with the head alone. [...] By virtue of his *officium* the bishop of Rome sets the episcopal *officium* and directs it in practice towards the service of that communion.⁴²³

Thus, when we explain the primacy of the bishop of Rome in terms of unity and communion, a “new bishop is not ‘the vicar of the Roman pontiff’⁴²⁴ but ‘the vicar and delegate of Christ’ in the particular Church which is entrusted to him [...] exercising in Christ’s name his own ordinary and immediate power.”⁴²⁵ By his entry into the episcopal college, he becomes along with his brethren in episcopate ‘subject of supreme and full power over the whole Church’⁴²⁶. In this respect, we can say that the canonical determination given by the pope “brings about entry into the fullness of collegial power rather than a restriction of it.”⁴²⁷

But elsewhere, speaking about the articulation of the power between the college of bishops and its head, the Council asserts that the Roman Pontiff *separately has the same power* as the college taken as a whole.⁴²⁸ Tillard thinks that the explanations given to it by *Nota praevia* fall short of convincing many. As he put it,

The conciliar data as a whole do not allow the idea that the college owes its “supreme and full power” simply to the presence in its midst of him who possesses that plenitude as head. But it should be noted that, according to *Lumen gentium*, the pope’s freedom of action, at first sight unlimited, is in fact limited by the specific quality of his *officium*: the *vi muneris* (by virtue of his charge).⁴²⁹

The nature of his charge stipulates that due place must be accorded to the data of revelation “on the place and mission of the apostolic college, the “basic structure of the Church,” the place held simultaneously by the local Church and the episcopal college, on the sacraments and particularly on the Eucharist and the episcopate, the “definitions of the first councils.”⁴³⁰ To proceed without regard for these would be to act *ad destructionem*...⁴³¹ In short, the special office of the bishop of Rome—described as immediate and ordinary jurisdiction—must be understood as “a charismatic *officium*, entirely episcopal, self-limiting—because it

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁴ *LG* 27.

⁴²⁵ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 18.

⁴²⁶ *LG* 22.

⁴²⁷ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 18.

⁴²⁸ *LG* 22.

⁴²⁹ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 19.

⁴³⁰ Cf. G. ALBERIGO and F. MAGISTRETTI, *Constitutionis dogmaticae synopsis historica* (Bologna, 1975) p. 456, as cited in J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 19.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*

cannot go beyond what is imposed by the ‘maintenance of the Church in the unity of faith and communion’...⁴³² This office is concerned with “the opening-out of each particular Church towards the universal Church.”⁴³³

If it happens that it has to intervene in the affairs of a particular Church or group of Churches, this will never be by taking the place of the local bishop or of those of the region or patriarchate, but by bringing them the help they need to keep their Christian people in the fullness of communion of faith and charity. This is what happens when the bishop of Rome after an ecumenical council sees to it that its decisions are observed.⁴³⁴

G) Understanding the Relationship between Local and Universal according to the Principles of Subsidiarity and Synergy

Tillard thinks that the relationship between the *primate* (*prôtos*) and the local Churches and their bishops can be better articulated if we apply to it the principle of subsidiarity. When we apply this principle, the upholding of the responsibility and power—ordinary, immediate, *vere episcopalis*—of the *prôtos* must be done in a direction tending to the opposite of centralization.

In subsidiarity, the higher authority, faced with a smaller group over which it exercises real authority, seeks to reduce its interventions as far as possible. For it leaves this group to supply itself, concretely, the means of incarnating its faith and of settling questions bound up with its identity and life. It only has to intervene (but then it must do so from its very mission) if this group has, in vain, exhausted its resources in the face of an internal crisis, is drifting or is proving unable to discern for itself things essential, imperative.⁴³⁵

When we apply this principle to the role the bishop of Rome as the *principium unitatis*, it follows that the specific object of this function be clearly defined. As the *prôtos* he has “the duty to act, for the good of the *whole* Church involved in each local Church, when he perceives that one of these Churches has run out of resources and is allowing itself to deteriorate in a way that seriously threatens its identity (and thereby the universal *koinônia*), or is neglecting, in grave situations, to make decisions that are called for.”⁴³⁶ In such interventions, the *prôtos* is not at all overriding the authority of the local bishop, but defending and strengthening it, by awakening the local bishop to his responsibilities and providing him with extra helps. The *prôtos* is “the one among the bishops whose proper task is to preserve the episcopal body in a total fidelity to the mission of building up the Church of God in unity and catholicity.”⁴³⁷

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁵ ID, “Horizon of the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 31.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

We can also speak of a *synergy* between the power of the bishop of Rome, that of the entire episcopal college and each individual bishop. It conveys the idea of a compenetration rather than a complementarity, the inseparability of agents rather than their plurality, the unity of effect which results from this rather than the sum of the influence. In each of the Churches of the *communio* of local Churches, it is the same osmosis that takes place through the ministry of its bishop who is the one in whom the solidarity of the college produces its effect. As long as the local bishop acts in communion and in function of it, and as long as the bishop of Rome is careful not to surpass limits of his function, there will not be two authorities in a diocese. But when a bishop slips out of the *communio* or when the bishop of Rome acts in such a way as if he alone is the Bishop, then imbalance sets in: osmosis will disappear and two authorities will be superposed.

In the light of the above discussion it may be possible to better sketch the authority that the Catholic tradition acknowledges to the bishop of Rome. We can approach it both negatively and positively. *Negatively*, it must be underlined that this authority is not a power of *dominion* but a pastoral authority of service. It is ordained to the authority which the other bishops also have received, and which it has the duty to affirm and defend. Basically, it is not a power to *make bishops*, because local Churches themselves used to choose their bishops according to their proper customs. It is not either, in a political sense, a power of government. *Positively*, it is a power of *leadership*. Leadership consists in guiding and leading each towards what the Spirit wants it to be. The primatial power is one that enables the bishop of Rome to intervene, in certain cases, in the life of a local Church, when the good of the *communio* demands it.

Certes, le primat doit d'abord pousser l'évêque local à agir par lui-même, alerter les Eglises voisines. Mais une intervention directe peut s'imposer: demande explicite d'aide faite à une autre Eglise, convocation d'un synode local ou d'un concile provincial, envoi des hommes nécessaires, expression officielle de son désaccord.⁴³⁸

According to the ancient practice, the bishop of Rome could also, in response to an appeal, give his verdict on a particular affair.⁴³⁹ This custom was ratified by the canons (3, 4, and 5) of the Council of Sardica in 343, under Pope Julius. However, the Roman intervention in the affairs of local Churches should not be seen as an act by which Rome takes the place of the local authorities.

Son attitude première est d'éveiller leur attention, de leur rappeler (vigoureusement peut-être) la tâche qui leur incombe. Mais, lorsqu'elle constate que seuls ils ne parviennent pas à surmonter la crise, alors elle se

⁴³⁸ ID, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 344.

⁴³⁹ We may recall here Cyprian's demand to Pope Stephen, requesting a judgement on the affair of the Bishop of Arles, Marcianus who was close to Novatian. Cf. *Epistola* 68.

doit d'intervenir. Sans cela, en effet, ce groupe se laissera détériorer ou végétera d'une façon qui menace son identité. En ce sens, l'évêque de Rome a le pouvoir, et le devoir, d'agir pour le bien de toute l'Eglise (en jeu dans chaque Eglise locale, puisqu'elle s'y réalise) lorsqu'une Eglise locale compromet le bien de la *communio*.⁴⁴⁰

Today's situation is quite another. If Rome multiplies its interventions in the local Church, it is not always the fault of Rome, but that of the local Churches themselves which have multiplied their appeals to the central authority. According to Tillard, what is now required is a healthy practice of subsidiarity, which will ensure that the power of the bishop of Rome is meant for the *aedificationem ecclesiae*.

9.5.3. Articulation of Primacy and Episcopate in the Synodal Institutions

During the post-conciliar period, we can sense a renewed awareness in the Catholic Church for the need for a redefinition of the relationship between Rome and local Churches. Often it can create a situation of encounter between (a) two responsibilities: that of Rome and that of the bishops in communion with their faithful; (b) two attitudes: that of de-uniformisation and that of maintaining unity at all costs. According to Tillard,

Ce qui, à une lecture superficielle, pourrait sembler simple manifestation d'indiscipline, se révèle, au terme d'une analyse théologique attentive à l'histoire, signe d'un dynamisme d'évolution planté par l'Esprit dans le Peuple de Dieu. La plupart des grandes réorientations ecclésiales ne se font-elles pas à partir de désirs, puis d'initiatives, de la base amenant un dialogue, souvent tendu au départ, avec ceux qui exercent *l'episcopè* à divers niveaux?⁴⁴¹

These orientations and desires, emanating from the grass roots (as a result of the *conspiratio* of the bishops and faithful), must be seen as a critique of the present state of the relationship between Vatican and the rest of the Church, marked by too much centralisation. Tillard has the impression that the institutions responsible for translating synodality into the dynamics of the life of the Church have not so far succeeded in properly articulating the *munus* of the Roman pontiff and the *munus* of the episcopal college. In his words:

Concern for safety has made us continue to revolve round a monarchical view without realising that expressions of collegiality become something more than a means of serving the primacy. In so doing we turn our backs on Vatican II. Putting collegiality at the service of pope's power reverts to making him 'more than pope'. Primacy in the Great Tradition is at the service of collegiality, and not the other way round. It is a serious problem, for it perpetuates a hesitation and an ambiguity which could slowly lead on to wither fruits of Vatican II⁴⁴²

Tillard contends that this process has already started, as the following examples would demonstrate:

⁴⁴⁰ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d'Eglises*, p. 347.

⁴⁴¹ ID, "La primauté romaine," p. 303.

⁴⁴² ID, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 45.

1) A working paper for the 1969 Synod of bishops has the following to say about the pope: “Peter’s successor, having authority over the whole people of God, is instituted as the visible principle of the co-ordination and direction of every activity of the Church.”⁴⁴³

2) Another example is the policy of ‘concession’: According to *CD* 8, “The bishops [...] enjoy as of right in the dioceses assigned to them all ordinary, special and immediate power which is necessary for their pastoral office, but always without prejudice to the power which the Roman pontiff possesses by virtue of his office, of reserving certain matters to himself or to some other authority.” This power is given to them through the sacrament of ordination. But the actual practice seems to be in the spirit of *Motu Proprio ‘Pastorale Munus’* of December 3 1963. Accordingly, the Roman pontiff *concedes* to the bishops and episcopal conferences the powers and privileges (which, in fact, they already have through the sacrament). Thus the sacramental is restricted in favour of the canonical.⁴⁴⁴

This situation hastens the need for a return to the teaching of Vatican II, according to which the building up of the Church takes place through the *potestas ordinaria* of the bishop of the local Church, open to the universal communion. Primacy is, in fact, the extension of the episcopal function of one of the bishops, viz. the bishop of Rome, in view of the full actualization by his fellow-bishops of their responsibility (that of *aedificatio Ecclesiae*) in the universal *Koinonia*. But unfortunately,

[i]n spite of Vatican II’s new reading of Vatican I, the post-conciliar Church has not yet provided itself with intuitions that will enable it to adapt itself to the ecclesiology of communion, whose foundations *Lumen Gentium* laid without securing them deeply enough [...] We should not attempt to revise or correct Vatican II, but dig into it deeply enough to discover how the two plenary powers of *Lumen Gentium* 22, the Roman pontiff and the college of bishops, may be jointed and tied together in unity.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴³ Commenting on this Thils, who cites this, has the following observation: “It is one thing to be a principle effective in safeguarding the unity of faith and communion in order to avoid schisms and heresies, but quite another to co-ordinate and direct every activity of the Church. The working paper for the 1969 synod emphasizes the centralization....” G. THILS, *La Primauté pontificale* (Gembloux, 1972), p. 186.

⁴⁴⁴ *LG* 22 declares that a Christian becomes a member of the episcopal college by virtue of sacramental consecration (*vi consecrationis*) and taking into account the hierarchical communion (*communione*) with the head of the college. According to Tillard, the hierarchical communion here is not a cause but simply a condition (otherwise the Orthodox bishops could not be true bishops).

⁴⁴⁵ *Id*, *Bishop of Rome*, p. 48. This task is not easy at all. Catholic theology on this point is still in its infancy, many complex chapters on the theology of papacy are yet to be written. This has to be written in communion with other Churches. This is because the two Vatican councils still remain councils celebrated by the Catholic Church alone. They have not yet been received by the other Churches. He explains further: “...if—as Vatican II asserts and we believe—the Catholic Church is that in which the Church of Christ *subsists* with all the essential elements (although she exists outside her frontiers), the official declarations which Rome holds to be guaranteed by the Holy Spirit may not be refused (...) But it is necessary, we said, to ‘re-read them in the new light shed by the ecumenical will to ‘remake unity,’ *Ibid.* p. 49.

In this context Tillard explores some of the synodal institutions of the Catholic Church in view of discovering how the relationship between primacy and episcopate is articulated in them.

A) Councils and Synods of the Past

We see by the end of the 2nd century a regional structure of Churches slowly taking form. The first legislations regarding such regional organisation can be found in the canons of the Council of Nicaea.⁴⁴⁶ The first synods gathered the bishops of what is called an ‘ecclesiastical Eparchy,’ generally held in a metropolitan town. These provincial synods, far from being isolated enclaves, situated themselves within the communion of all the Churches. That is why each synod, at its conclusion, sent a synodal letter to the other Churches.

Among the reasons which led to such regional structures, we may retain the following: a) the model of the civil institutions of the time which structured the social life; b) the rapid spread of the problems of a local Church into those of an entire region; c) the awareness of the need to take common decisions with a view to avoid individual episcopal initiatives that can destabilize the order of other Churches. Anyway, it is not difficult to consider these provincial gatherings of bishops as a service to the unity and cohesion of the Church, respecting the diversity of a region. Here, the responsibility and liberty of local bishops were also respected.

Les évêques ne peuvent que chercher ensemble, dans une unanimité fondée sur la liberté, non sur un obscur jeu de forces, la volonté du seul Seigneur de l’Eglise. [...] Par cette ardente passion de la liberté épiscopale et ce respect de la fonction des pasteurs, on résiste au danger non illusoire d’une absorption de l’Eglise locale dans un tout où elle perdait sa nature propre.⁴⁴⁷

Later on, a number of provinces would be grouped into ‘dioceses’ which was parallel to the civil dioceses of the Roman Empire, with the bishop of the capital city of the civil diocese assuming a more important role. And the provinces in this ecclesiastical diocese were governed by a ‘great’ synod. Finally, the ecumenical councils constitute an instance where the collegial solidarity of the episcopate finds its full realisation.

La « collégialité », lorsqu’elle s’exercera formellement dans les conciles, regroupera des évêques déjà unis dans cette solidarité régionale. C’est d’ailleurs ainsi qu’elle exprimera pleinement la catholicité, unité totale dans la diversité, *communio de communions*.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. cc. 4-7. These canons accorded to the Metropolitan certain privileges and powers: 1) a local bishop be installed by all the bishops of the province (eparchy), but is to be confirmed by the Metropolitan (this in a way limits the right of the local Church in the choice of its bishop); 2) during the annual provincial synods, the legitimacy of excommunications made by individual bishops will be examined (this curtails the authority of the local bishop as the diakonos of Christ for his Church). On the positive side, since the local bishop involved as he is in the affairs of his own Church was little aware of the needs of the other Churches, there was some one to take care of that: the Metropolitan bishop.

⁴⁴⁷ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, pp. 416-418.

⁴⁴⁸ ID, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 261.

B) Synod of Bishops

The Synod of Bishops, as it exists today in the Catholic Church, was instituted by Pope Paul VI on 15 September, 1965 through the Motu Proprio *Apostolica sollicitudo*. Its principal task is to adopt a report normally in the form of propositions, to be submitted to its president, the pope whose right it is to pronounce it.⁴⁴⁹

The Synod of bishops was understood at the time of its gestation not only as an expression of the communion of bishops, but also as that of the collegiality. According to *Christus Dominus* 5, the synod is a testimony to the participation of all the bishops in the care of the universal Church.⁴⁵⁰

It is undeniable that the synodal gatherings of the past gave occasion to the participating bishops to open themselves up to the dynamism of other Churches. They could discover there the complexity of the problems facing the Church and grasp the true measure of catholicity. Since the goal of the Synod is to enlighten the Holy See, the awareness of divergences and manifestation of diversity during the synodal gatherings will not leave this latter unaffected. Yet, in the opinion of Tillard, there exists a major ecclesiological problem around the Synod of Bishops as it exists today.

The Synod only exists in order to let the Roman pontiff know its opinion. It is not able to address the Church directly so as to express, in communion with the pope but not simply preparing the pope's own decision, the judgement of the universal episcopate on the matters at issue. Its conclusions are addressed to the pope and it is for him to decide if they should be published and how.⁴⁵¹

Thus, we see that the Synod of Bishops has very little in common with the traditional role of Synods. This problem arises from the basic incompatibility between the monarchical system and synodality. The former works within a closed circuit and depends on a court which hardly tolerates the crystallisation of opinions which may encroach on its preserves. A synodal assembly, on the other hand, is attentive to the *sensus fidelium*, even if the end result will not be a clear-cut declaration. According to Tillard, "[r]ecent Roman synods have done no more than set the customs of a monarchy alongside the procedures of an assembly without being able to co-ordinate them."⁴⁵² The same difficulty is observable in the case of the episcopal conferences too.

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. Thus, it was the 1974 Synod of Bishops which led to the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi: On Evangelisation in the Modern World*, promulgated on December 8, 1975, cf. *AAS*, 71 (1979) 257-324.

⁴⁵⁰ "Several episcopates saw in the synod the chance of better contact with the Roman centre, and especially some degree of sharing in the making of decisions. But it did not work out," J.-M. R. TILLARD, *The Bishop of Rome*, trans. by John de Satgé (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), p. 44, hereafter cited as J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Bishop of Rome*.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

C) Episcopal Conference

The emergence of Episcopal Conferences⁴⁵³ was in part prompted by the need felt for more liberty than was available on the level of local synods, which were too dependent on Rome. Although Vatican II has given a new theological horizon to these episcopal gatherings in conjunction with its accent on the collegiality of bishops, Tillard fears that “la réflexion théologique, trop centrée sur la discussion de la marge de compétence des Conférences, ait négligé d’en approfondir l’enjeu ecclésiologique.”⁴⁵⁴ In ecclesiological terms, although episcopal conferences are not of divine right—this is the case also with councils and patriarchates—“elles sont, en effet, lourdes d’implication pour la praxis ecclésiale, tout spécialement en ce qui concerne l’exercice de la primauté romaine.”⁴⁵⁵

1) *The Theological Foundation of the Episcopal Conference*

Joining in the debate over the theological foundation of episcopal conference, Tillard takes up the conciliar teaching on the subject. It is true that—in the context of divergence of opinion among the theologians and bishops on the question of the theological status of the episcopal conference—*Christus Dominus* stopped short of pronouncing on the specific mode of the rootage of episcopal conference in the episcopal collegiality, opting instead to highlight only its historical and pastoral foundation. This in itself—thinks Tillard—does not provide sufficient ground for concluding that the Council was unable to find any theological foundation for the episcopal conference.

According to Tillard, the theological foundation of the episcopal conference can be brought to the fore only when we read *Christus Dominus* in the light of *Lumen Gentium*. The conciliar constitution on the Church—while asserting that the episcopal body exercises its full and supreme power only when it acts as a whole and in communion with the bishop of Rome—does not limit the scope of collegial solidarity of the episcopate only to the exercise of supreme power. Instead, this solidarity, which is of divine right and is present in each bishop as he is the pastor of a Church, is exercised in various levels and degrees, which is a response to the differing needs of Churches planted in various human spaces. It must be, however, underlined that there aren’t two types of collegiality: one that works in the universal level and the other in the regional level. Instead, there is only one collegiality, that of the

⁴⁵³ Cf. G. FELICIANI, *La Conferenze Episcopali*, Bologne 1974; ID, “Episcopal Conferences from Vatican II to the 1983 Code,” *Jurist* 48 (1988), 11-25; A. GARCÍA Y GARCÍA, “Episcopal Conferences in Light of Particular Councils during the Second Millennium,” *Jurist* 48 (1988), 57-67; F. CARROLL, *The Development of Episcopal Conferences* (Sidney 1965); R. LILL, *Die ersten deutschen Bischofskonferenzen*, Freiburg-im-Br. 1964.

⁴⁵⁴ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “La primauté romaine. «...jamais pour éroder les structures des Eglises locales»...,” *Irén.*, 50 (1977), p. 304, *hereafter cited as* J.-M. R. TILLARD, “La primauté romaine.”

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

episcopal body with the pope at its head. It is in the name of the episcopal body—which is never without its head—that the bishops of a particular region assemble in order to fix the pastoral action there. It is in this perspective, we can admit of—along side the supreme exercise of collegiality—varying degrees of its actualisation. Thus, the episcopal conference can be seen as the manifestation of the essentially collegial dimension of the episcopal grace.

Ceci en fonction d'une vision de l'unité qui, loin de confondre celle-ci avec l'uniformité, la voit au contraire comme l'articulation et la coordination d'une pluralité d'expressions de la foi commune, dans le respect des traditions, des tempéraments, des histoires. En communion avec le siège de Rome—ce qui ne signifie pas qu'il doive tout attendre de celui-ci et tout lui soumettre—l'évêque de chaque Eglise locale actualise en solidarité avec ses voisins la double responsabilité qu'il tient de son ordination: construire son Eglise, mais en la maintenant ouverte sur la catholicité.⁴⁵⁶

Catholicity spoken of here cannot be reduced to the geographical expansion of the Christian community. Rather, it also stands for the dynamism of grace embracing the great cultural, socio-political and racial spaces, in order to let them into the hold of Salvation. Accordingly, we can bring out the theological significance of the episcopal conference if we consider it as a service to the catholicity of the Church. As such, an episcopal conference may be seen as a group of bishops who have the duty to ensure that the Lordship of Christ is actualised in the tissue of humanity within the limits of a nation, region or an area, by healing—if need be—its memory, by assuming its richness, sufferings, projects and genius. It is in this way that an episcopal conference can be at the service of the Catholicity of the Church. Although the episcopal conference as a *coetus* carries out this ministry, in a corporative manner, it should not lead to the eclipsing of individual bishop's responsibility—in his *sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum*—for the *catholic* openness of his Church.

C'est en tenant compte de l'homogénéité du segment d'humanité dont leurs Eglises sont en commun les traits, les problèmes, les soucis, les besoins mais aussi les richesses traditionnelles et les capacités natives, que lui-même et ses frères évêques peuvent exercer, en toute fidélité au mandat reçu de l'Esprit dans le sacrement de l'Ordre, leur service du dessein du Salut. Prétendre que cette relation aux évêques voisins empiéterait sur la souveraineté de chaque évêque sur son Eglise locale [...] serait ne pas reconnaître l'authentique nature de la vie ecclésiale. Celle-ci ne peut d'aucune façon faire l'économie de la solidarité : elle est *communio*.⁴⁵⁷

II) The Doctrinal Authority of the Episcopal Conferences

Given the complexity and particularity of different socio-cultural, political and other situations, in which various local Churches live, it is not healthy and helpful to regulate every detail of ecclesial life on a universal level, even if it were done by the episcopal college as a

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁴⁵⁷ ID, "Conférences épiscopale et catholicité de l'Eglise," p. 530-531.

whole gathered *in actu*.⁴⁵⁸ History provides us with several instances in which the local Churches—seeking a solution to dogmatic or canonical problems facing them—did not always appeal to the episcopal college as such. They often chose, instead, to act at their level, with, of course, a care to remain in harmony with the past decisions of the universal episcopate and its spirit.⁴⁵⁹ An explanation for this must be sought in what Tillard calls the *morphology* of the episcopal college itself. This morphology is linked to the fact that a bishop is always *the bishop of a place*. The *collegium*, seen in its concrete exercise is not simply an undifferentiated whole of individuals, gathered in hierarchical communion with the bishop of Rome. But each bishop belongs to it as ‘bearer’ of his local Church. As such, the episcopal college is the *sacramentum* of the concrete communion of local Churches, inseparable from their particular situations.

Il est donc la communion de groupes d’évêques soudés sur terrain par les solidarités que créent les lieux (culturels, géographiques, sociologiques, historiques) de leurs Eglises. C’est pourquoi la dimension horizontale de la communion épiscopale dans le collège épouse les contours des ensembles humains dont la communion fait la catholicité.⁴⁶⁰

Hence, when an episcopal conference pronounces a formal act,⁴⁶¹ we cannot characterise it merely as emanating from an informal, fraternal meeting of bishops moved by *affectus collegialis*.⁴⁶² Rather it must be seen as an act *in the collegium*. It is clear that the entire college and its authority are not implicated in the decisions of an episcopal conference. Yet this must be considered as an act posited by the bishops of a region or nation in the name of their solidarity and collective responsibility, whose unique subject is none other than the *collegium*.

This means that we must avoid an *all or nothing* attitude. That is to say, we must not think that we may find only a *collegial emptiness* where the action of the entire college is absent. As *Nota Praevia* 4 has justly observed, the college always exists although it does not always

⁴⁵⁸ Of course, in matters affecting faith, morals and the universal mission of the Church, episcopal college together with the bishop of Rome is the subject of supreme and full power. The decisions thus taken, implicating the whole college, is binding on the whole Church.

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Synods of Alexandria (320 and 430); African councils of 4th and 5th centuries; Provincial councils of Toledo (6th century), etc. According to Tillard, those who consider this situation as merely *archaeological*, belonging to a time before the constitution of the Roman curia, which is always abreast with the state of the universal Church, neglect the existence of the institutions of *plenary, national and provincial councils* according to the present legislation.

⁴⁶⁰ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Conférences épiscopales et catholicité de l’Eglise,” *CrSt*, 9 (1988), p. 532, *hereafter cited as* J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Conférences épiscopales et catholicité.”

⁴⁶¹ That is, an official decision taken by an episcopate as such in the name of the Churches they represent, and formally, in virtue of their episcopal responsibility.

⁴⁶² This is evoked by the prescription given in *CD* 38, 4 and *CIC* 455, 2; 456, according to which the decisions of the episcopal conferences should be *explicitly* in *communion* with the bishop of Rome, *locus* of the unity of the episcopal college.

pose a *strictly* collegial action. Even if it cannot be held that an episcopal conference ‘represents’ the entire episcopal college, it makes good sense to say that the bishops of a region, gathered to treat the affairs of their Churches, do so *in the name* of their belongingness to the college and their concern for all the Churches, which is called for by this belongingness.⁴⁶³

The *coetus* of bishops that constitutes an episcopal conference is also—in the manner of the patriarchates—awakened by Providence, in the service of the catholicity of the Church. As such it must be seen (here, Tillard joins his professor J. Hamer) as “une expression possible et une manifestation appropriée de la solidarité du corps épiscopal, réalité de droit divin dans l’Eglise du Christ [...] exercice limité de la collégialité épiscopale.”⁴⁶⁴ There is but one Body, responsible for the *episkope* of the Church of God, viz. the episcopal college. It is this collective responsibility, which is actualised each time, an episcopate—in communion with other episcopates and acting according to the norms established by *jus Ecclesiae*—reaches decisions in disciplinary and even in doctrinal matters for the good of the Churches, entrusted to their care.⁴⁶⁵ In short, we must consider the episcopal conference as “une forme d’actualisation historique de la solidarité épiscopale qui, elle, est *jure divino*.”⁴⁶⁶

III) *The Episcopal Conference and the Holy See*

Ever since the *Motu Proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae* (August 6 1966),⁴⁶⁷ it has been maintained that the episcopal conference has only that power provided by the common law or by a concession by the Holy See. Nevertheless, we can put up a long list of areas in which the competency of episcopal conferences is recognised. In fact, it is difficult to find a problem of common action of ecclesiastical government, in the solution of which, the episcopal conferences do not intervene. Several post-conciliar documents also underline the importance of episcopal conferences.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶³ Cf. J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 263.

⁴⁶⁴ J. HAMER, “Les conférences épiscopales...,” pp. 968-969

⁴⁶⁵ SC’s decision to entrust to the episcopal conferences the responsibility of the adaptation of the Liturgy in their territories (SC 22: 2) is significant as far as the theological status of the episcopal conference is concerned. This shows that the competency of the episcopal conference surpasses the questions of mutual and fraternal aid. In this conciliar decision, the episcopal college, formally and strictly exercising its authority, decides to extend the reach of its action beyond the plenary gathering. Tillard thinks that it amounts to a ‘collegial’ extension, in a regional level and in a limited way, of its activity fully and strictly collegial.

⁴⁶⁶ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 265. “La conférence épiscopale est, aujourd’hui, la forme institutionnelle (*de jure ecclesiastico*) que prend la mission collégiale des évêques (*ex institutione divina*) lorsqu’est en cause l’*episkopè* d’un espace ecclésial particulier, d’ordinaire national, comprenant plusieurs Eglises locales, unies en une communauté géographiques, sociologiques, culturelle, économique, politique,” ID, “Conférences épiscopale et catholicité de l’Eglise,” p. 534.

⁴⁶⁷ AAS 56 (1966) 757-776.

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. *Schema Documenti Pontificii quo disciplina canonica de sacramentis recognoscitur*, Vatican 1975, Instruction of the Secretariat for Unity on *communicatio sacris* (AAS 64 (1972). pp. 524-525), *Motu Proprio* on

We must see the episcopal conference's obligatory reference to the See of Rome as necessitated by the need to link its work with that of other episcopal conferences, and still more profoundly, with that which the Catholic episcopate has ceaselessly accomplished from the beginning—in fidelity to the unique faith—in various groupings of Churches.

The facts, stated above, lead us to the following conclusion. The Vatican II, as a whole, has maintained a theological image of the episcopal conference. From being a private gathering for mutual counselling and help, it came to have an authority incorporated in the public law of the Church. From being a heterogeneous gathering, the episcopal conferences have come to become homogeneous in their fundamental traits and in the quality of their members. From being assemblies having no other authority than the moral authority of their members, they have turned out to be juridical institutions with the power to make their decisions obligatory in specified matters and conditions. This change cannot be fully grasped unless we set it in the context of the collegiality in its practical application in various levels. The collegiality in question is not measured according to the number of the members, but according to the *quality of koinonia* of the actions posited or decisions taken. According to Tillard,

...l'avenir dépend d'une intelligence de la notion de collégialité dont on n'a pas encore approfondi toutes les implications, en se bornant à ses aspects les plus frappants, souvent interprétés en fonction de schèmes sociologiques ou politiques (démocratie, pouvoirs monarchiques, etc.). La théologie de la collégialité n'en est qu'à ses ébauches.⁴⁶⁹

9.6. Concluding Remarks

The lack of a proper articulation of the relationship between the bishop of Rome and the rest of the bishops (both as a college and as individuals) as well as the local Churches (here again, as a *communio ecclesiarum* and as individual Churches) has long been a cause of tension not only in the ecumenical context, but also in the *ad intra* life of the Catholic Church itself. It is as a fine *connoisseur* of both these areas that Tillard attempted a re-interpretation of the traditional doctrine on the subject in the light of contemporary development in the Catholic ecclesiology and ecumenical sensibility. Here, our attempt is to summarise his findings, which we may not find, in such details, in the writings of the Orthodox theologians we have studied, as they were concerned with the papal primacy mainly as an ecumenical question.

mixed marriage (AAS 62 (1970) pp. 261-262), *Motu Proprio* on the restoration of permanent diaconate (AAS 59 (1967), pp. 699-702 and AAS 64 (1972), pp. 539-540), *Motu Proprio* on new ministers (AAS 64 (1972), pp. 532-533).

⁴⁶⁹ J.-M. R. TILLARD, "La primauté romaine," p. 314.

Tillard begins with an irenic interpretation of the *Pastor Aeternus*. Although this Constitution does not give specific guidelines as to how the *ordinary power* of the pope can be coordinated with the *ordinary power* of each local bishop, Tillard has succeeded in showing how, even from the perspective of the *Pastor Aeternus*, primacy can be measured by the episcopate and that it is basically an episcopal *munus*. The major contribution of Vatican II in this regard was that it succeeded in re-situating primacy within the collegiality of bishops. But it was only a half-success as we still lack a clear statement about the primatial function in its relationship to the episcopate. As Tillard remarks, we know the rights of the pope vis-à-vis the bishops, but we do not know his duties. That is to say, *Lumen Gentium* did not put practical boundaries between the power of the pope and the power of the episcopate. The Dominican theologian, however, discovers certain hints which permit us to articulate the relationship between the two. On the basis of these data, he attempts an interpretation of the relationship between the bishop of Rome and the communion of Churches and their bishops.

He first explores the meaning and significance of the pope being the bishop of a local Church with a special mission. In his view, since *sedes* and *sedens* are inseparably related, the identity of the *sedens* is to be drawn from the identity of the *sedes* itself. In this context, the title best suited to the pope must be that of ‘the bishop of Rome.’ In this capacity he can be also considered as ‘Vicar of Peter in the see of the Church founded on witnesses of Peter and Paul.’

Next, he turns to consider the pope as the servant of communion. As the visible foundation of faith and communion, the bishop of Rome must be seen primarily as a sentinel of communion. This role gives him corresponding authority to alert the pastors and the faithful and even to intervene whenever faith and communion are in peril. But this role of the bishop of Rome as servant of communion was often occulted in the past (and even in the present) owing to the confusion and mixing up of the threefold primacies usually recognised to the Bishop of the see of Rome. This is, in fact, at the root of many tensions in the Catholic Church’s *ad intra* as well as *ad extra* relations. In this context, it is crucial to restate the basically episcopal nature of the primatial function; it is equally important to highlight the purpose of this function which is none other than to be at the service of the communion of Churches as well as their bishops. In this light, we can see the *munus* of the bishop of Rome as a special mode of the solicitude for all the Churches, received by every bishop at the time of his ordination. Because the local Church is a manifestation of the universal Church, the one who heads it should have solicitude for the *communio ecclesiarum*; in the same way, the

authority of the bishop who has the *munus* overseeing the communion of all the Churches will have also a local impact.

Turning, now, to the relationship between the episcopal college and the bishop of Rome, Tillard says that this relation is forged at the moment of each bishop's entry into the college. It is true that the source of episcopal *munera* is the sacrament of ordination. These become *potestates* through *canonica determinatio*, which is related to the see which has responsibility for the communion of Churches and their bishops. By canonical determination each bishop is woven into the fabric of communion; he is given a place which permits him to play his part in the communion of Churches. That is to say, the bishop of Rome directs the episcopal function towards the service of communion.

In the order to properly articulate primatial and episcopal authorities, it is important to apply the principle of subsidiarity to their relation. Accordingly, the bishop of Rome as the *principium unitatis* intervenes in the affairs of local Churches only when it is called for: mainly to awaken the local bishops to their responsibilities and to provide them with help when it is need. When he is obliged to take resolute measures in order to save a particular local Church from losing its identity or falling apart, such actions may not be seen as overriding the authority of the local Church or its bishop. What is needed is an osmosis between the primatial powers and the episcopal powers. But when the bishops step out of communion or when the pope behaves as though he were the *only* bishop, this osmosis disappears.

All these fine ideas will remain a hollow talk unless they are translated into synodal institutions. Only then we can say that the communal and synodal dynamism said to be pervading and penetrating every aspect of ecclesial life becomes really tangible in the everyday life of the Church. Tillard's exploration of institutions like the Synod of Bishops and the Episcopal Conferences make discover the present state of some of the synodal institutions in the Catholic Church. What comes out clearly from the aforesaid is the fact that we are still in need of bolder steps so that a sane articulation of the relation between the primatial authority and the communion of Churches and their bishops becomes a reality. Further discussions on this topic will follow in the next chapter.

10. Conclusion

It is hoped that Tillard's theology of the local Church, as presented in this chapter, has permitted us to identify not only the points of convergence between his ecclesiology and that of the Orthodox theologians we have studied, but also the specificity and distinction of the

Dominican ecclesiology with regard to his Orthodox dialogue partners. Let us try to summarise our findings.

Tillard agrees with the Orthodox that the local Church can be properly understood only from within an ecclesiology of communion. In this ecclesiology, the eucharistic celebration has a constitutive importance. If, according to the Orthodox perspective, 'being always together' and 'gathered for the same thing' is the fundamental principle of ecclesial life (Afanasiev) which is none other than an osmosis between 'one' and 'many' (Zizioulas), for Tillard too the basic ambiance of Christian existence is God and others. That is to say, it is conditioned by a twofold communion: communion with God and communion with others. This communion is basically the consequence of the reconciliation through which humanity is transformed into 'a humanity according to God.'

Our exploration has permitted us to identify *reconciliation* as a key category in Tillard's theology of the local Church. The local Church, as realised at the eucharistic celebration, is a reconciled community; its mission is to spread the dynamism of reconciliation everywhere so that others may also be caught up in the reconciliatory power of Christ. Reconciliation is also at the heart of the local Church's catholicity. Like Afanasiev, Tillard also asserts that a local Church is fully catholic because it is never separated from Christ who makes her catholic. But the Dominican theologian has succeeded in giving a wider horizon to the catholicity of the local Church by relating it to what he calls the *Gospel of God* whose objective is salvation. Tillard has shown that the content of salvation is communion, which is achieved through reconciliation. It is again in the context of the demands of the *Gospel of God* that Tillard explains the missionary dimension of the local Church, which is not much developed in the Orthodox ecclesiology. In short, according to Tillard, reconciliation is a key to the understanding of the local Church as such, its catholicity and its mission.

Therefore, it is only natural that communion, which is the fruit of reconciliation, permeates every aspect, facet and level of the life of the Church. Thus, Tillard has shown that just as the *ad intra* life of a local Church is a symphony of charisms and services, the relationship among the Churches must be also understood as a symphony of charisms and services, because charisms received by individual Churches are not identical. When different charisms and services are pooled together, they contribute towards the *aedificatio ecclesiae* and the fulfilment of the *Gospel of God*. It is in this way that he situates the special position and authority of the Church of Rome in the *communio ecclesiarum*. Because of the close and inseparable bond between the *sedes* and *sedens*, the special vocation and function of the Church of Rome is exercised by the bishop of that Church, founded on the faith of Peter and

Paul. The primatial *munus* of the bishop of Rome is basically an episcopal function which is at the service of the communion of Churches and their bishops. The principle of subsidiarity can be applicable to the relationship between the bishop of Rome and the local Churches and their bishops. Thus, the bishop of Rome—as the sentinel of the universal communion—has to intervene in the life of the local Churches, only when the latter are incapable of finding solutions to challenges they face or when faith and communion are at risk. So, what is needed is an osmosis between the primatial function of the bishop of Rome, who has the *episkopè* over the universal communion of Churches, and the episcopal function of the local bishops who have received, besides the *episkopè* over their respective local Churches, also the solicitude for the Church universal, which has to be exercised together with the head of the episcopal college. Only in this way, we can grasp the Tillardian understanding of the relationship between local Churches and the Church universal or, as he likes to call it, the *Catholica*. According to him, local Churches exist in order that the *Catholica* takes a concrete form. Once this has taken place, *Catholica* exists only in and through them. According to him, there is a dialectical tension between the local and universal “so as to make possible the presence of the *ecclesia catholica* in the *ecclesia particularis* and the building up of the *ecclesia catholica* from the starting point of the communion of *ecclesiae particulares*. Impossible to let one of the poles be taken away; you would no longer have the Church of God.”⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁷⁰ J.-M. R. TILLARD, “Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome,” p. 17.

CHAPTER SIX:

THE LOCAL CHURCH AND THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH: NEED FOR AN ECCLESIOLOGY OF REGIONAL CHURCHES IN THE CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC ECCLESIOLOGY

1. Introduction

After an exploration of the Orthodox concept of the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church in two chapters¹ followed by a chapter on Tillard's contribution towards the comprehension of this relationship,² we turn our attention in this chapter to the views of other Catholic theologians on the question. Here again, as in the case of chapter three, we maintain a parallel structure to the preceding chapter with an emphasis on novelty: novelty in this case consists in the tendency among some of the contemporary Catholic theologians to insist on the necessity of developing regional Churches after the model of ancient patriarchates. The discussions in this chapter have in the background the recently concluded and overly publicised theological debate between Cardinal J. Ratzinger and Cardinal W. Kasper on the question of the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church. This debate, in our opinion, should serve as an entry point and as a means to make an appraisal of our topic's *status questionis* in the contemporary Catholic ecclesiology. Hence, we begin this chapter with a presentation of the Ratzinger-Kasper debate. After this introductory discussion, we will move on to a systematic exploration of our subject based on the views of some select contemporary Catholic theologians. It will begin by a discussion on the incoherent terminology inherited from the council and in recent theologico-canonical literature. It will be followed by an exploration of what is meant by the realisation of the Church of God in a *place*. Then we will take up a related theme, the relationship between the episcopate and the primacy—a discussion which will shed more light on the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church. After this discussion

¹ See Chapters two and three.

² See Chapter five.

we will be able to make a better appreciation of the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church. The remaining part of the chapter will be a discussion on the intermediary instances of the ecclesial structure, concentrating particularly on episcopal conferences and Catholic Oriental Churches, with the assumption that stronger regional Churches will better articulate the relationship between the local Church and the Church universal.

2. Ratzinger-Kasper Debate on the Relationship between the Local Church and the Universal Church

2.1. Introduction

The recent, rather overly publicised, public debate between the two leading Cardinals of the Roman Curia on the subject of the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church is of particular interest for our research, given the fact that it has drawn reactions and responses from different quarters, particularly from other theologians. In what follows, we make an attempt to account for the genesis, development and outcome of this interesting theological dispute.

2.2. Background of the Debate

In order to understand the issues underlying the *Ratzinger-Kasper Debate*, we think it useful to examine a document issued by the *CDF* on May 28, 1992, because the debate we deal with has in the background the basic affirmations of this document, entitled “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion.”³

In this document, the *CDF*—having identified the Church of Christ with the universal Church⁴—declared that particular Churches are to be considered as “manifold particular expressions of the saving presence of the one Church of Christ,” as such they are “in themselves Churches,” constituted as they are “after the model of the universal Church.”⁵ In this sense, the universal Church is a *Body of the Churches* and as such a *Communion of*

³ Original text in *OR* (Italian edition), 15-16 June, 1992; Original Latin text and French translation in *DC*, no. 2055 (2-16 août 1992), 729-734.

⁴ “Church of Christ, which we profess in the Creed to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic, is the universal Church...,” no. 7.

⁵ Cf. *LG* 23/a; *AG* 20/a.

Churches.⁶ But the document reminds us that the concept of communion applied to the particular Churches must be taken in an analogical fashion.

The *CDF* is particularly concerned about the wrong interpretations of the local/particular Church which threaten “to weaken the concept of the unity of the Church at the visible and institutional level.”⁷ Thus, according to the *Letter*, there are those who consider the local/particular Church as a subject complete in itself and “the universal Church is the result of a *reciprocal recognition* on the part of the particular Churches.”⁸ The danger involved in this view, which amounts to an *ecclesiological unilateralism*, is shown by history itself which teaches us that whenever a particular Church sought to become self-sufficient cutting itself from the communion with the universal Church, its internal unity also suffered.⁹ In fact, “the particular Churches, insofar as they are ‘part of the one Church of Christ,’¹⁰ have a special relationship of ‘mutual interiority’¹¹ with the whole, that is, with the universal Church....”¹²

According to the same *Letter*, the universal Church “in its essential mystery, [...] is a reality *ontologically and temporally* prior to every *individual* particular Church.”¹³ In fact, “*ontologically*, the Church-mystery, the Church that is one and unique, precedes the creation, and gives birth to the particular Churches as her daughters.”¹⁴ This Church is *temporally* manifested on the day of Pentecost as a universal Church in that it was manifested in the community of the Apostles and started as a Church that speaks ‘all the languages.’¹⁵ It is from this Church, which in its origin and manifestation is universal, that the various particular Churches were born.

Arising *within* and *out* of the universal Church, they have their ecclesiality in it and from it. Hence the formula of the Second Vatican Council: *The Church in and formed out of the Churches (Ecclesia in et ex Ecclesiis)*, is inseparable from this other formula: *The Churches in and formed out of the Church (Ecclesiae in et ex Ecclesia)*.¹⁶

⁶ Cf. No 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Cf. PAUL VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 8-XII-1975, n. 64/b.

¹⁰ *CD* 6/c.

¹¹ JOHN PAUL II, Address to the Roman Curia, 20-XII-1990, *OR*, 21-XII-1990, p. 5.

¹² No 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Cf. Acts 2, 1ff. IRENAEUS, *Adversus haereses*, III, 17, 2 (PG 7, 929-930): “at Pentecost (...) all nations (...) had become a marvellous choir to intone a hymn of praise to God in perfect harmony, because the Holy Spirit had brought distances to nought, eliminated discordant notes and transformed the varieties of the peoples into the first-fruits to be offered to the Father”. Cf. also ST. FULGENTIUS OF RUSPE, *Sermo 8 in Pentecoste*, 2-3: PL 65, 743-744.

¹⁶ No. 9; Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Address to the Roman Curia, (20-XII-1990), n. 9, p. 5.

According to another affirmation of the *CDF*, a Christian becomes a member of the universal Church not in a *mediate* way, i.e. “*through* belonging to a particular Church, but in an *immediate* way, even though entry into and life within the universal Church are necessarily brought about *in* a particular Church.” For “each member of the faithful, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, is in *his or her* Church, in the Church of Christ.”¹⁷

With due respect for the positive values of the *eucharistic ecclesiology*, the *CDF* warns the readers of the dangers involved in a “unilateral emphasis on the principle of the local Church.”¹⁸ One such deviation is the view that holds that “where the Eucharist is celebrated, the totality of the mystery of the Church would be made present in such a way as to render any other principle of unity or universality non-essential.”¹⁹ There are also views which go on to hold that “gathering together in the name of Jesus (cf. *Mt* 18, 20) is the same as generating the Church: the assembly which in the name of Christ becomes a community, would hold within itself the powers of the Church, including power as regards the Eucharist.”²⁰ Others hold that the Church would arise from the base level. These erroneous views neglect the fact “that it is precisely the Eucharist that renders all self-sufficiency on the part of the particular Churches impossible.”²¹ For, the unicity of the Eucharistic Body of Christ implies the unicity of his Mystical Body, the one and the indivisible Church.

The unity of the Church is rooted also in the unity of the Episcopate. There is a parallelism between the *Body of the Churches* and the *Body of Bishops*. Just as the former calls for a *head* of the Churches (Rome), so also does the latter for the existence of a Bishop who is its head. The Bishop of Rome is a *perpetual and visible source and foundation*²² of the unity of the Church and the Episcopate. Hence, argues the *CDF*, “for each particular Church to be fully Church, that is, the particular presence of the universal Church with all its essential elements, and hence constituted *after the model of the universal Church*,²³ there must be present in it, as a proper element, the supreme authority of the Church.”²⁴ Hence, citing Pope John Paul II, it is asserted that “*we must see the ministry of the Successor of Peter, not only as a ‘global’ service, reaching each particular Church from ‘outside,’ as it were, but as belonging already*

¹⁷ No. 10.

¹⁸ No. 11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *LG*, 23/a. Cf. *Pastor Aeternus* (DS nos. 3051-3057); CYPRIAN, *De unitate Ecclesiae*, 4: PL 4, 512-515.

²³ That is, the Episcopal College “together with their head, the Supreme Pontiff, and never apart from him,” *LG*, 22/b; cf. also 19.

²⁴ No. 13.

to the essence of each particular Church from ‘within’.”²⁵ This interior service of the Petrine ministry is given, this time in reference to *Pastor Aeternus*:

Indeed, the ministry of the Primacy involves, in essence, a truly episcopal power, which is not only supreme, full and universal, but also *immediate*, over everybody, whether Pastors or other faithful.²⁶ The ministry of the Successor of Peter as something *interior* to each particular Church is a necessary expression of that fundamental *mutual interiority* between universal Church and particular Church.²⁷

Due to this fact, “communion with the universal Church, represented by Peter’s Successor, is not an external complement to the particular Church, but one of its internal constituents.”²⁸ From an ecumenical point of view, this assertion is of grave consequence. It would follow that those Churches which are not in communion with the Bishop of Rome miss something essential to their ecclesiality, in the words of the present document, “their existence as particular Churches is *wounded*.”²⁹

2.3. Kasper’s Reaction to CDF’s Letter

Walter Kasper formulated his first critical reaction to the CDF’s 1992 *Letter* in a German article appeared in a *Festschrift* published in honour of Mgr Josef Homeyer.³⁰ In this article, dealing with the theology and the exercise of the episcopal ministry, he lays accent on the need for a correct articulation of the relationship between the Primacy and the Episcopal College. The Council clearly states that the college of bishops has responsibility for and authority over the whole Church (*Gesamtkirche*); it has this authority when it is in communion with its head, the bishop of Rome. In the conciliar formulation of this doctrine, a possible conflict between the Pope and the episcopal college is ruled out as the involvement of the head of the college is always called for. But the crucial question, according to W. Kasper, is

...ob die Autorität und Initiative des Kollegiums nicht *praktisch* zu einer bloßen Fiktion wird, wenn der Papst sie jederzeit unterbinden kann, wenn aber umgekehrt er jederzeit auch ohne formelle Mitwirkung des Kollegiums—nicht als *persona privata*, sondern als Haupt dieses Kollegiums—entscheiden und handeln kann.³¹

²⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Address to the Bishops of the United States of America*, 16-IX-1987, n. 4.

²⁶ Cf. *Pastor Aeternus*, chap. 3: DS, no. 3064; LG 22/b.

²⁷ No. 13; cf. no. 9.

²⁸ No. 17.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ W. KASPER, “Zur Theologie und Praxis des bischöfliches Amtes,” in: Wener SCHREER; Georg STEINS (eds), *Auf neue Art Kirche sein. Wirklichkeiten – Herausforderungen – Wandlungen. Festschrift für Bischof Dr. Josef Homeyer* (München: Bernward bei Don Bosco, 1999), pp. 32-48, *hereafter cited as* W. KASPER, “Zur Theologie und Praxis des bischöfliches Amtes.”

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

The same problem can be found also in the relationship between the particular/local Churches and the universal Church. According to the teaching of Vatican II, particular Churches are not to be considered as mere administrative provinces of the Universal Church. Instead, each of them “constitutes one particular Church in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and active.”³² They are “fashioned after the model of the universal Church, in and from which Churches comes into being the one and only Catholic Church.”³³ In this sense, the Catholic Church must be considered neither as a confederation of local Churches nor as a Super Church in which particular Churches are mere provinces. As Kasper formulates it, “Teilkirche und Universalkirche realisieren sich perichoretisch ineinander; sie sind gegenseitig innerlich (»in quibus«).”³⁴

According to Kasper, the above conciliar determination of the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church has been given further development by the 1992 *Letter* of the *CDF*—a development which in practical terms “mehr oder weniger eine Umkehrung bedeutet.”³⁵ Of course, no Catholic theologian can object to *CDF*’s statement that “the universal Church cannot be conceived as the sum of the particular Churches, or as a federation of particular Churches.”³⁶ But that is not the case with the thesis of the ontological and temporal priority of the universal Church in its relationship with the particular Churches. In Kasper’s view, in *CDF*’s affirmation that “the Church in and formed out of the Churches (*Ecclesia in et ex Ecclesiis*), is inseparable from this other formula, the Churches in and formed out of the Church (*Ecclesiae in et ex Ecclesia*),”³⁷ there cannot be any objection to the formula *Ecclesiae in et ex Ecclesia*, especially if what we understand by *Ecclesia* is the *una, sancta, catholica et apostolica Ecclesia*. So what is crucial here is what we understand by ‘universal Church’.³⁸ If by universal Church, we understand the historical Jerusalem Church, then it must be noted that it was, in fact, both the universal Church and the local Church. According to Kasper, “Die eine Kirche bestand also von Anfang an ‘in und aus’ Ortskirchen.”³⁹ In this context—thinks Kasper—the 1992 *Letter* of the *CDF* is not an aid in the clarification of the communion ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council but, on the

³² *CD* 11.

³³ *LG* 23.

³⁴ W. KASPER, “Zur Theologie und Praxis des bischöflichen Amtes,” p. 43.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ No. 9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ “Man kann dieser Formel also zustimmen, vorausgesetzt, daß geklärt ist, was mit Kirche bzw. Universalkirche konkret gemeint ist.” W. KASPER, “Zur Theologie und Praxis des bischöflichen Amtes,” p. 44

³⁹ *Ibid.*

contrary, its dismissal. It is seen also as an attempt to restore Roman centralism. Now the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church is thrown out of balance.⁴⁰

2.4. Response of Ratzinger

As prefect of the Congregation which issued the document in question, Cardinal Ratzinger was looking forward to an opportunity to give a reply to Kasper's critique,⁴¹ as he put it, in 'the least polemical way' as possible.⁴² This he found at a symposium on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the conclusion of Vatican II, held in Rome in November 2000, where he presented a paper entitled, "The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church, 'Lumen Gentium'."⁴³

Reiterating what was stated in the letter of the *CDF*, the Cardinal begins by airing his concern about the distortion and devaluation (a gradual 'horizontalism') of the notion of communion during the years after the 1985 synod. That is to say, "[t]he ecclesiology of communion began to be reduced to the theme of the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church, which in turn degenerated gradually into the problem of the division of the areas of competence between them."⁴⁴ According to him, it is in the face of such reductions that the *CDF* published the letter in question. But, to his regret, Ratzinger notes that it has become common among the theologians to make a negative appraisal to this

⁴⁰ "...problematisch wird die Formel, wenn die eine universale Kirche unter der Hand mit der römischen Kirchen, *de facto* mit Papst und Kurie, identifiziert wird. Geschieht dies, kann man das Schreiben der Glaubenskongregation nicht als Hilfe zur Klärung der Communion-Ekklesiologie, sondern muß es als deren Verabschiedung und als Versuch einer theologischen Restauration des römischen Zentralismus verstehen. [...] Das Verhältnis von Orts- und Universalkirche ist aus der Balance geraten," W. KASPER, "Zur Theologie und Praxis des bischöflichen Amtes," p. 44. This imbalance is visible also in the *Motu proprio* of John Paul II, *Apostolos suos*, "On the Theological and Juridical Nature of Episcopal Conferences," issued in May 21, 1998, in response to the Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1985. For Kasper, this document has value only as a 'provisional formulation' (*Zwischenergebnis*) and not the last word on the question. *Apostolos suos* will be a topic of further study *infra*.

⁴¹ As Ratzinger would later evaluate, "Kasper's text was quite rightly understood everywhere as a warning cry against a new, theologically veiled form of Roman centralism and as an emphatic criticism of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. A warning like this from the mouth of a bishop with solid theological credentials carries weight," J. RATZINGER, "The Local Church and the Universal Church: A Response to Walter Kasper," www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m1321/16_185/80379086/print.jhtml (= *America* 185 (2001 - Nov. 19) 16, 7-10).

⁴² "As prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, I tried to find the least polemical way to clear up the problem," *ibid*.

⁴³ www.ewtn.com/library/curia/cdfeccl.htm (*OR* (English Edition), 19 September 2001, page 5). He treats same theme almost a year later, when he read on 15 September 2001 a similarly entitled text. "The Ecclesiology of Vatican II," www.ewtn.com/library/curia/cdfeccv2.htm [*OR* (Eng.) 23 January 2002, p. 5] (= "L'ecclésiologie de Vatican II," Conférence du Cardinal Ratzinger lors d'ouverture du Congrès pastoral du diocèse d'Aversa (Italie) *OR* (2001) no. 42, 16 October, pp. 5-6), while opening the Pastoral Congress of the Diocese of Aversa (Italy) dedicated to a re-reading of the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

⁴⁴ J. RATZINGER, "The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church, 'Lumen Gentium'." In saying this, the head of the *CDF* does not neglect the importance of the discussion on the proper order and designation of responsibilities and correction of imbalances. He does not deny the possibility of Roman centralism either, which must be identified and purified.

Letter.⁴⁵ “It was the sentence that said that the universal Church is a reality that in its essential mystery is logically and ontologically prior to the particular Churches that was singled out for criticism.”⁴⁶ Ratzinger contends that this assertion was based on the patristic vision⁴⁷ that the Church which is one and unique precedes creation and gives birth to a particular Church. He then adds,

[t]he ontological priority of the universal Church—the unique Church, the unique Body, the unique Bride—vis-à-vis the empirical, concrete manifestations of various, particular Churches is so obvious to me that I find it difficult to understand the objections raised against it.⁴⁸

In his view, the failure to see the ontological precedence of the universal Church over the individual local Churches is a sign of the failure to see the Great Church conceived by God. It is also a failure to see the Church of the Fathers and of the New Testament.⁴⁹ In that case, “[a]ll that would remain is the empirical image of mutually related Churches and their conflicts. This would mean that the Church as a theological theme is cancelled.”⁵⁰

When it comes to the historical precedence of the universal Church, Ratzinger is less assertive as he is aware of the weakness of the argument.⁵¹ Hence, he invites us to concentrate on “the theological affirmation which Luke has at heart.”⁵² The first reality in Luke’s account is not the local Church of Jerusalem, but the new Israel revealed in the Twelve, “even before it becomes the representation of the local Church of Jerusalem, as a unity that embraces all time and places.”⁵³ More than this temporal priority, clear in Luke, what is more crucial is the point that “Church is generated in the Twelve by the one Spirit for all peoples, hence even from the first moment she is directed to being in all cultures, and thus to being the one People of God: she is not a local community that grows gradually, but the leaven that is always destined to permeate the whole, and consequently, embodies universality from the first

⁴⁵ “Today, any theologian concerned about his reputation feels obliged to criticize all documents from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Our Letter met with a storm of criticism—very few parts of the text met with approval,” J. RATZINGER, “The Ecclesiology of Vatican II.”

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ “Fathers take up a rabbinical theology which had conceived of the Torah and Israel as pre-existent,” J. RATZINGER, “The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church, ‘Lumen Gentium’.”

⁴⁸ J. RATZINGER, “The Ecclesiology of Vatican II.”

⁴⁹ According to Ratzinger, the ontological priority of universal Church in relation to the particular Churches is attested by NT including the great Epistle of Paul. In Gal. Apostle speaks of heavenly Jerusalem as a reality that precedes (our mother). Thus, as he put it, “...it is not necessary to wait for the Deutero-Pauline Epistles and the Apocalypse to find the ontological priority—reaffirmed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith—of the universal Church in relation to the particular Churches.” J. RATZINGER, “The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church, ‘Lumen Gentium’.”

⁵⁰ J. RATZINGER, “The Ecclesiology of Vatican II.”

⁵¹ As he formulated it, “the question concerning her temporal priority is certainly more difficult,” J. RATZINGER, “The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church, ‘Lumen Gentium’.”

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

instant.”⁵⁴ Also, the miracle of tongues on the day of Pentecost was—according to the patristic interpretation—“an anticipation of the *Catholica*—the Church from the very first moment is oriented *kat’holon*—she embraces the whole universe.”⁵⁵

It is here that Ratzinger expresses his critical remarks on the position held by W. Kasper. In his view, “[t]he precise meaning of the text of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is not fully conveyed when a German theologian says of it that the original community of Jerusalem was in fact the universal Church and the local Church at the same time...”⁵⁶ For, according to the prefect of the *CDF*, the matter at issue is not the historical perspective, but the “interior beginning of the Church, which Luke wants to describe and which he attributes, over and apart from any empirically verifiable fact, to the power of the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁷

Having thus stated his basic thesis, he enquires why there is such a resistance to accept the affirmations of the pre-eminence of the universal Church in relation to the particular Churches. According to him, “[i]t only becomes understandable on the basis of a suspicion.”⁵⁸ He has in mind the following assertion of W. Kasper:

The formula becomes totally problematic if the one universal Church is tacitly identified with the Roman Church, de facto with the Pope and the Curia. If this occurs, then the Letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith cannot be understood as an aid to the clarification of the ecclesiology of communion, but must be understood as its abandonment and an endeavour to restore the centralism of Rome.⁵⁹

Here, Ratzinger contends that Kasper’s accusation is unfounded.

It cannot be rightly said that the Letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith tacitly identifies the universal Church with the Roman Church, or de facto with the Pope and the Curia. The temptation to do so arises if at the start the local Church of Jerusalem and the universal Church had already been identified, that is, if the concept of Church has been reduced to that of the communities that are empirically discernible, and if one has lost sight of its theological depth.⁶⁰

In order to give further solidity to his arguments, Ratzinger now turns to the conciliar texts. It is clear from the *Lumen Gentium* that the Council develops the theology of the Church in the context of the Trinitarian theology. In this *theo-logical* understanding, the Church is the gathering for the kingdom of God, the breaking-in of the kingdom. When we show the inner dynamic of the Church in its relation to the kingdom of God, we get a better picture of what it means by the universal Church. Now, where can we find this one unique universal Church

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ W. KASPER, “Zur Theologie und Praxis des bischöflichen Amtes,” p. 44, trans. as in J. RATZINGER, “The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church, ‘Lumen Gentium’.”

⁶⁰ J. RATZINGER, “The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church, ‘Lumen Gentium’.”

which ontologically and temporally precedes the local Churches? According to Ratzinger, we can discover this precedence at work especially in the sacraments. For Baptism, the Eucharist and the Apostolic ministry come from outside the local Church.

First, Baptism is—far more than a socialization bound up with the local Church—a Trinitarian event. It does not derive from the local Church, but from the one unique Church. At baptism one becomes a member of the universal Church, and not just of a local community. Hence, concludes Ratzinger, “[i]n Baptism the universal Church continuously precedes the local Church and builds her. [...] The Church is always the one Church, one and the same. [...] Baptism comes from her and gives birth within her.”⁶¹

Secondly, the eucharistic celebration must be seen as an event in which the Lord gives his Body and makes us his Body. It is the occasion in which the believers are incorporated into the one Christ.

This body is one, and so again for every local Church the Eucharist is the place of incorporation into the one Christ, the becoming-one of all communicants in the universal *communio*, which unites heaven and earth, the living and the dead, past, present and future, and opens up into eternity. The Eucharist is not born from the local Church and does not end in her. It continuously shows that Christ comes to us from outside, through our closed doors; the Church comes to us continuously from outside, from the total, unique body of Christ and leads us into it.⁶²

The Eucharist celebrated in various places is at once local and universal, because there is only one Christ and only one body of Christ.

This ‘from outside’ (*extra nos*) aspect of the sacrament is also shown by the ministries of the bishop and the priest. The need for these ministries is shown by the fact that a local Church cannot give itself the Eucharist: “it must receive it from the Lord through the mediation of the one Church.”⁶³ Besides, the bishop does not come out of the local Church, and is not an isolated individual, but stands in the historical continuity with the college of the Apostles.

The bishop is not a bishop as an individual, but by belonging to a body, a college, which in turn represents the historical continuity of the *collegium Apostolorum*. In this sense, the episcopal ministry derives from the one Church and leads into it. Precisely here it becomes evident that there is no opposition between the local Church and the universal Church. The Bishop represents the one Church in the local Church, and builds up the one Church while he builds up the local Church and awakens her particular gifts for the benefit of the whole body. The ministry of the Successor of Peter is a particular form of episcopal ministry connected in a

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

special way with responsibility for the unity of the whole Church. But Peter's ministry and responsibility would not even be able to exist had the universal Church not existed first.⁶⁴

2.5. Kasper's Friendly Reply

In response to the above intervention of Cardinal Ratzinger, W. Kasper came out with another article, entitled as “On the relationship between the universal and the local Church: Cardinal⁶⁵ Walter Kasper's ‘Friendly Reply’ to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.”⁶⁶ This amounts to a response to—as he put it—“a highly critical stance against [his] position, maintained in his 1999 essay “On the Office of the Bishop.” In justification of his stance, Kasper says that his conclusions were not based on an abstract reasoning but on the pastoral experience; for as the bishop of a large German diocese he had occasions to observe “how a gap was emerging and steadily increasing between norms promulgated in Rome for the universal Church and the needs and practices of our local Church.”⁶⁷ In this context, a local bishop, who has to be “a bond of unity between the See of Rome and his people,” finds himself pulled in two directions: if, as a member of the episcopal college, he has the duty to promote and protect the unity of the Catholic Church, he cannot either—as the shepherd of his local Church—neglect his duty to “take care of his own people, respond to their expectations and answer their questions.”⁶⁸ If at all he decides to enforce the Roman regulations without any contextual discrimination, such efforts can turn out to be pastorally counterproductive. If, on the other hand, he were to take a passive attitude towards the Roman regulation, he would be easily branded as disobedient.

A solution to this impasse would be, according to W. Kasper, to give to the local bishop “enough vital space to make responsible decisions in the matter of implementing universal laws.”⁶⁹ This move in no way should be deemed as opening the door to cheap compromises, because the primary duty of the bishop as guardian of faith “is to bear witness to the truth, whether it is opportune or not....”⁷⁰ Instead, this suggestion is well within the tradition of the Church, in which many of the universal regulations of the Church were open to adaptation in concrete situations.⁷¹ In Kasper's view, this tradition is “well grounded in sound theology, in

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ In fact, when he wrote and first published this article (December 2000), Kasper was not yet a Cardinal.

⁶⁶ www.shadow-synod.net/documentation/kasper_en.htm (21.5.2002) (= *America*, 184 (April 2001) 8-14).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Even “Church recognized the right of the local bishop to “remonstrate”; that is, to suspend a new law temporarily if he judged it harmful in his territory,” *Ibid.*

particular in the theology of the local Church and the office of the bishop.”⁷² It implies the principle that the local Church is not simply a department of the universal Church and the local bishop a mere delegate of the pope, but rather all the power that a bishop needs to govern his local Church is given to him through his sacramental consecration. This vision of the primitive Church was rediscovered and re-instated by Vatican II. It should have brought about decentralization in the Church’s government. But the outcome was unfortunately the opposite: “the trend toward centralization returned after the council.”⁷³ The end result of all these is that the “right balance between the universal Church and the particular Churches has been destroyed.”⁷⁴

In Kasper’s view, Cardinal Ratzinger “approached the problem of the relationship between the universal Church and local Churches from a purely abstract and theoretical point of view....”⁷⁵ He recalls here how the prefect of the *CDF* had accused him of “proposing an understanding of the Church that has no theological depth and reduces its essence to empirically developed separate communities.” This, in his opinion, is a misrepresentation of what he defended.⁷⁶ In order to avoid further misunderstanding, he proposes a clear articulation of his position.

He begins by saying that “[t]he relationship between the universal Church and the local Churches cannot be explained in the abstract by way of theoretical deductions, because the Church is a concrete historical reality.”⁷⁷ The Church is a reality which unfolds itself in history and therefore it is to history we must turn for sound theology. The point of departure for this theology must be the Bible. If we are to rely on the Pauline vision (who used *ecclesia* principally to refer “to a particular Church or to a given community”), “the one Church of God comes to life in each local Church.”⁷⁸ Based on this scriptural data, Kasper goes on to affirm that the early Church got developed from local communities, each of which was the concrete presence of the Church of God. This was the basic ground of their mutual

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.* In this development, not all blame must be laid on the Roman curia; we must also take into account responsibility of some of the local Churches that failed to maintain a balance between unity and diversity—a situation which demanded resolute actions from the Holy See. There are also occasions in which “the local Churches themselves can promote centralization whenever they abdicate their responsibility and turn to Rome for a decision.” To these, we must also include the fact that the present day facility of communication greatly favours ‘unification’. Also we must not forget that in an atmosphere of globalisation, “singular solutions in particular Churches are not always desirable,” *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Pleading his cause, Kasper says, “Throughout my ministry as a bishop, I consistently fought against sociological tendencies that wanted to reduce the Church to disconnected assemblies,” *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* Only in the Captivity Letters (which, according to the scholarly opinion, may not be Pauline) the *local* meaning of *ecclesia* recedes and it is considered mainly in its universal dimension.

communion. This ontological communion will later give rise to structural manifestations like synods and councils. In this structural set up none of the Churches has autonomy but remained “within the network of a communion of metropolitan and patriarchal Churches, all of them bonded together as the universal Church.”⁷⁹ In this network of Churches in communion, the Roman see was recognised as “the leading and guiding authority in determining what the essence of Christianity was.”⁸⁰ This vision of the Church which dominates the first millennium contrasts with the ecclesial vision, developed in the West during the second millennium, in which emphasis on universality predominates. This trend culminated in attributing all authority to the pope.

But the Second Vatican Council made an attempt to revive the beliefs and attitudes of the early Church through its teaching on the local Church, the sacramental character of the episcopal ordination and the episcopal collegiality. As a result of this, during the post-conciliar period, especially after the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, ‘*communio*’ was recognised as the central and foundational idea of the Council, a fact which was positively evaluated also by the 1992 *Letter* of the *CDF*.

Kasper thinks that the *CDF* has “...objected correctly to a one-sided ecclesiology that gave excessive weight to the local Churches and saw the universal Church as the end result of the coming together of local Churches.”⁸¹ He is also keen to enumerate several points of agreement between him and Cardinal Ratzinger. They are as follows: 1) there is but one Church willed by Jesus Christ, and it indeed exists in the present; it subsists in the Roman Catholic Church, 2) this one and unique Church of Christ exists ‘in and from’ the local Churches, which can only exist in communion with one another. “As the universal Church consists ‘in and from’ local Churches, so each local Church exists ‘in and from’ the one Church of Jesus Christ. The unity of the universal Church is a unity in communion.”⁸² 3) “Just as the local Churches are not mere extensions or provinces of the universal Church, so the universal Church is not the mere sum of the local Churches.” The unique Church of Christ is constituted after the image of the Trinity; hence, the unity of the Church is unity in diversity.

Beyond these points of agreement, there are areas where both theologians disagree. To begin with, Kasper states that the *CDF* went beyond the limits of the conciliar teaching when it stated that “the local Churches exist ‘in and from’ the universal Church” and then went on to propose the thesis of ‘the ontological and historical priority of the universal Church.’ This

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

assertion—thinks Kasper—must have been motivated by a desire to “to oppose the thesis of the primacy of the local Church as proposed by some theologians.”⁸³ This is a point on which Kasper cannot agree with Ratzinger. According to him, the view that the Twelve in the Jerusalem community represented the one unique Church is questionable. Drawing support from Michael Theobald, Kasper argues that “the ‘Pentecostal event’ does not refer to the universal Church as such but to the gathering of the Jewish ‘diaspora,’ which in the course of time, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will expand into a Church of all nations.”⁸⁴

Ratzinger had based the ontological primacy of the universal Church on a thesis about the pre-existence of the Church, which has recourse to the Pauline imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem from above as our mother.⁸⁵ In Kasper’s view, what St Paul wants to convey is the truth that the Church is not the product of accidental historical circumstances, but is grounded in the eternal saving will of God. Nobody can deny this pre-existence of the Church of God. But Kasper does not take it as an argument for the primacy of the universal Church. According to him,

The Pauline texts about the pre-existence of the Church do not at all support the thesis about the pre-existence of the universal Church. They do support, however, the doctrine defended by me and many others of the simultaneous pre-existence of the universal Church and the particular Churches.⁸⁶

Having thus stated the basic divergence between him and Ratzinger, Kasper now attempts to explain it. According to him, what we have here is a conflict “between theological opinions and underlying philosophical assumptions.” In philosophical terms, it is a conflict between the Platonic approach and the Aristotelian approach. If Ratzinger follows the Platonic method which has its starting point in the primacy of an idea that is a universal concept, Kasper prefers the Aristotelian-Thomistic method which sees the universal as existing in a concrete reality. What is now needed is to give sufficient room for differing theological opinions as was done in the past.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Cf. *Heb.* 12: 22 ff.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Elsewhere Kasper wrote: “L’unique Eglise se rend concrète, elle s’inculture, il faut même dire qu’elle s’incarne, dans le temps et l’espace. Ce n’est qu’ainsi qu’elle atteint la plénitude de son unité. Et c’est pourquoi l’Eglise universelle n’existe que dans les Eglises particulière, et par elles (LG 23); elles la représente, et elle se réalise en elles; elle agit en elles et subsiste en elles (CD 11). Donc, pas plus que l’Eglise universelle n’est une addition ou une confédération d’Eglises particulières qui lui préexistent, pas plus les Eglises particulières ne sont une subdivision administrative de l’Eglise universelle. *Eglise universelle et Eglises particulières s’impliquent mutuellement, il règne entre elles un rapport d’inhabitation réciproque.*” W. KASPER, “L’Eglise comme communion. Un fil conducteur dans l’ecclésiologie de Vatican II,” p. 26.

2.6. Ratzinger's Second Response

Following the publication of the above *response* of W. Kasper, the editors of *America* invited Ratzinger to react to it publicly. Accepting the invitation, Ratzinger penned an article entitled, "The Local Church and the Universal Church: A Response to Walter Kasper."⁸⁷ We may note in passing that the 'friendly reply' of Kasper ended in a rather reconciliatory tone, saying that what distances the two Cardinals is not doctrine as such but methodology and philosophical presuppositions. Ratzinger, on his part, remarks at the very outset of his reply that he does "not want to foster the impression that there is a longstanding theological dispute between Cardinal Kasper and myself, when in fact none exists."⁸⁸

In this article of Ratzinger, the initial paragraphs are devoted to establish the sequence of theological exchanges between the two German theologians. Then he observes that Kasper, in his 'friendly response', tacitly dropped the reproach from his first article and reframed the whole dispute differently. The question of priority of the universal Church over the particular Church is no more treated as a question of Church doctrine but as a problem of theological opinions and of the various related philosophies. So now, we have two theological points of view: while Ratzinger's position is tinted with Platonism, Kasper holds on to the Aristotelean-Thomistic standpoint.

Ratzinger is happy to observe that Kasper emphasised the common ecclesiological foundation, and he modified his own rejection of the ontological and temporal precedence of the universal Church over the individual Churches, when he characterized the 'pre-existence' (properly understood) of the Church as indispensable for understanding it.⁸⁹ We may recall here that according to Kasper's point of view, pre-existence applies not only to the universal Church, but also to the concrete Church, which is composed of local Churches. Rejecting the idea of 'primacy' of the universal Church, he defends the simultaneity of the universal Church and the particular Churches. That is to say, they penetrate each other and are perichoretic.

Responding to this re-framed position of Kasper, Ratzinger answers, "I can certainly accept this formula; it is valid for the Church as it lives in history. But it misses the actual point at issue as seen in the reference to the 'pre-existence' of the Church."⁹⁰ In order to explain this point further, he returns to his 2000 talk on the subject, where positioning himself within the patristic ecclesiology, he had argued that there is only one Bride, only one Body of

⁸⁷ J. RATZINGER, "The Local Church and the Universal Church: A Response to Walter Kasper," www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m1321/16_185/80379086/print.jhtml, 25.02.2003 (= *America* 185 (2001) 16, 7-10).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ "Such a pre-existence of the Church cannot be contested; it is indispensable for the correct theological understanding of the Church," W. KASPER, "A Friendly Reply to Cardinal Ratzinger on the Church."

⁹⁰ J. RATZINGER, "The Local Church and the Universal Church: A Response to Walter Kasper."

Christ and therefore one Church.⁹¹ Repeating what he had asserted then, Ratzinger says, “I cannot understand how my position can be refuted by means of biblical theology. The inner priority of unity, of the one bride to her essential variety, seems to be plainly evident.”⁹²

One of the reasons behind this resistance, according to him, is “that mentioning the universal Church and its ontological (or should we say teleological?) precedence over the individual Churches leads people to think immediately about the pope and the Curia, and the need to avert centralism.”⁹³ This is a totally groundless fear for the simple reason that

[t]he Church of Rome is a local Church and not the universal Church—a local Church with a peculiar, universal responsibility, but still a local Church. And the assertion of the inner precedence of God’s idea of the one Church, the one bride, over all its empirical realizations in particular Churches has nothing whatsoever to do with the problem of centralism.⁹⁴

Another reason is that when we speak of the universal Church, we consider it only in abstract terms. It is in this context that Ratzinger “had made a deliberate effort to present the practical reality of the Catholic Church and how it actually works.”⁹⁵ As we may recall, Ratzinger had asserted that the universal Church is the visible and tangible reality in the sacramental experience. By baptism, for instance, one is not socialised into a particular community but is born into the one Church. Thus, here the universal Church, the one Church, is quite concretely and palpably present. “As far as I am concerned, this statement clears up the controversy—for that is the issue here.”⁹⁶ The prefect of the *CDF* observes with some surprise that nothing about this central passage of his talk figures in Kasper’s response. Concluding the discussion, Ratzinger says:

If one strips away all the false associations with Church politics from the concept of the universal Church and grasps it in its true theological (and hence quite concrete) content, then it becomes clear that the argument about Church politics misses the heart of the matter. It becomes clear that the problem is not Platonism or Aristotelianism, but the key notion of salvation history in the Bible.⁹⁷

2.7. Concluding Response from Kasper

In its November 26, 2001 issue, *America* published a letter “From the President of the Council for Promoting Christian Unity,”⁹⁸ in reply to Ratzinger’s response. Kasper begins by a global evaluation of the whole debate. In his view, it shows that “two cardinals, both of

⁹¹ “There is only one bride, only one body of Christ, not many brides, not many bodies,” *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *America*, 185 (November 26, 2001) 28-29.

whom are active in the Roman Curia and who have to rely on solid cooperation, can engage in a theological dispute leading, not to fisticuffs, but to joint progress toward knowledge.”⁹⁹

We may recall that one of the stinging negative remarks that Ratzinger had made about Kasper’s doctrine of the Church was that it tended “to dissolve the Church into purely sociological entities.” This he did by pointing out what he considered Kasper’s excessive focus on the empirical Church. Kasper, in this reply, discovers some positive shifts in the views of Ratzinger. First of all, he notes with delight that “Cardinal Ratzinger no longer sees my position as threatening to dissolve the Church into purely sociological entities.” He is even happier that Ratzinger now “agrees with the formula that local Churches and the universal Church are incorporated into and interpenetrate one another, so that one can speak of their being simultaneous.”¹⁰⁰ This principle is absolutely central to Kasper’s position from which he does not depart. Ratzinger, says Kasper, now grants this perichoretic relationship. He then adds that if this formulation holds true for the Church as it exists throughout history (which means that the local Church and universal Church are simultaneous in all concrete historical manifestations), then he does not any more care “to attribute too much importance to the really rather speculative question of whether the situation is precisely the same or perhaps different with regard to the pre-existence of the Church.”¹⁰¹ He concludes by citing H. de Lubac, revered as a modern ‘Church Father’ by both of them: “A universal Church prior to all individual Churches or seen as existing in itself apart from them, is merely an abstraction.”¹⁰² This means that while Kasper is not going to give a great deal of importance to the disagreement on the pre-existent Church, he is gently insisting on the importance of simultaneity of the local with the universal Church, which saves the universal Church from becoming a logical construct.

Kasper notes that Ratzinger has “made over” the thesis of the ontological and temporal priority of the universal Church, turning it into “the priority of inner unity.” And in Kasper’s view, it is an acceptable position on both philosophical and scriptural grounds as it “avoids the confusing language about the precedence of the universal Church.” This “making over” of the thesis of the ontological priority of the universal Church into “the priority of inner unity,” Kasper notes, can be accommodated in both the Platonic and Aristotelian perspectives. “Unity as a transcendental determination of being makes variety and multiplicity possible to begin

⁹⁹ W. KASPER, “From the President of the Council for Promoting Christian Unity.”

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² H. DE LUBAC, *Les Eglises particulière dans l’Eglise universelle*, p. 54

with” in both philosophical systems. The formulation “priority in inner unity” has the added benefit of “standing in opposition to the postmodern principle of absolute pluralism.”¹⁰³

In explaining the precedence of the universal Church in the sacramental life, Ratzinger had remarked with some humour that Kasper “had not been socialized into this particular community [in which the baptism occurred], but [was] born into the one Church.”¹⁰⁴ The argument is now used by Kasper to defend the simultaneity between the universal Church and the local Church. According to him, “one becomes so—as the temporal-spatial event of baptism makes it clear—in a specific (episcopally structured) local Church. The principle of simultaneity holds true precisely of the sacramental event.”¹⁰⁵

Kasper concludes his letter with an observation on a remark of Ratzinger in which he explains that what he wants is to strip away “all the false associations with Church politics from the concept of the universal Church and to grasp it in its true theological (and hence quite concrete) content.”¹⁰⁶ According to Kasper, the Catholic tradition does not see Church “as some sort of Platonic republic, but [as] a historically existing divine-human reality.”¹⁰⁷ Hence, “it cannot be wholly wrongheaded and be chalked off as mere political reductionism to ask about concrete actions, not in political, but in pastoral life.”¹⁰⁸

2.8. Reactions to the Ratzinger-Kasper Debate

The above theological debate between Cardinals Ratzinger and Kasper drew the attention of many in the Catholic Church, particularly theologians, among whom, we may take note of Cardinal Avery Dulles, Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, and Kilian McDonnell.¹⁰⁹ While the first two tend to subscribe to the views of Cardinal Ratzinger, the third one does not hide his preference for the views of Cardinal Kasper.

2.8.1. Charles J. Chaput

Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Denver has in an article¹¹⁰ recorded his impressions on Kasper’s “Friendly Reply to Cardinal Ratzinger.” In his view, although “Cardinal Kasper

¹⁰³ Cf. W. KASPER, “From the President of the Council for Promoting Christian Unity.”

¹⁰⁴ J. RATZINGER, “The Local Church and the Universal Church: A Response to Walter Kasper.”

¹⁰⁵ W. KASPER, “From the President of the Council for Promoting Christian Unity,” p. 29.

¹⁰⁶ J. RATZINGER, “The Local Church and the Universal Church: A Response to Walter Kasper.”

¹⁰⁷ W. KASPER, “From the President of the Council for Promoting Christian Unity,” p. 29.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Besides these authors, the following articles also deal with the Ratzinger/Kasper debate: P. BLOSSER, “The Kasper-Ratzinger Debate and the State of the Church,” www.bigbrother.net/~mugwump-RATZFANCLUB/Blosser_article.html, R. SHAW, “Authority reconsidered: Who’s in charge here?,” www.osvpublishing.com/periodicals/show-article.html (= *Our Sunday Visitor*, Dec. 8 (2001)); R. MOYNIHAN, “Theology in the Wrong Hands,” *Inside The Vatican* Aug-Sept (2001), www.INSIDETheVatican.com.

¹¹⁰ C. J. CHAPUT, “Reflections on Walter Kasper’s ‘On the Church’,” www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m1321/-3_185/77083397/print.jhtml (25.03. 2003), (= *America*, 185 (2001) 3, 18-19).

offers excellent arguments for the legitimacy of respectful discussion within the Church about the role of local Churches and bishops,” “in presenting a dialectic—setting ‘pastoral experience’ against the perception of Ratzinger’s ‘abstract reasoning’—[his] text inadvertently creates a caricature of the Church’s doctrinal concerns.”¹¹¹ According to him, the abstract and the pastoral need not necessarily stand in opposition.

According to Mgr Chaput, Cardinal Ratzinger’s concern about the developments of post-conciliar Catholic ecclesiology can be corroborated by his own pastoral experience as bishop, and on this point,—says the US Archbishop—Cardinal Kasper will not disagree as he himself pointed out a variety of situations in which “the Curia had to intervene, not because it was craving for power, but because some local Churches seemed to have forgotten the need for unity....”¹¹² Responding to Kasper’s characterisation of a local bishop as being caught up between the pastoral concerns and expectations of his local Church and the regulations coming from Rome, Mgr Chaput says that the primary duty of a bishop, entrusted with a portion of the people of God, “is not to broker peace, but to teach and preach the truth.”¹¹³ Nevertheless, according to him, when we take a closer look at the views of Cardinals Kasper and Ratzinger—the former adopting a conciliar approach in response to pastoral needs and the latter emphasising the primatial authority, which according to him is crucial for maintaining the dogmatic and doctrinal integrity of the Christian faith—it becomes clear that they hold views which are mutually complementary. We have here a practical issue rather than a doctrinal question.

2.8.2. Avery Dulles

Cardinal Avery Dulles’ article in *Inside the Vatican*¹¹⁴—“Universal vs. Particular Church: Who Is Right?”—is based on Ladislav Örsy’s translation of Kasper’s “...Freundschaftliche Auseinandersetzung mit der Kritik von Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger,” published in *America*. The initial paragraphs of this article are devoted to the presentation of the context of the debate between Ratzinger and Kasper. He underlines the fact that both Ratzinger and Kasper admit of the pre-existence of the Church. For Ratzinger, the universal Church is not simply the result of the expansion of an initially local community. It is “ontologically and temporally prior to every individual particular Church.”¹¹⁵ In Kasper’s opinion too, the Church must not be taken as the product of accidental historical circumstances but is grounded in the eternal

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ June 4, 2001 at: www.INSIDEtheVatican.com.

¹¹⁵ *Communio* no. 9.

saving will of God. But the point where he differs from Ratzinger is that, according to him, the pre-existence in question is not the prerogative of the universal Church alone but is applicable to the concrete historical Church. In this debate, Cardinal Dulles prefers to join the side of Ratzinger although he would have defended the position of *CDF*'s 1992 *Letter* by less sophisticated arguments. As he put it,

The ontological priority of the Church universal appears to me to be almost self-evident, since the very concept of a particular Church presupposes a universal Church to which it belongs, whereas the concept of the universal Church does not imply that it is made up of distinct particular Churches.

Historically, too, the priority of the universal Church is evident because Christ unquestionably formed the community of the disciples and prepared the apostles for their mission while they were still gathered together. Particular Churches emerged only after the Church became dispersed, so that it became necessary to establish local congregations with their own hierarchical leaders.¹¹⁶

In their exchange of views, both Kasper and Ratzinger dwell lengthily on the key statement of *Lumen Gentium* 23 that 'in and from particular Churches the one and only Catholic Church' exists (*in quibus et ex quibus una et unica Ecclesia catholica existit*). According to Ratzinger, this formulation can be reversed and we can say that the local Churches exist 'in and from' the universal Church. In both cases there is some kind of precedence. Kasper speaks in terms of perichoresis, that is, the simultaneous, mutual priority of the universal and the particular Churches. But Dulles holds here a slightly different view concerning this formula of *LG* 23. According to him, it has reference to the present situation in which particular Churches do exist. "The Church as we find it today is made up of many particular Churches and does not exist without them any more than they exist without it. It is impossible to belong to either the universal or the particular Church without belonging to both."¹¹⁷ Therefore any thesis which holds that one first belongs to the local Church and subsequently only to the universal Church must be ruled out. Here, in Dulles' opinion, Ratzinger is correct in holding that the sacraments of initiation incorporate believers immediately to the universal Church.

Reacting to Kasper's remark that what is at issue in the dispute between him and Ratzinger is a question of methodology, Dulles thinks that although Ratzinger's affinity for Platonic method is known, in the present debate "he takes his arguments from Scripture and tradition rather than from Platonic philosophy."¹¹⁸ In Dulles' view, although Kasper is right in stating that according to Vatican II the bishop receives his office of government (*munus regendi*)

¹¹⁶ A. DULLES "Universal vs. Particular Church: Who Is Right?"

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

directly from Christ through the sacrament of ordination (LG 21), “he fails to note that the bishop cannot govern a particular diocese unless he is duly appointed by canonical mission and remains in hierarchical communion with the college of bishops and its head, the bishop of Rome (*Lumen gentium* 24).”¹¹⁹

Cardinal Dulles is aware that W. Kasper engages in this debate from a pastoral and practical point of view: “As bishop he found that many of the directives coming from Rome were resented and ignored by the priests and people of his diocese. If the priority of the particular Church were respected, he believes, the diocesan bishop could adapt general regulations to the situation of his own flock.”¹²⁰ Kasper was particularly concerned about the question of admission to the Eucharist of non-Catholic Christians and of divorced and remarried Catholics. Now, making use of Kasper’s own argument that “singular solutions in particular Churches are not always desirable,” Dulles affirms that “the policy regarding admission to the Eucharist of persons not holding the Catholic faith or living in marriages that the Church regards as invalid are good examples of pastoral matters that probably ought to be settled by the authority of the universal Church.”¹²¹ Dulles concludes his discussion with a strong defence of the Petrine office and writes:

Kasper [...] would certainly agree that the Catholic Church must be on guard against degenerating into a loose federation of local or national Churches. She has learned much from the experience of Gallicanism and analogous movements in past centuries. In this age of globalization and multiple inculturation, it is more imperative than ever to have a vigorous office that safeguards the unity of all the particular Churches in the essentials of faith, morality, and worship.¹²²

2.8.3. Kilian McDonnell

Kilian McDonnell has recently published an article, entitled “The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: the Universal and Local Churches,”¹²³ analysing the development and outcome of the theological dispute in question. In his view, the debate between Ratzinger and Kasper is complicated by the category shifts within the conversation: the debate moves back and forth “touching on (1) the metaphysical (non-historical), (2) the historical, (3) the theological (mystery which embraces the two previous categories), and finally (4) the pragmatic.”¹²⁴ And we know that when pragmatic points are involved in theological matters it is difficult to separate them “especially when either side protests that what is at stake in the pragmatic is the

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *TS* 62 (2002) 2, 227-250.

¹²⁴ K. MCDONNELL, “The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: the Universal and Local Churches,” p. 247.

nature of the Church.”¹²⁵ According to K. McDonnell, when we make a distinction between the universal Church and the particular Churches, we should be aware that this distinction is inadequate.¹²⁶

Now both our theologians agree on the Church as a mystery hidden in God from eternity, pre-existing in the Old Israel according to the Fathers. But when it comes to its application, they differ: “Ratzinger uses this pre-existing mystery to assert the ontological priority of the universal Church, while Kasper asserting the pre-existing mystery must be of the whole Church (universal and local), not just one aspect of the Church (universal), therefore denies the ontological priority of the universal Church.”¹²⁷

We may also note that both agree that the universal Church exists “in and from” the local Church, and the local Churches exist “in and from” the universal Church. But difference between them is situated in what is meant by universal Church. “Kasper’s fear is that Ratzinger’s universal Church is a logical construct, an abstraction, existing apart from the historical reality. Ratzinger’s fear is that Kasper’s emphasis on the empirical Church reduces ecclesiology to sociology.”¹²⁸ In McDonnell’s opinion, the key to the debate seems to be the simultaneity of the universal Church and local Churches, and their perichoretic relationship, one of mutual inclusion, reciprocity. “Even when Ratzinger grants simultaneity, he insists on sequence: first the universal Church, then the local. He denies simultaneity has anything to do with the pre-existence of the Church, meaning the universal Church.”¹²⁹ Ratzinger doubts that Kasper identifies universal Church and the local Church, i.e. Kasper’s is an empirical Church deprived of depth. Kasper categorically denies such identification and the emptying of all theological depth. His main assertion is that “one does not step out of the local Church into the universal Church (or vice versa).”¹³⁰ This is because the local Church is the Church of God in a given place; because of the perichoretic relationship between the local Church and the universal Church “one is already in the universal Church when one is in a local Church.” In his view, simultaneity and perichoresis rules out ontological priority.

Whether simultaneity and perichoresis are precisely the same for the pre-existent Church as for the Church since Pentecost is a speculative question. But Kasper insists that the pre-existent Church has to be the

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ “The distinction between the universal Church and the particular Churches is, of course, valid but confusion reigns if there is no recognition that the distinction between the two is, in fact, inadequate because the particular Churches are integral to the universal Church,” *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 247-248.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

mystery of the Church as it has existed throughout history, namely the simultaneity and perichoresis of the universal Church and the local Churches. Otherwise it is an abstraction.¹³¹

Considering Kasper's ecclesiology as lacking in 'depth,' Ratzinger presented the priority of the universal Church on the basis of a Christology based on trinitarian doctrine, baptism, Eucharist and the nature of the Petrine ministry. Kasper does not have any basic disagreement with Ratzinger on these points except that whereas Ratzinger sees them expressed in the universal Church, Kasper sees them expressed in the Church which is simultaneously universal and local.

Ratzinger agrees with Kasper when he says that "the celebration of the Eucharist in the local Church is at the same time the celebration of the universal Church." But he believes that in baptism the universal Church precedes the local Church: one is baptized into the universal Church so that the believer can feel at home in every local Church. Kasper does not make such separation. For him, given the simultaneity between the local Church and the universal Church, a baptism into the local Church is also a baptism into the universal Church.

In the course of the discussion, Ratzinger grants that it is not of major importance to isolate the precise moment in which the Church comes into existence. Therefore, one must dwell rather on "the inner beginning of the Church," and "the inner priority of unity." This view is totally acceptable to Kasper too. According to McDonnell, "[t]hese two insights are Ratzinger's major contribution to the discussion and he is to be congratulated. They are points of convergence."¹³² However, he finds some inconsistency in the argument of Ratzinger and his supporters:

Ratzinger lays great stress on the Church's pre-existence, and in so doing enters a mode of mystery that is non-historical, without the usual space/ time limits or time sequence. It seems inconsistent, therefore, that when coming to the Pentecost event he (and Avery Dulles) wants to shift into a purely historical mode, insisting on time sequence (Pentecost comes first then the realization of the universal Church in particular Churches; further, it is absurd to have a universal Petrine ministry, if there were not first a universal Church).¹³³

The major point of Kasper's argument is that universalist ecclesiology has been a tool of centralization; it does not follow, however, that the process of decentralization will result in a diminished papacy. Rather, the Petrine ministry would be then exercised in a collaborative way so as to avoid making collegiality a naked fiction.

We may also note that Ratzinger's branding—in an indirect manner—of Kasper's stress on "the empirical Church" as a kind of sociological reductionism, an ecclesiological levelling is,

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 248-249.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

in fact, a charge without basis. The empirical Church, portrayed by his texts, is “simply the Church as it exists historically, concretely, being simultaneously universal and local.”¹³⁴ The *empirical* in Kasper is not at all a sociological category. But when Kasper’s ecclesiology is associated to that of Leonardo Boff, which is a more sociologically determined ecclesiology, we get the impression that in the mind of Ratzinger, Kasper’s ecclesiology also suffers from ‘ecclesiological relativism.’ According to McDonnell, “many will find it difficult to understand the propriety of Ratzinger’s introducing a paragraph on Boff, in a kind of guilt by association, when addressing issues of Kasper’s theology.”¹³⁵

2.9. Concluding Remarks

This discussion on the dispute between the two leading Cardinals of the Roman curia was meant to highlight the actuality of the subject of this study. It also shows the inconclusiveness of the debate. As Mgr Chaput has pointed out, the conciliar approach adopted by Kasper is not incompatible with the approach of Ratzinger which stresses the primatial authority in his concern for the unity of the Church. This debate has not been, however, fruitless; by mutually sharing views and positions, the two Cardinals have shown that a theological dispute can lead not to antagonism but—in the words of Kasper—“to joint progress toward knowledge.” Ratzinger’s later position, according to which, what counts is “the inner beginning of the Church,” and “the inner priority of unity” amounts to such a progress. Both the theologians agree on the Church as a mystery hidden in God from eternity. They differ in its practical application. For Ratzinger, it serves as an argument for the pre-existence of the universal Church, the same truth is used by Kasper to affirm the simultaneity of the universal Church and the local Church, because according to him the pre-existent reality is the *whole* Church, which is both universal and local. Hence, one cannot attribute priority to the universal Church. As far as our subject, viz. the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church is concerned, although this debate has been useful, many points call for further explanation and deepening, particularly terminology, conception of the local Church, its relationship with the Church of God, etc. Hence, in what follows, we attempt to explore the different aspects of the question in the light of the discussion among some of the selected Catholic theologians.¹³⁶ We will begin with a discussion on terminology.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Their selection was done on the basis of their proximity to the ecclesiology of Tillard or the Oriental ecclesiology.

3. Lack of a Coherent Terminology

3.1. Introduction

The question of denominating the various levels of the realisation of the Church of God has not found a satisfactory answer liable to be acceptable to all. Various attempts have been made in the past to denominate the Church of God and its various realisations. The Church as a whole was named as *total Church*, *universal Church*, *Church of God/Christ*, *Church catholic* or simply as *the Church* in an absolute sense. But for some minor disagreements on what is predicated by such terms as *universal* or *catholic*, these terms refer one way or other to the Church as a whole. But that is not the case with terms like *particular Church*, *local Church*, *individual Church*, *single Church*, *singular Church*, *regional Church*, *peculiar Church*, etc., which are used to refer to the infra-universal levels of the realisation of the Church. Their use—not only in the conciliar texts, but also in the subsequent theological literature and even in the recent canonical codifications—suffers from an unacceptable degree of incoherence and equivocation. In what follows, we make a quick survey of conciliar, theological and canonical literature in order to take note of the ecclesiological import of this terminological incoherence.

3.2. Vatican II

Despite its contributions towards the Catholic Church's rediscovery of the theology of the local Church, Vatican II could not—given the peculiar circumstances in which the conciliar deliberations progressed—produce a systematic theology of the local Church. This is particularly reflected in the conciliar terminology designating the infra-universal level realisations of the Church.¹³⁷ Cardinal Felici himself, the relator of the Council, was aware of this lacuna:

There is a question as to what term is to be used to designate the particular Churches. In the documents of Vatican II one finds the expressions «ecclesia particularis», «ecclesia peculiaris», «ecclesia localis», which are in these documents neither sufficiently determined nor always taken in the same sense.¹³⁸

This deficiency must be attributed to the fact that during the decades preceding the Council, the theology of the local Church was hardly treated in the Catholic theology. As a matter of fact, it only progressively emerged during the celebration of the council; even then, few were

¹³⁷ By this we mean not only the Churches presided over by the bishops but also the groupings of Churches such as embodied in the Oriental patriarchates.

¹³⁸ “De nomine adhibendo ad designandas Ecclesias particulares quaestio est. Occurrunt in documentis Concilii Vaticani II expressiones «ecclesia particularis», «ecclesia peculiaris», «ecclesia localis», quae in iisdem documentis non satis semper determinantur, nec in eodem sensu adhibentur,” P. FELICI, *Relatio super priore schemate Legis Fundamentalibus* (Vatican, 1971), p. 66.

among the Fathers who really understood the consequential importance of a theology of the local Church.

Of the eight occurrences of *Ecclesia localis* in the conciliar texts, four designate a *diocese*¹³⁹; one has reference to a *diocese* in its cultural context; on two occasions it stands for *grouping of dioceses*,¹⁴⁰ on another occasion it stands for a parish.¹⁴¹ The use of *Ecclesia particularis* is more numerous. Of the twenty-four occurrences, twelve times it refers to a diocese,¹⁴² twelve other times to a diocese in its cultural context. Of this latter use, on five occasions it designates Catholic Churches of non-Latin Rite.¹⁴³ From a statistical survey of conciliar documents, we can notice, without going into detail,¹⁴⁴ that while *Lumen Gentium* and *Christus Dominus* use preferably the term *particular Church* to refer to a diocese,¹⁴⁵ *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* uses the same term mostly in reference to the grouping of Churches as embodied in the Catholic Oriental Churches.¹⁴⁶ This particular preference of *OE* is visible in the early stages of the preparation of the Decree.¹⁴⁷ In what follows, we may make a brief survey of the post-conciliar theological literature to ascertain for ourselves that the terminological non-clarity is still not overcome.

¹³⁹ The community gathered around the bishop is a local reality (*congregatio localis*), cf. *LG* 26, 1. A similar terminology is found in *CD*, *AG* and *UR*: *CD*, 11; 22, 3; *AG*, 20, 1; 20, 7; *UR*, 14.

¹⁴⁰ We find the name *local Churches* being used to refer to grouping of particular Churches which are organically united, willed by divine providence and enjoying their proper discipline without prejudice to the unity of faith etc in *LG* 23, 4.

¹⁴¹ *PO* 6d.

¹⁴² *LG* refers four times to the community governed by a bishop by the term ‘particular Church’: *LG* nn. 23, 1: *particularibus Ecclesiis, Ecclesiis particularibus*; 23, 2: *particularibus Ecclesiis*; 27, 1: *Ecclesias particulares*. In the same way, *Christus Dominus*—while choosing to define the diocese not in geographical terms, but as a portion of the People of God—employed ‘particular Church,’ cf. *CD* 11.

¹⁴³ In *OE* 2 and 3, it “is not just an eparchy or diocese but a larger unit comprising usually several eparchies or diocese united by the same rite under one hierarch, who is normally a Patriarch,” G. NEDUNGATT, “*Ecclesia universalis, particularis, singularis*,” *Nuntia* 2 (1976), p. 76.

¹⁴⁴ A detailed statistical data is available in P. DELHAYE *et al.*, *Concilium Vaticanum II. Concordances, Index, listes de fréquences, tables comparatives*, (Louvain: Publications du CETEDOC, 1974).

¹⁴⁵ In order to designate a grouping of Churches, these documents use the expression, *coetus Ecclesiarum particularium* or *Ecclesiae locales* (*LG* 23).

¹⁴⁶ *OE*: 2, 5: particular Churches or Rites (*particulares Ecclesias seu ritus*); 2, 10: particular Church or rite (*particularis Ecclesiae seu ritus*); 3, 1: particular Churches (*particulares Ecclesiae*); 4, 2: particular Churches (*Ecclesiarum particularium*); 4, 5: particular Churches (*Ecclesiarum particularium*); 10, 3: particular Church or rite (*Ecclesiae particulari seu ritui*); 17, 7: particular Church (*ecclesiae particularis*); 19, 4: particular Churches (*Ecclesiis particularibus*); 19, 9: particular Churches (*Ecclesiarum particularium*).

¹⁴⁷ “Dans le schéma *De Ecclesiis orientalibus*, préparé en 1963 par la commission spéciale du concile Vatican II, les Eglises orientales catholiques n’étaient pas désignées par le mot *Ritus*, comme dans le CIC de 1917 et dans le *Motu proprio Cleri sanctitati* de 1957, mais par l’expression *Ecclesiae particulares*,” I. ZUZEK, “Les «*Ecclesiae sui iuris*» dans la révision du droit canonique,” p. 315. This preference of the Schema was contested in the floor of Council given its discordance with *LG* and *CD*. Finally, a compromise was struck when the Decree chose to speak *De ecclesiis particularibus seu Ritibus*. “Il n’y a donc pas de doute que la seule raison de ce renversement de la détermination mentionnée fut la nécessité de s’accorder davantage avec les schémas de *Lumen Gentium* et de *Christus Dominus*. Il est cependant significatif que, malgré tout, la commission relative n’ait pas renoncé à parler d’«*Ecclesiae particulares*» dans le sens d’Eglises totalement orientales dont quelques-unes sont, *de iure* au moins, non seulement *coetus dioecesium*, mais aussi *coetus metropolitium*,” *ibid.*, p. 317.

3.3. Theological Literature

During the years following the Council, many theologians tried to bring in some light and systematisation to the terminological confusion we have identified above. In general, the discussion centred on the term to be adopted to designate the infra-universal levels of the realisation of the Church, viz. episcopal Churches and their groupings.

The notion of ‘local Church’ is quite recent in the official Catholic Ecclesiology. As H.-J. Schulz¹⁴⁸ has pointed out, a systematic and differentiated use of the notion appears for the first time in a 1975 document of the Secretariat for the unity of Christians entitled, *Ecumenical collaboration in the regional, national and local level*. In the note 8 added to this text we read as follows:

Nous entendons l’expression «Église locale» dans un sens large. Elle est d’abord l’«Eglise particulière», au sens du texte qu’on vient de mentionner (*Christus Dominus*, n° 11). Elle est aussi réalisée dans les territoires où les évêques ont formé des conférences épiscopales ou des synodes. Elle est encore réalisée dans toutes les assemblées légitimes des fidèles sous la direction de leurs pasteurs en communion avec leur évêque, ce que nous appellerions «la paroisse». L’expression «Eglise locale» est plus compréhensive et plus compréhensible que «Eglise particulière».¹⁴⁹

Thus, according to this document, a ‘local Church’ can be a diocesan Church, a local congregation (a parish) or a regional Church.

H. de Lubac, who has greatly influenced the contemporary ecclesiology, distinguished between local Church and particular Church. According to him, the term *particular Church* stands for a diocese, i.e., a Church presided over by a bishop. Although it exists in a given place, it is not determined by topography or by a factor of human or natural order, but by the mystery of faith.¹⁵⁰ A particular Church is not the result of the dividing up of the universal Church; rather it constitutes the concentration of the Church exercising its proper faculty of realisation.¹⁵¹ Between the particular Church and the universal Church there is, as it were, a mutual interiority. *Local Church*, on the contrary, stands for a larger grouping of particular Churches established in a definite socio-cultural area. It is centrifugal in character and belongs to the socio-cultural order. While a particular Church belongs to the fundamental structure of

¹⁴⁸ Cf. H.-J. SCHULZ, “Eglise locale et Eglise universelle. Primauté, collégialité et synodalité,” *POC* 31 (1981), 3-22.

¹⁴⁹ *DC* 1975, p. 665.

¹⁵⁰ “Although it exists in a given place and gathers men driven by all sorts of human interests, the particular Church as such is therefore determined neither by topography nor by whatever other factor of natural or human order. It is determined by ‘the mystery of faith.’ We would say, in a word, that its criterion is of essentially theological order,” H. DE LUBAC, *Les Eglises particulière dans l’Eglise universelle*, p. 44.

¹⁵¹ Cf. K. RAHNER, “Quelques réflexions sur les principes constitutionnels de l’Eglise,” in: *L’Episcopat et l’Eglise universelle*, «Unam Sanctam – 39» (Paris: Cerf, 1962), pp. 549 and 555.

the universal Church, the local Church is merely “useful, or even indispensable *ad bonum Ecclesiae*.”¹⁵²

What is remarkable in this presentation of Lubac is that the particularity and locality are sharply distinguished from one another. The particular Church seems to float in the mid-air constituted solely of theological, supernatural and divine elements. The socio-cultural locality represents the natural and human variety within the catholicity, indispensable for the good of the Church. In other words, the dimensions of concrete locality do not enter into the definition of the particular Church. And a local Church is characterised by the tension with catholicity. When we closely examine the notional content that Lubac puts behind the terms, *particular Church* and *local Church*, it is not difficult to recognise that this content is not directly and logically drawn from the adjectives used. As G. Routhier has observed, what is crucial here is Lubac’s initial option to clearly distinguish between these terms.¹⁵³ Once this option is made, he gives to each of these expressions a meaning-content. Thus he conceives ‘particular Church’ as being based on ‘essentially theological’ criteria, whereas ‘local Church’ is seen as a phenomenon based on socio-cultural and geographical factors.¹⁵⁴ However, he admits that each Church, whether particular or local, has its own proper physiognomy composed of traits in which both the sacred and the profane intermingle. He is also careful not to downplay realities of socio-cultural or geographical order. He does not either consider that these realities to be dangerous to the Church.¹⁵⁵ Lubac is also aware that in the conciliar texts, one is often taken for the other, although there is a prevalence of particular Church to refer to a diocese.¹⁵⁶

The above distinction established by Lubac was widely made use of by theologians in recent times.¹⁵⁷ A similar stance is taken in the “Select Themes of Ecclesiology,” a 1984 document of *International Theological Commission* issued on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the closing of Vatican II.¹⁵⁸ In the wake of Lubac’s distinction, *ITC* also holds that ‘particular Church’ stands for a diocese, whereas local Church stands for a more or less

¹⁵² H. DE LUBAC, *Les Eglises particulière dans l’Eglise universelle*, p. 55. “Although ‘willed by the Providence,’ these more or less considerably varied groupings have in their very structure something contingent and the factors which led to their formation are, at least in part, of simply human order. [...] We would say that, to a considerable degree, their criterion is of socio-cultural order,” *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁵³ Cf. G. ROUTHIER, “‘Eglise locale’ ou ‘Eglise particulière’: querelle sémantique ou option théologique,” *StCan*, 25 (1991), pp. 288-89, *hereafter cited as* G. ROUTHIER, “Eglise locale ou Eglise particulière.”

¹⁵⁴ Cf. H. DE LUBAC, *Les Eglises particulière dans l’Eglise universelle*, p. 44-45.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. G. ROUTHIER, “Eglise locale ou Eglise particulière,” pp. 288-89.

¹⁵⁶ As we have seen above, this is particularly true of *LG* and *CD*.

¹⁵⁷ But they often seem to forget the arbitrary character of Lubac’s options.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. “Thèmes choisis d’ecclesiologie à l’occasion du vingtième anniversaire de la clôture du concile Vatican II (1984),” in: *Commission théologique internationale. Textes et Documents (1969-1985)* (Paris: Cerf, 1988), pp. 340-341 [= *International Theological Commission: Texts and Documents 1969-1985*, ed. Michael SHARKEY (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), pp. 267-304].

homogenous grouping of particular Churches. It can stand for a patriarchal Church or a grouping of Latin diocesan Churches. L. Örsy¹⁵⁹ prefers the expression *particular Church* to *local Church*, because it has the advantage of highlighting a natural cultural unity existing within a broader community. It can thus refer to the Christian community of a diocese, a region, a country, or several countries.

According to J. A. Komonchak, the term most often used to refer to the normative individual instance of the Church is ‘particular.’ Although this term is illuminating, “it says nothing about the individuating principles of a specific Church.”¹⁶⁰ In order to evoke these principles, the word ‘local’ is sometimes used. But it too lacks precision. For “the sociocultural, historical factors to which this adjective refers are commonly ascribed to other communities of Christians, and especially to the larger regional, national, or international groups of dioceses.”¹⁶¹ According to him, when we define Church in its local manifestation we must take into account not only the constituting principles, viz. the Holy Spirit, the Word, the Eucharist and the apostolic minister, but also “[t]he socio-cultural and historical elements that may enter into the definition of ‘local’.”¹⁶² In classical approach, these individuating elements, which contribute to the personality and physiognomy of a local Church, are considered as theologically insignificant. Over against this classical approach is put forward another approach, which insists on the necessity “to include the dimensions of local particularity and their relationships with one another within the one genuine catholic Church.”¹⁶³ Having examined the *pros* and *cons* of both terms, he chose the term ‘local Church’ “pour désigner les réalisations de l’Eglise dans les sphères culturelles particulières.”¹⁶⁴

We find a different position, akin to that of Lubac, in J. Ratzinger. While exposing his notion of local Church, he is keen to sound his concern that using the expression ‘local Church’ to designate the local realisations of the Church may lead to a purely sociological understanding of the Church.¹⁶⁵ According to him what is essential to the constitution of a

¹⁵⁹ L. ÖRSY, "A Theology of the Local Church and Religious Life," *RfR* 36 (1977), 666-682.

¹⁶⁰ J. A. KOMONCHAK, "The Local Church and the Church Catholic: The Contemporary Theological Problematic," 418 (*hereafter cited as* J. A. KOMONCHAK, "The Local Church and the Church Catholic"). He has in mind the Lubacian understanding of the term.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 419.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ J. A. KOMONCHAK, "La réalisation de l’Eglise en un lieu," p. 107.

¹⁶⁵ J. RATZINGER, *Les principes de la théologie catholique: esquisse et matériaux* (Paris: Tequi, 1982), p. 344.

local Church is not so much the place, i.e. the geographical element, as the theological element, namely the communion with the bishop.

Ce qui est constitutif de l'Eglise locale, [...] c'est moins le lieu, élément géographique, que la communion avec l'évêque – donc l'élément théologique. Au concile, l'Eglise locale fut définie, [...] par référence à l'évêque, non d'après le lieu pris comme unité géographique.¹⁶⁶

Here Ratzinger seems to concentrate himself on just one of the constitutive elements of the local Church, viz. the bishop—however important and essential it may be—by ignoring other elements like the Eucharist, the Scripture and the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁷ When these latter elements are ignored, the relationship of the Church to a place is imperceptible. In this regard, G. Routhier comments that even if one were to insist on bishop alone, it is not possible to sideline the relationship of the Church to a place. For a bishop is always a bishop *of a place*. There is no bishop who is not in relationship to a local community.¹⁶⁸ The essential bond of the bishop to a place was considered in the ancient Church as a criterion for knowing the catholicity of a Church.¹⁶⁹

H.-M. Legrand cannot agree with Ratzinger on this point. According to him, a particular Church must be understood first and foremost not in function of the episcopal ministry¹⁷⁰, but as a response to the Gospel heard in a given place.¹⁷¹ He then adds that reducing the theological criterion of a Church to the bishop without any reference to a concrete place will provoke imbalance in the theology of the local Church.¹⁷² According to him, when we speak of either *local* Church or *particular* Church, there is an underlying idea of space. Depending on what we understand by the term space—either a geographical space or as human-cultural space—the local Church will be conceived as a territorial reality which coincides with the

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ We will be discussing these constitutive elements later.

¹⁶⁸ The patristic tradition is unanimous on this point. We know only Ignatius of Antioch, Cyprian of Carthage, Polycarp of Smyrna, Clement of Rome, Augustine of Hippo, Irenaeus of Lyon, etc. However, this ideal is not sufficiently perceptible in the present situation when titular bishops, who are attached to fictive places, are numerous.

¹⁶⁹ In the ancient Church the principle 'one bishop per city' was generally accepted (cf. canon 8 of the Council of Nicaea). Besides, a bishop who was not attached to a See was not taken as constitutive of a local Church.

¹⁷⁰ "La théologie de l'Eglise particulière se situe donc provisoirement comme un chapitre de la théologie des rapports de l'Eglise et du monde, avant de se situer comme un chapitre de la théologie des ministères.[...] faire équivaloir automatiquement église épiscopale et église locale, c'est rester victime de l'ancienne hiérarchie," H.-M. LEGRAND, "Inverser Babel: mission de l'Eglise. La vocation des églises particulières au sein de la mission universelle," *Spiritus* 11 (1970), pp. 334-35, *hereafter cited as* H.-M. LEGRAND, "Inverser Babel."

¹⁷¹ H.-M. LEGRAND, "Synodes et conseils de l'après-concile. Quelques enjeux ecclésiologiques," *NRT*, 98 (1976), p. 197 (*hereafter cited as* H.-M. LEGRAND, "Synodes et conseils,"); ID., "Inverser Babel," p. 334: "...elle [L'Eglise particulière] est la réponse à un Evangile entendu dans un espace humain, dans sa propre langue."

¹⁷² It would be difficult to understand then the catholicity of the Church if it is not rooted in a concrete and specific milieu.

boundaries of a diocese or as a particular or particularised Church.¹⁷³ His term of predilection for designating diocese is *local Church* and he considers the expression *particular Church* as a ‘theological neologism.’ He uses this latter, in some of his writings, to designate the Church in as much as it is realised in a larger area than a diocese like for instance an Oriental patriarchate or an area coterminous with the oversight of an episcopal conference.¹⁷⁴

According to M. Vellanickal, a biblical scholar from the Syro-Malabar Church, ‘local Church’ is a generic term which can be applied to any realization of the Church at a given place (*locus*) such as in a house, town, region, state or a nation.¹⁷⁵ Thus, it can be applied both to ‘particular Churches’ and ‘individual Churches.’¹⁷⁶ ‘Individual Church,’ in his view, results from the verification of the apostolic Christ-experience in a people, taking a specific form of life, worship, liturgy, spirituality and ecclesial discipline which is integrated into their particular linguistic, radical, cultural and sociological conditions.¹⁷⁷ Particular Church, here, stands for the eparchial unit of the ‘Individual Church,’ under the leadership of a hierarchy of its own who is in communion with the hierarchy of the ‘Individual Church.’

If we now turn to another author—this time an Oriental canonist, G. Nedungatt—we can see a perspective based on a triadic concept of Church structure. It is true, according to him, that *locus* or geography has been a legitimate ground for the distinction of Churches ever since the New Testament times.¹⁷⁸ In Nedungatt’s view, along with the *locus*, other criteria can be also legitimately taken for the distinction of Churches. “Thus, though not exclusive of *locus* but coupled with it, nationality and ethnicity, and rite are the *de facto* criteria that are invoked to establish the identity of the Churches.”¹⁷⁹ As he put it, “[t]he term ‘local Church’ is commonly employed in contradistinction to the universal Church, and as such designates a geographically limited Church. It is, however, no more precise than the term ‘Church’ itself,

¹⁷³ For details of this distinction, see our discussion below.

¹⁷⁴ It may be noted that J.M.R Tillard also maintained a similar position. More recently, J. Famerée also follows suite: “Avec d’autres théologiens catholiques, je préfère nettement l’appellation “locale”, qui marque bien la territorialité de l’Eglise et évite l’idée de partie, facilement inférée de l’adjectif “particulière”, comme je préfère éviter l’expression “Eglise universelle” pour la même raison au profit de celle d’ “Eglise entière,” J. FAMEREE, “Ecclésiologie catholique,” p. 37.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. M. VELLANICKAL, “Biblico-Theological Foundations of Ecclesial Identity”, in Thomas VELLILAMTHADAM et al., (ed.) *Ecclesial Identity of the Thomas Christians* (OIRSI Publications: Kottayam, 1985) p.33.

¹⁷⁶ This term is found especially in the writings of Oriental ecclesiologists and canonists; it designates an *ecclesia sui iuris*.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. M. VELLANICKAL, “Biblico-Theological Foundations of Ecclesial Identity”, p. 34; *OE* no 2.

¹⁷⁸ The seven Churches mentioned in Apocalypse (Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea: 1, 22) are distinguished purely on geographical basis.

¹⁷⁹ G. NEDUNGATT, “Autonomy, Autocephaly and the Problem of Jurisdiction today,” *Kan* 5 (1981), pp. 19-20, *hereafter cited as* G. NEDUNGATT, “Autonomy, Autocephaly.”

in its extension.”¹⁸⁰ Literally, ‘local Church’ should designate the Church in a given place, but in most places today it no more represents a single Christian community under a single bishop or pastor. For one may use the term ‘local Church’ to designate the Church of (1) a country, (2) a vast geographical configuration, (3) a city / town, (4) a diocese (5) several overlapping dioceses of several particular Churches (e.g. Church of Kottayam, Beirut, Cairo).

It is in this situation that Nedungatt finds the significance of the term *particular Church*. In his view, “[i]t represents an intermediate ecclesial unit in a three-tier Church structure.”¹⁸¹ According to him, the terminological discrepancy found in conciliar texts in the use of this term was consciously and responsibly allowed for, for it was thought that just as the term ‘ecclesia’ itself is an analogous term (referring to several ecclesial realities), so also the term ‘particular Church’ could be used analogously; the context permitted to avoid ambiguity. But when it is used as a technical term (canonistics), it calls for a univocal sense; hence the difficulty around the term ‘particular Church’ in the juridical language. Hence, Nedungatt suggests the use of the following terminology: *Ecclesia universalis*, *ecclesia particularis* (the middle ecclesial reality between the universal Church and the eparchy / diocese), *ecclesia singularis*.¹⁸² Here Nedungatt takes help from the Greek philosophy, where Aristotle used two parallel pairs—*kathólou* (*universalis*)—*kathà méros* (*particularis*) and *kathólou* (*universalis*)—*kath' hékaston* (*singularis*). St Thomas, who followed closely the Philosopher, made use of the three categories: *universalis*, *particularis* and *singularis*. In Thomistic use, the terms *particularis* and *singularis* seems to be interchangeable “except that ‘*singularis*’ cannot be used collectively for more than one, whereas ‘*particularis*’ can designate a ‘few’.”¹⁸³ In the Scholastic tradition, especially in St Thomas, the term ‘*singularis*’—in relation to ‘*universalis*’—stands for

...individual beings or phenomena in which universal is objectively (*a parte rei*) realized. [...] it secures the truth that *ecclesia universalis* subsists really and objectively only in the *ecclesia singularis*. Again, according to the same Scholastic triad, *ecclesia particularis* should be situated schematically between the *ecclesia universalis* and *ecclesia singularis*, and represents in extension the intermediate ecclesial communion of *aliquae ecclesiae singlares*, or, as the Council puts it, *ecclesia ‘coetus organice coninctos’*.¹⁸⁴

Commenting on this distinction, I. Žužek says:

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁸² The author made this distinction as part of his contribution to the codification of the Oriental Code. Cf. ID, “*Ecclesia universalis, particularis, singularis*,” *Nuntia* 2 (1976), 75-87; ŽUŽEK, “Les «*Ecclesiae sui iuris*» dans la révision du droit canonique,” p. 321.

¹⁸³ G. NEDUNGATT, “*Ecclesia universalis, particularis, singularis*,” p. 81; cf. *Sum. theol.* I, q 86, art. 1 ad 2.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

Il n'est pas difficile d'entrevoir qu'à travers le terme d'*Ecclesia universalis*, dans la signification de l'Église catholique tout entière, et le terme d'*Ecclesia singularis*, désignant un diocèse particulier, s'insère naturellement le terme d'*Ecclesia particularis* pour exprimer une certaine unité juridique et en même temps le pluralisme des *Ecclesiae singulares* qui font partie d'une Église orientale déterminée.¹⁸⁵

We may, however, note that this terminology presupposes the triadic canonical structure of the Church.¹⁸⁶ But the conciliar documents as a whole follow the logic of a two-tier Church structure: "dioceses/eparchies in direct ecclesial communion with a single centre of unity and of universal jurisdiction, without passing through some intermediate structure, whether patriarchal, archiepiscopal or metropolitan."¹⁸⁷ Most of the post-conciliar theological literature also follows the same logic, which applies only to the situation of the Western Church in modern times. In the two-tier model (which consists uniquely of dioceses called 'particular Churches' and the universal Church) there is no place for an intermediate ecclesial structure, hence no place for the autocephalous or autonomous Churches of which the Oriental canonistics speaks. According to Nedungatt, this is a lacuna of contemporary Catholic Ecclesiology. As he formulated it,

...we need an ecclesiology that is both synchronically and diachronically pertinent to encompass the whole mystery of the Church in its historical unfolding; only such an ecclesiology can be truly catholic; only from it can we borrow satisfactory terminological tools for use in canonistics.¹⁸⁸

3.4. Canon Law

The Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law of the Latin Church, chaired by Cardinal Felici, was aware of the incoherence of the terminology of the conciliar text.¹⁸⁹ In order to forestall this, the 1983 *CIC* opted for the term 'particular Church,' in preference to 'local Church,' to designate a diocesan Church and institutions assimilated to it.¹⁹⁰ What is implied thereby is that the term 'particular Church' is generic and as such it cannot be fully identified with a diocese. It is interesting to note that while some¹⁹¹ point out the theological criterion, viz. the episcopate in defence of the expression 'particular Church,'

¹⁸⁵ I. ŽUZEK, "Les «Ecclesiae sui iuris» dans la révision du droit canonique," p. 321.

¹⁸⁶ "The decisive question is whether one is prepared to recognize a triadic canonical structure of the Church, that is to say, between a diocesan structure and a universal Church structure there is or is not to be a middle structure, and on what grounds. This middle structure has the sanction of the very first ecumenical councils, and the Second Vatican Council applies to it the epithet 'particular Church' in its decree on the Catholic Oriental Churches [No. 2]. It is to this middle structure that the canonical status of an autonomous Church or an autocephalous Church would belong in Oriental canonistics," G. NEDUNGATT, "Autonomy, Autocephaly," p. 22.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ See *supra* the words Cardinal Felici, cited in connection with the terminological problem of Vatican II.

¹⁹⁰ According to canon 368, "the following are equivalent to a diocese: a territorial prelature, a territorial abbacy, a vicariate apostolic, a prefecture apostolic and a permanently established apostolic administration."

¹⁹¹ Cf. H. de Lubac and Ratzinger.

for *CIC* 368, rather than this theological criterion, it is the localisation or the territorial circumscription which is crucial in the making of a particular Church.¹⁹² For some of these forms of ‘particular Church’ need not necessarily have a bishop at its head (e.g., a territorial abbacy). In this context, argues G. Routhier,

It becomes difficult, then, to draw the argument from the Code to say that the particular Church is determined by the theological criteria while the local Church is determined only by the geography. An attentive reading of the Code says just the contrary: the theological criteria do not necessarily determine the particular Churches, while the territory is a factor verifiable in every case.¹⁹³

It has been opined that the systematic avoidance of the term *Universal Church* by the 1983 *CIC* (by the use of ‘Church’ without any attribute, ‘Church of Christ,’ ‘People of God,’ etc.) permits the use of the term *particular Church* without its being poised in opposition to the former.¹⁹⁴ G. Routhier thinks, evidently inspired by Legrand, that such an opposition—whether or not one wants it—cannot be avoided in the Romanic languages. This leads to grave theological consequences.¹⁹⁵ As long as a particular Church is conceived in opposition to the universal Church, the local Church can find its universality only outside itself. Part of the difficulty comes from a poor understanding of the word ‘universal’ in vernacular languages, for in them the term is used to render two terms in Latin: *ecclesia universa* and *ecclesia universalis*. But theological literature is written not in Latin but in the vernacular. Hence the above confusion can create serious theological ambiguities. Perhaps a return to the plural form such as ‘Churches,’ ‘all the Churches’ to translate *Ecclesia universa* and expressions like ‘the Church,’ ‘the Church of Christ,’ in an absolute sense, to render *Ecclesia universalis* is called for.

¹⁹² “Le point commun que partagent en fait ces entités est d’être territorialement circonscrites et non d’avoir un évêque a leur tête, puisque certaines peuvent avoir comme pasteur un prélat non évêque,” L. VILLEMEN, “Le diocèse est-il une Église locale ou une Église particulière? Quel est l’enjeu de ce vocabulaire?” p. 79.

¹⁹³ G. ROUTHIER, “Eglise locale ou Eglise particulière,” p. 294, n. 46.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. R. PAGE, *Les Eglise particulières*, t. 1 (Montréal: Ed. Pauline, 1985), pp. 15-17.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. H.-M. LEGRAND, “L’Eglise se réalise en un lieu,” pp. 157-159. Legrand has repeatedly pointed out that a systematic use of the term ‘particular Church’ to designate an episcopal Church may lead to “une compréhension théologiquement inadéquate de l’articulation entre le diocèse et l’Eglise entière, de surcroît exclue par Vatican II puisqu’il l’a désigné comme portion de l’Eglise, refusant qu’il en soit une partie, n’ayant pas en elle-même l’essence du tout. Dès lors le choix de la racine *pars* pour le designer n’est pas innocent surtout que dans les langues latines particulier est lexicographiquement l’antonyme d’universel. Ce dernier terme connote également une extension géographique — dont la portée théologique est modeste — et surtout l’uniformité et l’abstraction aux quelles on accède en se dépouillant de ses particularités, alors que l’unité de l’Eglise est d’emblée pluriforme. La même logique fera concevoir le diocèse, ainsi désigné, comme une partie subordonnée à un tout qui seul aurait la plénitude, et l’on court ainsi le risque de renforcer tant d’images de l’Eglise catholique évoquant une multinationale aux multiples succursales,” H.-M. LEGRAND, “Eglises locales, Eglises régionales et Eglise entière,” in: M. DENEKEN (ed.), *L’Eglise à venir. Mélanges offerts à Joseph Hoffmann* (Paris: Cerf, 1999), p. 292, hereafter cited as H.-M. LEGRAND, “Eglises locales, Eglises régionales....”

The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches,¹⁹⁶ by opting to use a different terminology, contributed much to relativise the quick canonization of the terminology of 1983 *CIC*. *CCEO* systematically avoids the term ‘particular Church’ (except in 177 § 1). Instead, it speaks of Church *sui iuris*, *ritual Churches* (27-41), *patriarchal* (55-150), *archiepiscopal* (151-154), *metropolitan* (155-176) *Churches* and *eparchies* when it wants to designate dioceses (177-310), and *exarchates* (311-321). As we have alluded earlier, behind this systematic avoidance of the term *particular Church* to designate “community of the Christian faithful, which is joined together by a hierarchy according to the norm of law,”¹⁹⁷ we can recognise traces of a compromise and a will not to enter into conflict with the 1983 *CIC*.¹⁹⁸ Had *CCEO* chosen to follow the tradition of *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, it would have used *particular Church* to designate the ecclesial reality which it calls by *Ecclesia sui iuris*.¹⁹⁹ Today this term can stand for the following: a) *Ecclesiae patriarchales*, b) *Ecclesiae archiepiscopales maiores*, c) *Ecclesiae metropolitanae sui iuris*, d) *Ceterae Ecclesiae sui iuris*.

In the context of this differing of positions taken by the two canonical legislations, we find ourselves at the point where we started from, i.e. a terminological confusion of the conciliar documents. To hold that the 1983 *CIC* has put an end to the terminological debate is illusory. In a way, the canonical language is not obligatory for theology. Canons are relative to action, while theological/philosophical concepts speak of realities. Hence one can agree with Legrand who thinks that it is “nécessaire de conserver en théologie le vocabulaire traditionnel de l’Eglise diocésaine ou même locale plutôt que d’adopter l’option discutable du Code. Elle risque d’affaiblir la perception de la catholicité ontologique de l’Eglise diocésaine et de renforcer l’image inadéquate d’une «Eglise universelle antérieure ou supposée existante en elle-même, en dehors de toutes les Eglises locales, qui ne saurait être qu’un être de raison».”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Hereafter referred to as *CCEO*.

¹⁹⁷ *CCEO*, 27.

¹⁹⁸ As I. Žužek remarks, “la Commission pour la révision du Code de Droit canonique oriental, on était encore convaincu que les églises orientales devaient s’appeler *Ecclesiae particulares*, tandis que, pour les diocèses, on voulait trouver une autre expression, tout en les appelant, cela s’entend, *Ecclesiae*,” I. ŽUŽEK, “Les «*Ecclesiae sui iuris*» dans la révision du droit canonique,” p. 321.

¹⁹⁹ *CCEO*, 27. Oriental canonists make a distinction between Rite and *Ecclesia sui iuris*. Rite stands for the *patrimonium liturgicum, discip/inare, spirituale et theologicum* (OE 3) of a *Ecclesia sui iuris*, whereas this latter expression stands for “A community of the Christian faithful, which is joined together by a hierarchy according to the norm of law and which is expressly or tacitly recognized as *sui iuris* by the supreme authority of the Church,” *ibid.* Cf. I. ŽUŽEK, “Les «*Ecclesiae sui iuris*» dans la révision du droit canonique,” p. 320.

²⁰⁰ H.-M. LEGRAND, “Eglises locales, Eglises régionales...,” p. 292. Cf. H. DE LUBAC, *Les Eglises particulière dans l’Eglise universelle*, p. 54

3.5. Concluding Remarks

Concluding this discussion, we take note of two points. First, it must be borne in mind that the terminological debate which preoccupies us today was unknown to the New Testament.²⁰¹ Without using any of the lately coined expressions such as *universal Church*, *particular Church*, *local Church*, etc., *Acts* employs simply the term *Church* in plural or singular, often to refer to a precise local assembly.²⁰² Paul, as to him, used the term *Church* to refer to an assembly in a house,²⁰³ to community in a city,²⁰⁴ or in a region.²⁰⁵ The primitive Church was stranger also to various appellations of the Church currently used in ecclesiological literature. Even in later literature, especially of the epoch in which ecclesiology as a separate theological discipline was born, we may hardly find any data that can help us make a terminological option. The reason is that at that time—as far as the Western Catholic Church is concerned—the Church was perceived in universalistic terms with little attention given to the theological value of the local realisations of the Church. As a matter of fact, it is in conjunction with the rediscovery of the local Church that the theologians began to pay attention to the terminological question. Second, our way of defining various instances of the realisations of the Church is dependent on our vision of the institutional structure of the Church. According to a predominant opinion—especially in the West—the ecclesiastical communion is realised at two institutional levels: at the universal level around the pope and at the local level around the bishop. According to another opinion—dear to the Oriental tradition—the ecclesiastical communion is realised at three institutional levels: at the universal level around the pope, at the intermediary level around the patriarch and the local level around the bishop. Depending on what model of Church structure we subscribe to, the content of our terminology will also change.

Given the persisting confusion in terminology, we are obliged to follow the option taken by various theologians under discussion in this chapter. Thus, for instance, if ‘particular Church’—for Legrand, Nedungatt and *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*—stands for a supra diocesan reality,²⁰⁶ for H. de Lubac and J. A. Komonchak,²⁰⁷ the same reality is designated by the term

²⁰¹ Cf. R. E. BROWN, “New Testament Background for the Concept of Local Church,” *CTSA Proc* 36 (1982), 1-14; ID., *L’Eglise héritée des apôtres* (Paris: Cerf, 1987); ID., “The New Testament Background for the Emerging Doctrine of Local Church,” in: *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 114-135.

²⁰² *Acts* 11: 26; 12: 1; 14: 27; 15: 4; 15: 22.

²⁰³ *Rom* 16: 15; *1Cor* 16: 19; *Col* 4: 16; *Philmn* 2

²⁰⁴ *Rom* 16: 1; *1Cor* 1: 2; *2Cor* 1: 1; *Col* 4: 16, etc.

²⁰⁵ *1Cor* 16: 1.19.

²⁰⁶ “...toutes ces traductions de l’Evangile dans l’histoire et les cultures du passé, ou de l’avenir, ont sans cesse à se mesurer à la catholicité, peuvent être appelées particulières, sans équivoque et judicieusement.” H.-M. LEGRAND, “Eglises locales, Eglises régionales...,” p. 293.

‘local Church.’ There are others who use these two terms indistinctly. Father Vellanickal’s option to use the term ‘individual Church’ to designate Catholic Oriental Churches is also noteworthy. In general, we have chosen to use both ‘local Church’ and ‘particular Church’ in a generic sense, that is to say, either can be used to refer to both a diocesan Church and a grouping of diocesan Churches. The context will make it clear in which sense it is used. Sometimes, we make use of ‘local/particular Church’ to signify that which is stated as applicable at once to a diocesan Church (eparchy) and a grouping of Churches, as represented by an Episcopal conference or an *Ecclesia sui iuris*.

4. Realisation of the Church of God in a Place

4.1. Introduction

If our discussion on terminology informed us of the absence of a clearly articulated theology of the local Church in the conciliar texts, in judging this situation we must take into account the predominant Catholic ecclesiological vision of the time, which we have already sketched in the introduction to this study.²⁰⁸ It is clear that, in this context, not much place would be left to “Eglises locales qui seraient partenaires dans la construction de l’Eglise entière, et moins encore pour une vision de l’Eglise comme communion d’Eglises locales.”²⁰⁹ It is in this background that we can recognise the contribution of Vatican II towards a theology of local Churches. Rather than inventing a brand new theology of local Churches, the Council, in fact, concluded a process of the re-discovery of the ancient vision of the Church.²¹⁰ In what follows, we highlight the major contributions of Vatican II towards a theology of Local Churches.

4.2. Contributions of Vatican II towards a Theology of Local Churches

Vatican II has not developed a systematic theology of Local Churches. However, we can find certain sporadic elements in various conciliar texts,²¹¹ which help us construct a conciliar theology of the local Churches. In general, we can say that the council attempted a re-instatement of the ancient ecclesiological tradition, which conceived the universal Church as a communion of particular Churches.

²⁰⁷ See our discussion *supra*.

²⁰⁸ See our summary under the heading “A Note on the Development of Theology of Local Church.”

²⁰⁹ ID, “L’Eglise se réalise en un lieu,” p. 149-150.

²¹⁰ Y. CONGAR, “Autonomie et pouvoir central,” p. 135.

²¹¹ See particularly in *SC, LG, AG, UR, CD*.

4.2.1. The Local Church as the realization of the Church of God

K. Rahner used to say that the greatest novelty brought about by Vatican II is the idea of the local Church as the realisation of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.²¹² E. Lanne characterised it as a ‘Copernican Revolution.’²¹³ According to the perspective of Vatican II, the universal Church “ne saurait être une réalité immédiate, à moins d’être considérée comme communion des Eglises locales, car déjà l’Eglise locale est une présence et une manifestation plénière de l’Eglise du Christ....”²¹⁴ This is evident in the definition of a diocese as found in *CD* 11.²¹⁵ A diocesan Church is no more considered as a *part* but as a *portion* of the Church.²¹⁶ However, this re-valorisation of the local Church need not be seen as a return to an archaic stage of Church organisation.

4.2.2. The relation of the Local Churches to their Human Spaces is Essential to their Catholicity

In the pre-Vatican II Catholic Ecclesiology, catholicity was identified with universality. According to the Council,²¹⁷ being spread out everywhere is not the essential point of catholicity. Instead, catholicity signifies essentially the plenitude of faith, respect of the gifts of the Spirit in their variety, communion with other Churches, believing the integration of human cultures.²¹⁸ As *Ad Gentes* 22 clearly spells it out, “Christian life will be accommodated to the genius and the dispositions of each culture. Particular traditions, together with the peculiar patrimony of each family of nations, illumined by the light of the Gospel, can then be taken up into Catholic unity.”

Dans cette perspective, la catholicité de l’Eglise est un appel à la reprise croyante des légitimes particularités humaines, si bien que les Eglises locales ne seront pleinement catholiques qu’au terme d’un processus d’inculturation critique leur demandant de discerner, au sein des culture et des sociétés, ce qu’il convient de favoriser, de purifier, d’intégrer.²¹⁹

²¹² K. RAHNER, “Das neue Bild der Kirche,” in: *Schriften zur Theologie*, VIII, (Einsiedeln, 1967) p. 333 ff.

²¹³ “On a dit que ce texte était révolutionnaire; qu’il avait opéré une révolution copernicienne, puisque désormais ce n’est plus l’Eglise locale qui gravite autour de l’Eglise universelle, mais l’Eglise unique de Dieu en Jésus-Christ qui se trouve présente dans chaque célébration de l’Eglise locale par l’action continue de l’Esprit Saint,” E. LANNE, “L’Eglise locale et l’Eglise universelle,” p. 490.

²¹⁴ H.-M. LEGRAND, “L’Eglise se réalise en un lieu,” p. 151-152. “ Il [le concile] affirme, en premier lieu, que l’Eglise universelle se réalise dans et à travers la diversité des Eglises locales,” J. A. KOMONCHAK, “La réalisation de l’Eglise en un lieu,” p. 108.

²¹⁵ A detailed discussion on this text will be taken when we discuss the constitutive principles of the Church.

²¹⁶ “Ainsi l’Eglise locale-diocésaine sera une présence et une manifestation plénière de l’Eglise de Dieu, aux conditions que le texte énumère.... on cesse de voir les Eglises locales comme des réalisations partielles, et subordonnées, de l’Eglise entière,” H.-M. LEGRAND, “La Réalisation de l’Eglise en un lieu”, p. 152.

²¹⁷ Cf. *AG* 4 and 15.

²¹⁸ Cf. H.-M. LEGRAND, “La Réalisation de l’Eglise en un lieu”, p. 153.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Local/particular Churches thus incarnated in their soil and “adorned with their own traditions, will have their own place in the ecclesiastical communion.”²²⁰ They enrich the catholicity of the entire communion.²²¹

4.2.3. Institutions permitting the re-vivification of the Local Churches

According to Legrand, although Vatican II did not succeed in providing a mature theology of the local Church, its decision to constitute or restore synodal institutions has made considerable contribution to the restoration, renewal and re-vivification of the local Churches. These institutions include episcopal conferences,²²² presbyteral Council,²²³ pastoral council,²²⁴ and other forms of councils²²⁵ within each diocese. The council also insisted on the reinvigoration of diocesan synods, provincial/plenary councils,²²⁶ and Synod of Bishops to advise the pope.²²⁷

4.3. Theological Significance of Locality

4.3.1. Place as Geographical and Human Space

When we talk about *local* Church, we cannot ignore the underlying reference to *space*. This space can be either geographical or human space. Our choice between these two will depend on our ecclesiological presuppositions. Thus, when we talk about a *local Church*, if we have in mind a territory (i.e. a geographical space), then the space will coincide with the territory of a diocese. Legitimate as it may be, the accent laid exclusively on territoriality tends to reduce the local Church to a ‘part’ of the universal Church, which can eclipse the diversity and particularity of the people of God in that place.²²⁸ Following the same logic, the bishop can easily be taken for a representative of the pope in one of the departments of the universal Church. If, on the contrary, we consider *local Church* as referring to a human or cultural space, it may not always coincide with the frontiers of a diocese: it may refer either to an area larger than a diocese or, sometimes, to a smaller area within a diocese. The frontiers of such human spaces are determined by a variety of criteria like nationality, ethnicity,

²²⁰ AG 22.

²²¹ Cf. LG 13.

²²² CD 36-38

²²³ PO 7.

²²⁴ CD 27.

²²⁵ AA 26.

²²⁶ CD 36.

²²⁷ CD 5.

²²⁸ “...ce redécoupage systématique des diocèses laisse s’accréditer une conception de l’Eglise locale comme partie de l’Eglise universelle, à la manière dont les départements constituent des circonscriptions administratives des états,” H.–M. LEGRAND, “Inverser Babel,” p. 335.

language, ideology, etc.²²⁹ An exclusive adoption of this perspective is also not without risk because identifying the Church according to the national or cultural criteria, “tout en étant une requête de catholicité, [...] risque d'affaiblir très sérieusement cette même catholicité de l'Eglise, comme en témoigne la carte des schismes successifs, qui ont déchiré l'unité de l'Eglise chrétienne: elle coïncide constamment et presque parfaitement avec celle des grandes aires culturelles.”²³⁰

Hence, Legrand proposes to join these two elements. In this regard, he considers the teaching of *Ad Gentes* as pertinent. When it enumerates the doctrinal principle governing the Mission, it takes into account the patristic interpretation of the Pentecost (*type*) as a reversal of Babel (*antitype*).²³¹ The presence of nations, enumerated in the *Acts* 2: 9-10 stands for—as the exegetes generally admit—all the peoples of the inhabited world. This led to the affirmation that the Church was born *universal*. We may have to give particular attention to the Lucan allusion to the fact that the Apostles spoke in a particular language. This allusion is, from an ecclesiological point of view, very crucial. It means,

...l'universalité de l'Eglise est toujours une universalité concrète qui n'existe qu'au travers de sa particularité. L'Eglise universelle, parce qu'elle est universelle, sera toujours particulière et l'économie de l'Esprit assumera toutes les langues et toutes les cultures, sans s'accommoder de la supériorité de l'une d'elles.²³²

The goal of the mission of the Church is to redo whatever Babel has undone, i.e. to assume all *tongues* (which must be taken in its broad sense to mean culture, national values, religious experiences, etc.). Until the *Parousia*, the Church should strive incessantly to speak all tongues.²³³ The rapid diversification of the ancient Christianity was prompted by this concern.

Reprises par le dynamisme de la Pentecôte, des nombreuses cultures ont ainsi donné naissance à autant d'Eglises particulières: les Eglises syriaque, grecque, latine, copte, arménienne, éthiopienne, indienne (Kerala). Elles n'ont pas copié servilement un modèle uniforme d'Eglise qui aurait existé ailleurs ou autrefois, mais elles se sont donné chacune une liturgie dans leur langue, une musique, une hymnographie, une théologie et un droit en profonde symbiose avec leur monde. Une Eglise particulière, nous le voyons plus

²²⁹ Legrand prefers to give this ecclesial reality the denomination of *particular Church*. “Ici l'Eglise ne saurait réellement exister si elle n'est particulière, et cette particularité ne consiste pas à être une partie de l'Eglise mais à assumer en celle-ci un espace humain,” *Ibid.*, p. 327.

²³⁰ ID, “La Réalisation de l'Eglise en un lieu”, p. 157. Cf. ID, “Inverser Babel,” p. 327.

²³¹ “...the day of Pentecost [...] prefigured] union of all peoples in the catholicity of the faith by means of the Church of the New Covenant, a Church which speaks all tongues, understands and accepts all tongues in her love, and so supersedes the divisiveness of Babel,” *AG* 4.

²³² H.-M. LEGRAND, “Inverser Babel,” p. 329.

²³³ We may note that this theology of tongues is situated in three focal moments of salvation history: at the beginning of history (Babel), the fullness of time (Pentecost) and at the recapitulation of everything (Parousia, Rev 7: 9). “Parler toutes les langues signifie théologiquement pour l'Eglise que l'Esprit lui donne une unité qui assume les différences sans les nier, ainsi qu'une universalité toujours concrète, inséparable de la particularité,” ID, “Synodes et conseils,” p. 197.

clairement maintenant [...] est fondamentalement la réponse à un Evangile entendu dans un espace humain.²³⁴

That is to say, a Church—in order to be truly a *catholic* Church in a place—must allow legitimate differences in the expression of faith and Christian life. Otherwise, it cannot be said to be faithful to the Spirit of the Pentecost who assumes differences in unity.²³⁵

4.3.2. Theological Significance of the Territoriality of the Local Church²³⁶

Although it is not the territory which constitutes the particularity of a Church, it is still a fact that, from the early times onwards, the Church has been organised in territorial dioceses. Also, the earliest records on the Church structure are unanimous in affirming the linkage between the unicity of the bishops and the territoriality of the diocese.²³⁷ Hence, according to Legrand, we must ask whether or not there was a theological reason behind this practice.

Behind the traditional insistence on the territorial constitution of the local Church coupled with the unicity of the bishop who heads, we can perceive a concern to maintain the catholicity of the local Church. We must first of all note that the forces of Babel were not magically done away with on the day of Pentecost. What the Pentecost created was a dynamism to combat these forces ceaselessly. This combat remains ever the mission of the Church. The dynamism of the Pentecost, while promoting diversity, demands the constitution of a people drawn from every language and tribe. If Churches were organized on the basis of any other principle than territoriality, the local Church would not have been able to unite in communion the diversity (linguistic, ethnic, national, etc) found in a given place.²³⁸

This option for the territorial principle is not simply an option for good order [...nor] does it correspond only to mimicking of the administrative structures of the Empire [...]. Its real meaning is ecclesiological. It was to

²³⁴ *Ibid.* Cf. ID, “Inverser Babel,” p. 331. On this point J. J. von Allmen also maintains similar opinion: “Les inévitables et bonnes adaptations locales à telle culture, à tel milieu, l’histoire vécue par l’Eglise locale, les combats qu’elle a dû mener pour garder pures sa foi et sa vie, les persécutions qu’elle a pu endurer, les réflexions doctrinales qu’elle a pu ou qu’elle a dû pousser dans telle direction particulière, les schémas de pensée de ceux qui la composent, les conflits internes de personnes qu’elle n’a pas pu éviter, etc., ont façonné sa «personnalité» ecclésiale, de sorte que l’Eglise de Dieu telle qu’elle est à Corinthe n’est pas immédiatement congruente, superposable à l’Eglise des Thessaloniciens qui est en Dieu le Père et en Jésus-Christ notre Seigneur,” J. J. VON ALLMEN, “L’Eglise locale parmi les autres églises locales,” *Irén.* 43 (1970), p. 517.

²³⁵ Cf. H.-M. LEGRAND, “La Réalisation de l’Eglise en un lieu”, p. 157.

²³⁶ Views presented here are those of the Western Catholic theologians. A different view, that of the Catholic Oriental theologians, will be taken up, when we discuss the place of Catholic Oriental Churches within the Catholic communion of Churches.

²³⁷ Canon 8, Nicaea. Pre-Chalcedonian Churches remain faithful to this rule even today. The Orthodoxy deviates from this regulation only in 1920.

²³⁸ “Elle prendrait ainsi le contre-pied de sa définition qui signifie «convocation». L’Eglise du lieu succomberait au défi de Babel si elle se contentait de reproduire en son sein, en les sacralsant, les divisions humaines, d’ordre culturel, social et politique, alors que sa nature est de les affronter selon l’Evangile qui rassemble un peuple de toutes tribus, langues et nations,” H.-M. LEGRAND, “La Réalisation de l’Eglise en un lieu”, p. 173.

assure that the Eucharistic synaxis would be coextensive with the local Church. Nothing must get in its way....²³⁹

This is because the Eucharistic synaxis is understood as an example of the eschatological calling of the Church to gather into unity the dispersed children of God. If, as Legrand puts it, “l’église particulière est la manifestation concrète, l’épiphanie de l’Eglise universelle en un lieu donné,”²⁴⁰ it must be fully catholic. To be catholic, the Church must transcend all forms of cultural and social division, even natural ones such as age and race.²⁴¹ It is fullness which must be, *de facto*, translated. This is possible only when local Churches are organised according to the territorial principle, which alone can root out exclusivism based on various criteria like language, tribe, colour, etc.

4.3.3. Concluding Remarks

The purpose of the above discussion was to make clear how *locality* is to be understood in an ecclesiological discourse. When we speak of a Church as *local*, it conveys the idea that the Church in question is or should be incarnated not only in the geographical space in which its faithful live but also in the human space (which stands for culture, patrimony, value system, religious and spiritual tradition, social customs, etc. of a given region and people) to which they belong. We can easily notice here the closeness between the views of Tillard and Legrand. As we may recall, for Tillard, “le local—avec ce qu’il porte de culturel, de « contextuel », de géographique, de religieux, d’historique—appartient au matériau où s’incarne en sa vérité l’*Ekklesia tou Theou*.”²⁴² Both the Dominican theologians give a particular significance to territoriality as such: according to them it is at the service of the catholicity of the Church. Its purpose is to make the eucharistic synaxis co-extensive with the local Church. Here, these Catholic theologians are quite close to the position of Afanasiev and other Orthodox theologians we have seen. In their view, territorial organization of the Church can be useful in overcoming the divisions—based on nation, culture, language, etc.—within the area of a local Church. In that way, it helps the Church to continue the dynamism of the Pentecost which consists in redoing whatever was undone by Babel.

4.4. Constitutive Elements of the Local Church

In light of what we have seen so far, we can better appreciate the definition of the diocesan local Church given in *Christus Dominus* 11:

²³⁹ H.-M. LEGRAND, “‘One Bishop Per City’ ...,” pp. 374-375.

²⁴⁰ ID, “Inverser Babel,” pp. 336-337.

²⁴¹ ID, “‘One Bishop Per City’ ...,” p. 375.

²⁴² J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d’Eglises*, p. 30.

A diocese is a portion of the people of God (*Populi Dei portio*) which is entrusted to a bishop to be shepherded by him with the cooperation of his clergy (*presbyterii*). Thus by adhering to its pastor and gathered together by him through the Gospel and the Eucharist in the Holy Spirit, it constitutes a particular Church (*Ecclesiam particularem constituat*) in which the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative (*vere inest et operatur*).²⁴³

This definition enumerates the constitutive elements of a diocesan local Church, viz. the Gospel, the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit and the bishop. All of these structural elements are not to be placed in the same level. The Church is gathered by the Spirit; he is the one who ‘builds up’ the Church through the Gospel and sacraments of initiation (of which the Eucharist constitutes the summit). The role of the pastor here is that of a servant: he is at the service of the other constitutive elements.

4.4.1. Role of Holy Spirit in the Building up of the Local Church

Compared to the traditional Catholic ecclesiology, Vatican II was more attentive to the role of the Spirit in the building up of the Church.²⁴⁴ According to Y. Congar, the Council considers the Spirit as the power of interiorisation of persons so that, in the diversity of their gifts, charisms and vocations, each one could be in communion with the others. That which is true of the persons must be true also of peoples and Churches, although this latter aspect is not sufficiently developed in the conciliar texts.²⁴⁵ When we give a constitutive role to the Spirit in the edification of the Church, it will definitely affect our vision of the Church. For then it is possible to speak of the Church as ‘We’ (i.e. all Christians), each of whom are called to build up the Church thanks to their particular charisms. In fact, the various synodal institutions developed in the course of history are institutional translations of this ‘We’ of the Christian faithful as a whole. This allows us to perceive that since the same Spirit is given to each of the local Churches, their life in communion must be regulated by a mutual recognition.

This pneumatological vision is, from an ecumenical point of view, highly rewarding. Thus, *LG* 15, having enumerated a number of elements which are common in both the Catholic Church and the other Churches adds that “we can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them too He gives His gifts and graces whereby He is operative among them with His sanctifying power.” According to Congar, this union in the

²⁴³ This definition is clearly inspired by *LG* 26 which says that “in their locality these are the new People called by God, in the Holy Spirit (...). In them the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated (...). In these communities, though frequently small and poor, or living in the Diaspora, Christ is present, and in virtue of His power the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is constituted.”

²⁴⁴ Thus, presenting the Trinitarian vision of the unity of the Church, *LG* 4 says, “the Church has been seen as a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

²⁴⁵ Y. M.-J. CONGAR, “Les implications christologiques et pneumatologiques,” p. 125.

Spirit is a union in the ‘*res*’ (possessed now as preliminary deposit). The difficulty consists in how to understand the ‘*sacramentum*’ (the confession faith, the Eucharist, the sacrament of Orders, the Episcopate, the Petrine Primacy, etc). The ecumenically pertinent question in this regard is: Does the Holy Spirit bestow all the ecclesial effects where the ecclesial sacrament is imperfect? Only a Pneumatological ecclesiology of the local Churches will enable us to answer this question, giving due consideration for the ecclesiality of other Churches.

4.4.2. The Gospel and the Articulation of the Local Church

The Church, which is born of the Gospel, has the mission to take it to the frontiers of the world. The Gospel is basically a word calling for conversion: proclamation of the Gospel is the inauguration of the trail and reconciliation of the world. It got started with the Pentecost. Through its proclamation, “l’Eglise doit refaire sans cesse ce que Babel ne cesse de défaire.” As long as the powers of Babel are present in our history, the actuality of the Gospel cannot be over emphasized. “L’Evangile ne saurait être vivant dans une Eglise sans que celle-ci exerce «le ministère de la réconciliation» (2 Co 5, 17-20).”²⁴⁶ The Gospel also calls for the communion with God and with brethren in a given place: “Message et pratique, l’Evangile est aussi une réalité de grâce par laquelle Dieu instaure des rapports nouveaux entre lui et nous, entre nous et des frères chrétiens.”²⁴⁷

4.4.3. The Eucharistic Understanding of the Local Church and Communal Aspects of the Church

The most ancient narrative we have of the eucharistic celebration²⁴⁸ clearly shows the causal dependency and reciprocal implication between the eucharistic Body of Christ and his ecclesial Body, the Church.²⁴⁹ The realisation of the Eucharist calls for a place. It is always a local event. “Jamais elle [Church] ne mérite mieux son nom que lorsque, dans un lieu donné, le Peuple de Dieu se presse autour de son Pasteur pour la célébration eucharistique.”²⁵⁰ It is clearly explained by K. Rahner:

L’Eucharistie ne peut être célébrée que par une communauté rassemblée dans le même lieu. En d’autres termes, l’Eglise est sans doute une institution sociale, elle est permanente, elle est destinée à tous les hommes, mais de par son être le plus intime, elle doit se réaliser dans un lieu déterminé. Comme événement

²⁴⁶ H.-M. LEGRAND, “La Réalisation de l’Eglise en un lieu,” p. 163.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

²⁴⁸ 1 *Cor* 10: 16-17.

²⁴⁹ “ Parce que la célébration eucharistique unit sacramentalement les chrétiens à la Pâque du Christ; parce qu’elle est, par excellence, la confession, par les baptisés, du mystère de la foi; parce qu’elle unifie, en un lieu, les croyants en leur diversité (*hoi polloi*) par la communion a un seul pain et a un seul calice, pour en faire une koinônia, a tous ces titres, la communion eucharistique est la source décisive du corps ecclésial.” H.-M. LEGRAND, “La Réalisation de l’Eglise en un lieu,” p. 165.

²⁵⁰ H. DE LUBAC, *Méditation sur l’Eglise*, p. 127.

local, l'Eucharistie n'est pas seulement célébrée dans l'Eglise: au sens le plus profond l'Eglise ne devient pleinement événement que dans la célébration locale de l'Eucharistie.²⁵¹

He then continues,

Il n'est pas seulement vrai de dire: l'Eucharistie existe parce qu'il y a l'Eglise, mais aussi, si on interprète exactement, il y a Eglise parce qu'il y a Eucharistie. L'Eglise, même universelle, n'existe et ne se maintient que parce qu'elle s'accomplit toujours à nouveau dans l'Événement unique et total, l'Eucharistie. Parce que cet événement est, de par sa nature, localisé, lié à un élément spatio-temporel dans une communauté locale, l'Eglise locale n'est pas seulement comme une agence, librement créée dans la suite, de l'unique Eglise universelle, mais elle est l'«Événement» même de cette Eglise universelle.²⁵²

This is clearly the teaching also of *Lumen Gentium* 26, which says that “the Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called Churches in the New Testament. [...] In these communities, though frequently small and poor, or living in the Diaspora, Christ is present, and in virtue of His presence there is brought together one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.”

The Eucharistic understanding of the Church highlights the communal nature of the local Churches (i.e. basic openness to *koinonia*) as well. For every local Church, while celebrating the Eucharist, is in communion with other communities across time and space. Temporally, the criterion of the identity of a local Church, celebrating the Eucharist here and now, is the mystery of salvation handed over by the Apostles. Spatially, its identity is determined by mutual recognition of local Churches. Thus, as the Body of Christ, the totality of Churches constitutes a communion of local Churches. From the eucharistic mystery, we grasp the mystery of the Church of God as a communion of Churches. Congar explains it as follows:

Si chaque Eglise particulière est une réalisation de l'Eglise pure et simple, sa nature même la voue à être en communion avec toutes les autres Eglises, à avoir activement regard au tout (catholicité signifie : être et se comporter selon le tout). La célébration de l'Eucharistie, qui achève d'exprimer et de former une Eglise particulière, porte très précisément cette même exigence, de telle sorte qu'une “ecclesiologie eucharistique” ne peut pas, en profondeur, se construire contre une ecclesiologie universaliste.²⁵³

Unity and multiplicity are here inseparably bound together. In this perspective, a local Church can never be seen as a monad, isolated from others. Inspired by Lubac's view that a universal Church which is anterior to or existing outside the particular Churches²⁵⁴ is nothing but a mental creation, Legrand says that

²⁵¹ K. RAHNER, “Quelques réflexions sur les principes constitutionnels de l'Eglise,” pp. 553-54.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 554.

²⁵³ Y. M.-J. CONGAR, “Collegialité de l'épiscopat et la primauté,” pp. 137.

²⁵⁴ As we have seen earlier, by particular Church Lubac means a diocesan Church. Legrand, on the contrary, makes use of the term local Church to designate the Church as it is realised in a diocese.

...l'Eglise en son mystère ne se rencontre concrètement que dans les Eglises locales: on ne saurait être baptisé, confirmé, admis à la communion, ordonné, marié que dans l'une d'elles et par là même dans l'Eglise catholique. Toutefois, l'Eglise entière, comme communion des Eglises locales, a elle aussi une existence concrète, enracinée dans la réalité eucharistique, puisqu'il y a réciprocité entre communion eucharistique et communion ecclésiale.²⁵⁵

4.4.4. Role of the Bishop in the Building up of the Church and in its Link with the Communion of Churches

The role of the bishop, as one of the constitutive elements of the Church, is to be at the service of the Spirit, the Gospel and the Eucharist. The charism received at the episcopal ordination²⁵⁶ makes of him the leader of the community for which he was ordained. But his leadership charism is situated within a multitude of charisms, which are also given by the Spirit. One of his major roles is to coordinate these various charisms. If he proclaims the Word, he receives it from the Church. Again, as H. de Lubac formulates it, “[i]l est celui qui veille, par toute son activité, à ce que la réalité unifiante du mystère eucharistique auquel il préside produise partout son effet.”²⁵⁷

A local Church cannot be theologically dissociated from other Churches. This is particularly visible in the episcopal ministry. According to the primitive vision of the Church, the minister belongs to the community in which he receives charge of presidency. However, it must be underlined that although the local Church elects her bishop, she never proceeded to consecrate him on her own. It is to be done by the neighbouring bishops. This fact is of ecclesiological significance:

La présence des évêques et leur action dans l'ordination, en dehors du charisme qu'elle confère par épiscopat, veut avant tout témoigner de l'identité de cette église particulière, dans la foi, dans la vie nouvelle, dans les ministères, notamment le ministère épiscopal, avec les églises dont ils viennent et avec l'Eglise apostolique, répandue dans l'espace et le temps. Bref, de l'identité de cette église particulière avec l'Eglise du Christ. Par leur action liturgique, cette identité est solennellement manifestée, reconnue et reçue et le nouvel évêque en sera désormais le témoin irrécusable dans son église comme auprès des autres églises.²⁵⁸

According to the ancient canonistics, the bishop is the representative at once of his Church (particularly in synods and councils) and of the whole Church (by his reception within his Church of the synodal decisions).

²⁵⁵ H.-M. LEGRAND, “La Réalisation de l'Eglise en un lieu”, p. 168. The view of Legrand expressed here is quite close to that of Kasper. See our discussion on Ratzinger-Kasper debate *supra*.

²⁵⁶ According to the Prayer of Ordination found in Hippolytus, the ordaining bishops together with the community pray for the *pneuma hegemonikon* (*spiritus principalis*, the spirit of leadership).

²⁵⁷ H. DE LUBAC, *Les Eglises particulière dans l'Eglise universelle*, p. 54.

²⁵⁸ H.-M. LEGRAND, “Inverser Babel,” p. 338.

Il devient ainsi le lien de l'Eglise, représentant toutes les Eglises auprès de la sienne et représentant son Eglise auprès de toutes les autres. C'est ainsi l'évêque qui inscrit visiblement, ex officio, son Eglise dans la communion des Eglises.²⁵⁹

4.4.5. Concluding Remarks

In explaining the constitutive elements of the Church, the Catholic theologians we have discussed above manifest their closeness to the Oriental vision of the Church. We see it first in their pneumatological approach to the Church. Thus, according to Congar, it is the Spirit who makes the local Church a 'WE,' where we can see a symphony of charisms (we may note here the similarity of views between Congar and Tillard). Here, we are reminded of the symbiosis between *one* and *many* explained by Zizioulas. Thus, the Catholic and the Orthodox theologians in unison agree that the pneumatological rootage is the source of synodal life not only at the local level but also at the supra local level.

We see much closeness between Legrand and Tillard, when the former explains the local Church as a *locus* of reconciliation, which is a key category in the latter. For both, the Gospel (for Tillard, it is the 'Gospel of God') calls for the reconciliation in order to undo the Babel.

Another point of convergence between the Catholic and the Orthodox theologians is their view on the relationship between the Eucharist and the communion of Churches. Without the local event of the Eucharist (Rahner), the universal Church cannot exist (Rahner, Tillard, Zizioulas, Afanasiev, etc.). According to Congar, only the eucharistic mystery allows us to grasp the Church as communion of Churches, a view shared also by Afanasiev and Tillard. With regard to the relationship between the bishop and his community we also find similarity between the Catholic and the Orthodox positions. However, unlike Meyendorff and Afanasiev, who give priority to a local bishop's being the head of the local Church, the Catholic theologians we have seen and Zizioulas²⁶⁰ want to hold together this aspect of the ministry of the bishop with his membership in the episcopal college without giving priority to either, because, according to them, the specificity of the ministry of a bishop consists in being a bond between the local Church and the universal Church.

4.5. Local Churches as Subject Churches

Reference to the local Church as a *subject* is not uncommon in the contemporary Catholic Ecclesiology.²⁶¹ In a 1972 article, Y. Congar wrote: "Les fidèles et les Eglises sont de vrais

²⁵⁹ ID, "La Réalisation de l'Eglise en un lieu", p. 170.

²⁶⁰ See *supra* our discussion on "Collegiality and Communion of Local Churches" at 4.9.1.

²⁶¹ This is particularly evident in Y. M.-J. Congar, J. Ratzinger, H.-M. Legrand and J. Komonchak.

sujets d'activité et de libre initiative.”²⁶² This view was shared a few years earlier by J. Ratzinger who also pointed out that often we miss to realise “that each Church as a Church (a community) is a subject of rights in the Church, that in the Church there are not simply offices on the one hand and many individual believers on the other hand with corresponding rights for one and for the others; but rather that the Church as such, concretely as a given community, is a bearer of rights and indeed a proper subject which stands in relationship to all others.”²⁶³

What do we mean by the expression *subject-Church*? H.-M. Legrand gives the following clarification.²⁶⁴ Adopting a negative approach, we may say that our intention in using this expression is not to advocate the subjectivity of the modern Western man. It is not either our purpose to account for the gradual movement of the Church's self-reflection and subjective awareness, which indeed contributed towards the development of ecclesiology as a theological discipline. Our purpose, instead, is—to put it positively—to dissociate ourselves from the common presentation of the Church as a community. According to Legrand, in the communitarian movements of recent times, which are based on a wide range of common cultural interests and elective affinities, there is a hidden danger: often such communities may be presented as exemplary models for all, although they only provide for the fulfilment of a very limited strata of the society. By choosing the terminology of *subject-Church*, we signal the adoption of a different approach, that is to say, while giving the rightful place to communitarian groups, we renounce to make of them models for all. In this perspective, *subject-Churches* are those local Churches, where diversity of groups and persons is recognized and valued as beneficial for the witness of the Gospel in a highly diversified society.²⁶⁵

4.5.1. Promotion of *Subject-Church* at Vatican II

We have already seen that the universalist ecclesiology that predominated Catholic theology for centuries left hardly any place for the local Church.²⁶⁶ But during the decades preceding the Second Vatican Council, a small number of theologians and pastors became

²⁶² Y. M.-J. CONGAR, “La Réception comme réalité ecclésiologique,” p. 393.

²⁶³ J. RATZINGER, “Demokratisierung der Kirche?” in: J. RATZINGER and H. MAIER (eds) *Demokratie in der Kirche. Möglichkeiten, Grenzen, Gefahren*, (Limburg: Lahn Verlag, 1970) 38-39 (trans. as in H. MÜLLER, “How the Local Church Lives and Affirms its Catholicity,” p. 363).

²⁶⁴ Cf. H.-M. LEGRAND, “Le développement d'églises-sujets. Une requête de Vatican II,” in: G. ALBERIGO (ed.), *Les Eglise après Vatican II: dynamisme et prospective: actes du colloques international de Bologne 1980* «(Theologie historique, 61)» (Paris: Beauchesne, 1981), pp. 150-151, *hereafter cited as* H.-M. LEGRAND, “Développement d'églises-sujets.”

²⁶⁵ It must be underlined that this orientation towards subject-Churches is a consequence of the ecclesiological renewal of the last century.

²⁶⁶ See *supra* “A Note on the Development of Theology of Local Church” in our *Introduction*.

increasingly aware that only a deepening of the theology of the local Church could correctly fix the relationship between primacy and collegiality as well as between Churches and their cultures.²⁶⁷ When this conviction won over a large majority of the Fathers, the Council gave a series of institutional re-orientations which can promote the re-emergence of local Churches.²⁶⁸ These innovations permit the local Churches to live a form of synodal life within the Catholic Church. Owing to this changed atmosphere, it is heartening to see many of the local Churches appealing to the various responsibilities of its members, they themselves increasingly becoming subjects of action and right.

Promotion of *subject-Churches* demands, according to Legrand, two things: promotion of participation within the local Churches and support to institutions which permit communication with other local Churches. In this area, a lot of things remain to be done.²⁶⁹ Also we may have to take note of another important factor: *subject-Churches* find their identity in part in their locality (geographical and human). This calls for a serious handling of what is called acculturation: it must be a critical acculturation. According Legrand, “freiner le processus d’acculturation critique de la vie chrétienne, c’est de freiner du même coup le processus de développement des Eglises-sujets.”²⁷⁰ To this one must add also the importance of canonical provisions. The conciliar texts which promote the nature of local Churches as subjects of initiatives and responsibility would remain practically ineffective if the theology underlying them is not properly translated canonically. For, as Legrand puts it, “les beaux textes conciliaires passent dans la vie de l’Eglise par la médiation du droit.”²⁷¹

4.5.2. Conciliar Teaching on Trinitarian and Sacramental Ecclesiology Reveals Church as Subject

Several texts from the Council allow us to affirm that it presents fundamentally a Trinitarian and sacramental vision of the Church.²⁷² It remains the task of the theologian to show “ce qu’implique une affirmation aussi fondamentale, notamment pour la compréhension de l’*ecclesia* comme sujet.”²⁷³

²⁶⁷ Cf. H.-M. LEGRAND, “Le développement d’églises-sujets. Une requête de Vatican II,” pp. 154-155.

²⁶⁸ Among these we may take note of the following: 1) The Council confirmed the existing bishops’ conferences and made it obligatory everywhere (*CD* 36-38). It also demanded mutual relation among them, 2) It demanded the reconstitution of synods and provincial or plenary councils (*CD* 36), 3) It insisted on the establishment of presbyteral councils (*PO* 7), pastoral councils (*CD* 27) and Council for the apostolate of the laity (*AA* 26), 4) The constitution by Pope Paul VI of the Synod of Bishops to advise the Holy Father (*AAS* 57, 1965, 475-480). It is undeniable that the debates and deliberations of the Council on collegiality led to it.

²⁶⁹ Cf. H.-M. LEGRAND, “Le développement d’églises-sujets. Une requête de Vatican II,” p. 155.

²⁷⁰ H.-M. LEGRAND, “Le développement d’églises-sujets. Une requête de Vatican II,” p. 157.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

²⁷² *LG* 4; 17; 26; *UR* 2.

²⁷³ H.-M. LEGRAND, “Le développement d’églises-sujets. Une requête de Vatican II,” p. 161.

This vision is founded on the fact that the people of God are also the Temple of the Holy Spirit. For it is the Spirit who makes us capable of communing with Christ and with one another. The ‘we,’ which the president of the assembly often uses, is that of the *ecclesia* represented by him. Hence his role as the minister is inserted within the epiclesis of the entire assembly. “Cette perception de l’*ecclesia* comme sujet intégral de la célébration est capital tant les structures liturgiques et les structures ecclésiologiques sont solidaires...”²⁷⁴

In the Trinitarian vision of the Church, any authority in the Church is in view of service and witness. No authority in the Church is self-sufficient. It must be exercised in coordination with the gifts which the Spirit gives to the Church.²⁷⁵ Nevertheless, although the authority is not above the Church, it is vis-à-vis the Church. The building up of the Church is not the task of a unique actor. In a Christomonistic structure, a sharp division between the clergy—Church authorities—and the laity—in charge of the world—is possible, but this dichotomy is overcome in a Trinitarian vision of the Church. But the difference, however, is maintained, and that is demanded by a sane Pneumatology.

4.5.3. The Call of the Local Church to act Responsibly with one another for the Good of the whole Church

Basically, a local Church is what it is, viz. the Church of God because of the divine initiative. Thanks to the unique Spirit who inhabits it, each Church has access to the unique tradition, under different forms. But since none of them can pretend to monopolize the Spirit in order to dominate over others or act according to its own wish, all are supposed to collaborate and to be anxious—each of them and all together—about the unity and the mission: *traditio traditionis*.

A) Spirit is the origin of the diversity of Churches and their Synodality

The Spirit, who is the source of the identity of the Church, is also the source of its diversity. It is He who renders a local Church the subject of rights and initiatives. The mission of the Spirit will not be accomplished unless communication is established among the diverse Churches. A local Church, which gives the due place to the Holy Spirit cannot but favour the ‘we’ of Christians in liturgy; it cannot but develop the synodal life (either in the strict form of synods or in the form of diverse councils).

When we affirm that local Churches are composed of active subjects and are themselves *subject-Churches*, they do not for that matter cease to be unequal in several respects. In fact, the history of the Church has never known perfect equality among Churches. Rather it

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

²⁷⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 171.

witnesses to the dominance of the more powerful one over the weaker ones. The exploitation of the daughter-Churches by the Mother-Churches is a well known fact.²⁷⁶ In fact, no Church is, properly speaking, mother of another local Church: fraternity is born between the mother and the daughter as soon as the new Church is born.²⁷⁷ This has repercussions for the relationship between the Church of Rome and other *subject-Churches*. However great may the pope be, he still remains the bishop of a subject-Church. As such, he remains visibly and concretely inserted into the collegiality of bishops, at the service of the synodality of Churches. This fact guarantees catholicity against all false universalism.²⁷⁸

B) Subject Church and Catholicity

The Church's nature as *subject* is not unrelated to its *catholic* nature. Local Churches are called upon to live the unique faith in a diversity of cultural ethos. The issue of *subject Churches* is a test case of our capacity to combine unity with difference in catholicity.²⁷⁹ To promote *subject Churches* means

...to take into account, in ecclesiology, the solidarity of all in the responsibility in a diversity of ministries; the complexity of the cultural differences; the conflict of ethos within a local Church as well as among them; the conflict among Churches not equal by culture, economic richness, the weight of tradition; the catholicity not being the negation of these diversities but their constant negotiation so that the Church may assemble "from all race, language, people and nation around the throne of the Lamb."²⁸⁰

The task ahead cannot be taken up without structures proper to them. Spatially, the structures of *subject Churches* are not only organizational. It is related to communion, to the fidelity to the sacramental and Trinitarian reality of Christian life. The work in this direction was started by Vatican II. But a lot of theologizing should accompany the reception of the perception of Vatican II on local Churches as *subject Churches*, so that it may be linked to the patristic tradition and trinitarian balance.

4.5.4. Concluding Remarks

The idea of local Churches as subjects of rights and obligations is a promising idea developed by Catholic theologians such as Congar, Ratzinger and Legrand, which is useful in

²⁷⁶ We may recall here some of the historical facts which violated this ecclesiological principle. Thus, the Church of Ethiopia, for instance, had to receive bishops from Alexandria until 1952, just as the ancient Church of the Thomas Christians were to be content with the Metropolitans from Mesopotamia until the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th century, and these latter tried to latinize them by putting over them the Portuguese bishops.

²⁷⁷ H.-M. LEGRAND "Le développement d'églises-sujets. Une requête de Vatican II," p. 180.

²⁷⁸ Cf. ID, "Le ministère romain et le ministère universel du pape. Le problème de son élection," *Conc(F)*, 118 (1975) 43-54.

²⁷⁹ "Se trouver un dans la diversité et la fidélité ne peut être l'œuvre que de l'Esprit d'amour. Si l'unité de la foi est requise pour la pleine communion, la diversité des usages n'y fait pas obstacle, bien au contraire," PAUL VI, *Tomos Agapis*, Vatican-Phanar, n° 172, p. 374.

²⁸⁰ H.-M. LEGRAND, "Développement d'églises-sujets," p. 182.

articulating the identity of a local Church as a Church caught up in the dynamism of synodality. Only in a pneumatic approach can one see the subjective identity of a local Church. Although all the local Churches are bestowed with a multiplicity of pneumatic charisms, none of them can have a monopoly of all the charisms; this calls for the communion among them. In this context, a subject Church must be seen as one that promotes the diversity of groups and persons, and their communal relationship. It also lives in a relationship of synodality with other similar subject Churches. This relationship among various local Churches is to be seen as a relationship among sister Churches. This is true also of the relationship between the Church of Rome and another local Church in the Catholic communion. For, as a subject Church, the Roman Church is also inserted into the synodality of Churches. It is not difficult to see the closeness of this view to the ideas developed on the subject by such Orthodox theologians as Schmemmann and Zizioulas.

5. Relationship between Primacy and Episcopacy

5.1. Introduction

A discussion on the relationship between primacy and episcopacy is not indifferent to the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church, because in the Catholic Ecclesiology and canon law the latter is approached and dealt with through the former. And an adequate harmonisation of primacy and episcopacy (and, hence, the local Church and the universal Church) is one of the important tasks of ecclesiology and ecumenism today.²⁸¹ Our exploration in this section on the relationship between primacy and episcopacy is, therefore, a part of our efforts to articulate the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church.

5.2. Some Initial Observations

5.2.1. Relationship between *communio ecclesiarum* and *collegium episcoporum*

Many of the contemporary interpreters of Vatican II have pointed out that one of the drawbacks of *Lumen Gentium* is its failure—in its treatment of the episcopal college—to link the members of this college to the local Churches of which they are shepherds and

²⁸¹ Pope Paul VI was clearly aware of the obstacle an ill-explained papacy represented for the Church in search of unity and reconciliation: In his allocution to the *Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity* on April 28, 1967, he said: “The pope, as we well know, is undoubtedly the gravest obstacle in the path of ecumenism. What shall we say? Should we call once more upon titles which justify our mission? Should we once more attempt to present it in its exact terms such as it is really intended to be — an indispensable source of truth, charity, and unity?” *DC* 64 (1967), p. 870 (=AAS LIX.7 (28 Iunii), p. 498).

representatives. This is indicative of the weakness of a juridical approach to collegiality. While focussing its attention uniquely on the relation among bishops and their relation as a body to the pope, this approach fails to give a due place to the local Churches as they developed in the course of history guided by the *divine providence*.²⁸² This approach marginalises the relationship of the bishop to his Church. For he is first made a member of the college, and only subsequently does he become the pastor of a local Church. In fact, a bishop's membership in the episcopal college and his headship of a local Church are not opposing realities. As Congar has explained, "l'option entre une antériorité du rapport de l'évêque au Collège comme tel et une antériorité du rapport à son Eglise particulière est un faux problème, qu'il convient de récuser. Il repose en effet sur l'idée que la relation de l'Eglise particulière à l'Eglise universelle est celle de la partie au tout."²⁸³ According to Legrand, the specificity of the ministry of bishop consists in the fact that he is a bond between the local Church and the whole Church.²⁸⁴

In this regard, the 1983 *CIC* also has not made much progress. According to the Council, the fact that by ordination one becomes a member of the college ensures his positioning vis-à-vis the universal Church.²⁸⁵ The same logic is followed by the 1983 *CIC*.²⁸⁶ It deals with particular Churches or dioceses after having dealt with the People of God, the hierarchy, the laity and the clergy, the supreme power in the Church and the college of bishops. Legrand wonders "comment, avant même d'avoir déterminé ce qu'est une Eglise locale et ce que représente la communion des Eglises, peut-on traiter, théologiquement et même institutionnellement de ce que sont des laïcs et des clercs, un pape, un évêque et le collège des évêques?"²⁸⁷ This simply shows that Vatican II, followed by the Code, did not succeed in tying up with the great ecclesiological tradition of *communio ecclesiarum*. Hence, the greatest task of ecclesiology today is to re-discover the correlation between *communio ecclesiarum* and *collegium episcoporum*.

²⁸² *LG* 23.

²⁸³ Y. M.-J. CONGAR, "Collegialité de l'épiscopat et la primauté," p. 137.

²⁸⁴ According to Legrand, the present practice of nomination of bishops by Rome somehow eclipses the close link that exists between the bishop and his see. The canonical tradition in force until 1917 provided for the election of the bishop by his Church, all other modes of nomination being only an exception to this general rule. The legislation of 1917, which reserved the right of episcopal nomination to the Holy See, amounts to an innovation, devoid of either theological or traditional foundation. Instead, it hides behind it a universalist vision of the Church.

²⁸⁵ *LG* 22.

²⁸⁶ According to Legrand, 1983 *CIC* "croit possible d'établir ce que sont des clercs et des laïcs, le pape, le collège des évêques, les cardinaux, la Curie romaine, les nonces, préalablement à toute considération de l'Eglise locale," H.-M. LEGRAND, "Eglises locales, Eglises régionales..." p. 297.

²⁸⁷ ID, "L'Eglise se réalise en un lieu," p. 306.

5.2.2. Non-reciprocal Relationship between the Episcopal College and the Pope

Lumen Gentium 22 which asserts that the episcopal college is “the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church” also adds that it “has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter as its head. The pope’s power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact. [...] And he is always free to exercise this power.” Commenting on it, the *Nota Praevia* 3 reminds us that there is a twofold difference between the power of the pope and that of the college: 1) it is up to the pope to decide whether the college can and should act as such and to determine its modality, 2) whereas the pope can *ex sese* exercise his power at all times, the college exercises its strictly collegial power only intermittently and never without the consent of the pope. That is to say, while the college is dependent on the pope for its existence and collegial action, it cannot expect such dependence on it from the part of the pope.²⁸⁸ Here, the college is taken in a juridical sense. As such, the college cannot in any way modify the action of the pope: “the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And he is always free (*semper libere*²⁸⁹) to exercise this power.” As *Nota Praevia* 3 explains, “It is for the Pope [...] to decide the best manner of implementing, either personal or collegiate [...]. The Roman Pontiff undertakes the regulation, encouragement, and approval of the exercise of collegiality as he sees fit.” Commenting on this exegesis, Legrand writes:

Si l’on acceptait cette proposition, cela signifierait 1° que le gouvernement collégial n’est que l’une des deux formes possibles de l’exercice du pouvoir suprême du pape, et 2° que la participation du collège au gouvernement de l’Eglise est entièrement suspendue au libre choix du pape, car n’existerait que le gouvernement de ce dernier, qui, de façon discrétionnaire [...], peut prendre le mode personnel ou le mode collégial.²⁹⁰

In doing so, we consider the power of the pope as self-sufficient, a view avoided even by Vatican I.²⁹¹ It amounts to a disregard for the divinely given solicitude of the episcopate vis-à-vis universal Church.

²⁸⁸ No Catholic doubts that the pope can, *ex sese*, exercise his full and supreme power over the whole Church, but the fact that the exercise of this power left to his personal discretion and pleasure (*placitum*) is something unheard of in any ecclesiastical documents so far.

²⁸⁹ We may note here that the expression is *semper libere* and not *semper et libere*. According to Legrand, “par là, on exclut l’immixtion continue et arbitraire du pape dans ce qui relève du gouvernement des évêques dans leur diocèse,” H.-M. LEGRAND, “L’Eglise se réalise en un lieu,” p. 302.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ According to Ratzinger, the *Nota Praevia* underlines that the papal discretion must be conditioned by ‘the good of the Church’ (*intuitu boni Ecclesiae*) and his wish must be conditioned by norm, ‘according to the needs of his charge’ (*sicut ab ipso suo munere requiritur*). Thus, although the pope is not subjected to any exterior tribunal, he has to submit himself to the inner exigencies of his charge and the Church’s needs, i.e. to the demands of the Revelation expressed in the Scriptures and the Tradition. Cf. J. RATZINGER, “La collégialité épiscopale. Développement théologique,” in: Guilherme BARAUNA (ed.), *L’Eglise de Vatican II*, «UnSa - 51 c» (Paris: Cerf, 1966), p. 786, *hereafter cited as* J. RATZINGER, “La collégialité épiscopale.”

In this context, thinks Legrand, we do not have to give a formal value to the view of *Nota Praevia*, which was not the object of a voting by the Fathers.²⁹² If we were to abide by this interpretation, the collegiality “ne change pas nécessairement la figure centralisée de l’Eglise d’après Vatican I, que la majorité des Pères avait voulu justement atténuer grâce à cette doctrine.”²⁹³ In practical terms, a collegial action is almost impossible. That is to say, the collegiality has come to be an inoperative doctrine in the life of the Church.²⁹⁴ As a matter of fact, consensus is still lacking on this point: some see bishops as at the service of primacy, for others, the contrary must be true, i.e. primacy must be at the service of the episcopate.²⁹⁵ The opinion that collegiality is only a form of the papal government is nothing more than an opinion. It is not part of the Catholic faith. As it has been clarified to Pope Paul VI who wanted an amendment which said that the pope is accountable to God alone, the pope—in the Catholic theology—is bound not only by God but also by the fundamental structure of the Church, sacraments, conciliar definitions, etc.

5.2.3. Minister and Church

Another conceptual limitation of the doctrine of collegiality is that it can leave the impression that the whole reality of the Church can be concentrated in the ministers. *Lumen Gentium* had laid strong foundations for a new balance in systematic theology when it developed a trinitarian conception of the Church and situated the ministers within the people of God. But some of the post-conciliar moves do not seem to follow the same conciliar direction. One such example is the *Instruction on Diocesan Synods* (1997). This instruction, issued by the *Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples* and the *Congregation for Bishops*, prohibited the diocesan synods to make declarations, even in the form of appeals to the Holy See, on subjects which do not concord with the perpetual doctrine of the Church or the pontifical magisterium or on disciplinary matters reserved to superior ecclesiastical

²⁹² “Pour bien apprécier la signification du texte, il importe de considérer que les Pères ne le connaissaient pas, ni même l’existence de la Note préliminaire. Ils n’en furent informés que le 16 novembre 1964, jour où leur fut remis le fascicule qui contenait les *modi* apportés au chapitre III de la Constitution sur l’Eglise, sur les quels la Commission théologique avait travaillé entre temps,” *ibid.*, p. 781, According to the theologian the *Nota Praevia* is, and will remain, a text of the Theological Commission. However, by the fact of its repeated distribution, its publication by *Osservatore Romano* and its mention by the pope in his concluding address gave to it particularly solemn character.

²⁹³ H.-M. LEGRAND, “Eglises locales, Eglises régionales...,” p. 298.

²⁹⁴ It is in this context, W. Kasper asks the following question: “Die Frage ist aber, ob die Autorität und Initiative des Kollegiums nicht *praktisch* zu einer bloßen Fiktion wird, wenn der Papst sie jederzeit unterbinden kann, wenn aber umgekehrt er jederzeit auch ohne formelle Mitwirkung des Kollegiums—nicht als *persona privata*, sondern als Haput dieses Kollegiums—entscheiden und handeln kann,” “Zur Theologie und Praxis des bischöflichen Amtes,” p. 42.

²⁹⁵ The opinions, respectively, of Mgr C. Colombo and Cardinal Döpfner are representative of these two views. Cf. CAPRILE, G., *Il sinodo dei vescovi. Prima Assemblea straordinaria* [11-28 octobre 1969] (Rome: La Civiltà Cattolica, 1970), p. 126 and 76-77.

authority.²⁹⁶ It would mean, as Legrand comments, as though “l’Eglises locales ne peuvent avoir un témoignage de foi qui différerait dans son expression un tant soit peu du magistère pontifical ou en tout cas qu’en matière disciplinaire elles ne sont pas habilitées à faire la moindre suggestion. Il ne s’agirait, en effet, dans l’un et l’autre cas, que de vœux à transmettre à l’autorité.”²⁹⁷

The above observations were meant to present the *status questionis* and to identify the main drawbacks of the present-day Catholic doctrine on collegiality. This was, by no means, an attempt to occult the achievements of Vatican II; rather it was motivated by a desire to highlight the areas where further developments are needed. In what follows, we try to synthesise some of the theological views on the relationship between primacy and episcopacy.

5.3. Primacy and Episcopacy Conceived as ‘Relations’

In a paper read at a Symposium on the Primacy of the Successor of Peter, held in Rome in December 1996,²⁹⁸ M. Buckley explored the possibility of understanding the relationship between primacy and episcopacy using the category of ‘relation’. According to him, both primacy and episcopacy are abstractions: the former stands for the leadership of the primate, the bishop of Rome and the latter for the collectivity of bishops in their relationship to one another and collectively to the Church as a whole. These terms can be understood only in reference to something else—to an ‘other’ (πρός τι).²⁹⁹

Thus, primate, who is the *first*, can be properly understood only in reference to those who are not the *first*. According to *Pastor Aeternus*, primacy is a principle or source of the unity of the episcopate and of the faithful.³⁰⁰ That is to say, primacy can be properly understood only in reference to its terms of reference (that of which it is the principle), viz. the episcopate and the faithful. As noted above, the episcopate also stands for a twofold relationship: the solidarity of bishops among themselves (including the primate) and their Christian leadership with reference to all the members of the Christian community. The relation we speak of is a relation between persons: “primacy relates one person to many; episcopate relates persons in community to others.”³⁰¹ According to M. Buckley, these relations—primacy and

²⁹⁶ Cf. *Instruction on Diocesan Synods* (1997), paragraph IV, 4.

²⁹⁷ H.-M. LEGRAND, “Eglises locales, Eglises régionales...,” p. 279.

²⁹⁸ M. BUCKLEY, “«Perpetuum utriusque unitatis principium ac visibile fundamentum». The Primacy and the Episcopate: Towards a Doctrinal Synthesis,” in: *Il Primato del successore di Pietro. Atti del simposio teologico, Roma, dicembre 1996* (Vatican City, Editrice Vaticana, 1998), pp. 281-339, *hereafter cited as* M. BUCKLEY, “«Perpetuum utriusque unitatis principium ac visibile fundamentum».”

²⁹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 296.

³⁰⁰ This point is further developed in the following section, viz. “Papal Primacy as a Munus of Unity.”

³⁰¹ M. BUCKLEY, “«Perpetuum utriusque unitatis principium ac visibile fundamentum»,” p. 299.

episcopate—“get their meaning or intelligibility from that towards which the relation points.”³⁰² That is to say, the meaning of primacy and episcopate is found in their *other*, their correlative terms. From an ecclesiological point of view, its importance cannot be underestimated:

One cannot understand the primacy adequately without understanding what is the real character of the unity of the episcopate. Or, more positively, as the Church progressively understands the episcopate more adequately, its understanding of the primacy will likewise and correlatively develop.³⁰³

According to the teaching of Vatican II, both primacy and episcopate are the fruit of divine initiative, that is to say, the foundation of both primacy (which is basically episcopal) and episcopate is sacramental. The triple *munera*, which a bishop receives at his episcopal ordination “serve as the foundation for the relation of the bishops to one another (collegiality and primacy) and to the people of God.”³⁰⁴ This sacramental action makes possible “the coming-to-be of that relation that is episcopacy and primacy, while the determination to a particular Church or for a particular office within hierarchical communion is the further specification of the foundation for primacy and the relation of a bishop to his diocese.”³⁰⁵

In this dynamics of sacramental and jurisdictional activity, the episcopate and the bishop of Rome stand in a peculiar relationship to each other and to the Church as a whole. Both receive their fundamental character from that towards which they are oriented, viz. the Church. “The mystery of the Church and the people of God constitute the real source for office and, hence, for the primacy and the episcopate. Only understood as emerging from this foundation is either relationship intelligible.”³⁰⁶

5.4. The Papal Primacy as a ‘Munus’ of Unity

The discussion here is based on the preceding section which considered primacy as a relation. As such, its purpose and nature can be understood only in reference to that to which it is related. It is clearly indicated by *Pastor Aeternus*, when it says that

[i]n order that the episcopate itself might be one and undivided, and that the whole multitude of believers might be preserved in unity of faith and communion, by means of a closely united priesthood, he [Christ] placed St Peter at the head of the other apostles, and established in him a perpetual principle and visible foundation of this twofold unity (*perpetuum utriusque unitatis principium ac visibile fundamentum*).³⁰⁷

³⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 298.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 300.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

³⁰⁷ *DS* 3051 (= *ND* 818).

Thus, from the perspective of *Pastor Aeternus*, the role of primacy is to promote unity within the episcopate and, by means of that unity, the unity of the members of the Church. The twofold terms of the relation that is primacy is also clear in this conciliar text, viz. “[t]he unity of the episcopate and the unity of the Church, within the agency of a united episcopate—a unity that is in faith and communion.”³⁰⁸

5.5. Unity as Communion

The concept of *communio* is now widely accepted as a key to the understanding of the ecclesiology of the last General Council. We find a fine depiction of Church as *communio* in *Unitatis reintegratio* 14: “For many centuries the Church of the East and that of the West each followed their separate ways though linked in a brotherly communion [*fraterna communione*] of faith and sacramental life; the Roman See by common consent acted as guide when disagreements arose between them over matters of faith or discipline.” The decree also praises Oriental Christians owing to their efforts “to preserve the communion in faith and charity [*in fidei caritatisque communione*] which ought to exist between local Churches, as between sisters.”³⁰⁹ It is this vision which sees the universal Church as actualised in the particular peoples with their own history, culture and locality. These various Churches are bound together because of the constitutive principle of Church as enumerated in *CD* 11.³¹⁰

This understanding of Church as communion has repercussions for the understanding of primacy and episcopacy. However crucial and important may be the apostolic ministries of primacy and episcopate, they still remain instrumental. The fundamental source of communion is the Holy Spirit. “The Spirit of Christ is what the Church most profoundly shares, and it is this sharing that constitutes its deepest communion.”³¹¹ Therefore, the unity as predicated of the Church and Churches can be seen as a *communio*.

In such an understanding of the Church, the term of the relationship that is the primacy is apprehended not so much as simply the unity of the Church, whether of episcopate or the faithful, as the communion of the Churches, realized among the bishops who represent these Churches and among the faithful who constitute them.³¹²

5.6. Primacy as an Episcopal ‘Munus’

According to *Pastor Aeternus*, as we have already seen, the unity of the episcopate is one of the *terms* of the relationship that is primacy. Here, we ask whether the subject of that

³⁰⁸ M. BUCKLEY, “«Perpetuum utriusque unitatis principium ac visibile fundamentum»,” p. 308

³⁰⁹ *UR* 14.

³¹⁰ See our discussion *supra* under the title, “Constitutive Elements of Local Church.”

³¹¹ M. BUCKLEY, “«Perpetuum utriusque unitatis principium ac visibile fundamentum»,” p. 312.

³¹² *Ibid.*

relationship is also episcopal. Put it differently, we ask whether the primatial *munus* is also an episcopal *munus*.

There was an attempt in the 1970s to make the pope elected by the universal episcopate, a move initiated by K. Rahner and H. Küng. According to H.-M. Legrand, this option amounts to cutting the bishop of Rome's relationship to his Church and making him uniquely the head of the episcopal college and a universal Bishop. This would not only compromise the articulation between primacy and collegiality, but also deprive the papacy of all its ecumenical chances.³¹³ Fortunately, the apostolic constitution *Romano Pontifici Eligendo* desisted from creating a cleavage between the bishop of Rome and his Church by conserving the practice of his election by “the three major orders of the Roman clergy – bishops, priests and deacons – who are called the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church.”³¹⁴

According to Legrand, “la relation vécue entre le pape et son diocèse de Rome témoigne d’une ecclésiologie de communion entre les Eglises, dont la signification pastorale et œcuménique est considérable.”³¹⁵ Accordingly, it is insofar as he is the bishop of Rome and a member of the episcopate that the pope exercises his primacy. That is to say, his primatial *munus* is also episcopal in nature.³¹⁶ Only that the episcopal *munus*, in the case of the bishop of Rome, attains its full universal amplitude. According to this perspective, the charism of primacy is not essentially different from the episcopal charism. That is the reason why *Pastor Aeternus* qualifies the ordinary and immediate papal power of jurisdiction as *vere episcopalis*, a fact forcefully reiterated in *Ut Unum Sint*.³¹⁷ The episcopal character of primacy is consequential for its relationship to the episcopacy:

The episcopal character of the primacy obviously connects the primacy and the episcopate much more closely. The episcopate is not only the term of the primacy; the primacy is a special relationship that emerges from within episcopate. It is an instrumentality by which the episcopate cares for its own unity and consequently its own existence — in the meaning of the Gospel and the fidelity of its life according to the Gospel.³¹⁸

Thus, when the pope cares for and fosters the unity of the Church, he is there embodying the care of the entire episcopate for the unity of the Church. In other words, “the papal *munus*

³¹³ For more details on this question, see H.-M. LEGRAND, “Le sens théologique des élections épiscopales d’après leur déroulement dans l’Église ancienne,” *Conc(F)*, 108 (1972) 41-50.

³¹⁴ Cf. PAUL VI, *Apostolic Constitution on “The Election of the Roman Pontiff” (Romano Pontifici Eligendo)* issued on October 1, 1975, www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul06/p6elect.htm (20.07.2004).

³¹⁵ H.-M. LEGRAND, “L’Église se réalise en un lieu,” p. 312.

³¹⁶ This fact was clearly explained by Mgr Zinelli, representing the Deputation of Faith: “It must be admitted that the power of the sovereign pontiff is in reality (*realiter*) of the same type as that of the bishops (*esse eandem speciem ac potestatem episcoporum*),” *MANSI* 52, 1104. For this text, see J.M.R. TILLARD, *The Bishop of Rome*, p. 143.

³¹⁷ Cf. § 94.

³¹⁸ M. BUCKLEY, “«Perpetuum utriusque unitatis principium ac visibile fundamentum»,” p. 315.

towards the entire Church is a unique realization of what is the *munus* of the college of bishops as a whole.”³¹⁹ M. Buckley identifies the threefold ways in which primacy relates to the episcopate: (a) by the fact that it “fosters the unity of the episcopate”, (b) by the fact that it “emerges from within the episcopal college as a *munus* proper to a particular member of the episcopate” and (c) by the fact “the primacy embodies the care of the entire episcopate for the unity of all the faithful.”³²⁰

5.7. Functions of the Papal Primacy

In the context of collegiality, we cannot explain primacy, in terms of an absolute monarchy, as if the bishop of Rome were a monarch of a State-Church, directed uniquely by a central see.³²¹ Primacy signifies that within the network of Churches communicating among themselves, there is a fixed and obligatory point, the Roman see, to which must be oriented the unity of faith and communion.³²² The primacy of the bishop of Rome, according to its original meaning, does not contradict the collegial constitution of the Church; it is a primacy of communion.³²³

If the *raison d'être* of papal primacy is to ensure *communio*—first, in the episcopate and through its agency, in the whole Church—then, he should be necessarily endowed with powers to carry out this office. Here, we must be attentive to the fact that each of these powers need not be necessarily of equal weight and frequency. There are powers which are needed for the normal execution of papal responsibilities; there are others which are called for only in extraordinary circumstances “when other structures of leadership and service have broken down and the unity in faith and communion of the episcopate or the faithful is severely threatened.”³²⁴ In the first case, we can speak of a habitual authority; in the second

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ “...la primauté du Pape ne peut donc pas être comprise sur le modèle de la monarchie absolue, comme si l'évêque de Rome était le monarque sans restriction d'un être étatique surnaturel, «l'Eglise», à constitution centraliste...,” J. RATZINGER, “Les implications pastorales de la doctrine de la collégialité des évêques,” p. 43.

³²² “La primauté signifie [...] la capacité et le droit de déclarer d'une manière obligatoire, au sein du réseau de communion, où est correctement attestée la parole du Seigneur et par suite où se trouve la vraie communion. Elle suppose la *communio ecclesiarum* et ne peut être comprise correctement qu'à partir d'elle,” ID, *Le Nouveau Peuple de Dieu*, p. 144.

³²³ Papal primacy situated within episcopal collegiality signifies that “il y a à l'intérieur du réseau des églises communiquant entre elles, dont se compose l'Eglise unique de Dieu, un point de repère obligatoire, la *sedes Romana*, d'après laquelle doit s'orienter l'unité de la Foi et de la communion. [...] la primauté de l'évêque de Rome dans son sens originel, ne s'oppose pas à la constitution collégiale de l'Eglise, mais qu'elle est primauté de communion, qu'elle a son siège à l'intérieur de l'Eglise qui vit et qui se comprend comme une communauté de communion. [...] La primauté présuppose la *communio ecclesiarum* et ne peut être comprise concrètement qu'en partant de celle-ci,” ID, “Les implications pastorales de la doctrine de la collégialité des évêques,” p. 43-44.

³²⁴ M. BUCKLEY, “«Perpetuum utriusque unitatis principium ac visibile fundamentum»,” p. 317.

case, of a substitutional authority. “The habitual use of primatial authority is to foster the unity of his brothers, not of his children—a unity in their faith and mutual charity—and with his brothers in college the unity of their Churches and of the entire Church.”³²⁵ In the substitutional use of authority, the primate adopts a paternal attitude, as a parent to a child that needs direction. “The “paternal” use of authority presupposes that either at this time or in this issue, a particular Church or Churches are not mature enough to deal with the issues that confront them and that they need the influence of the Apostolic See to steady and support them in the responsibilities that have fallen upon them.”³²⁶ Ideally, the substitutional use of authority aims at its own disappearance. But if it is used, when it is not at all required, “it can inhibit or even injure the growth of the very one it attempts to aid.”³²⁷ As Pope John Paul II has clearly stated, “[t]he mission of the bishop of Rome within the college of all the pastors consists precisely in ‘keeping watch (*episcoperein*)...’ According to him, the pope is

...the first servant of unity. This primacy is exercised on various levels, including vigilance over the handing down of the word, the celebration of the liturgy and the sacraments, the Church’s mission, discipline and the Christian life. It is the responsibility of the successor of Peter to recall the requirements of the common good of the Church, should anyone be tempted to overlook it in the pursuit of personal interests. He has the duty to admonish, to caution, and to declare at times that this or that opinion being circulated is irreconcilable with the unity of faith.³²⁸

Thus, the pope conceives his task as an episcopal one; it is characterised by the word *episkopein*. The concept of *episkope* allows us to ascribe to the pope the task of keeping an eye on the respective individual authorities in the Church as they carry out their functions of safeguarding and expounding the faith. When he intervenes, he should do it with respect for these other authorities and their involvement.

Despite the human weaknesses of the popes in the past, papacy possesses creative power to keep Churches in communion, to protect them from falling into false particularism based on national, ethnic or other criteria. As Legrand puts it, “ce n’est pas un mince accomplissement que d’avoir créé une communion catholique mondiale, vécue, entre des chrétiens aussi différents que ceux qui composent aujourd’hui l’Eglise catholique et y trouvent une identité commune. Ce n’est pas un mince mérite non plus que Rome ait maintenu le dynamisme missionnaire au moment où tant d’Eglises et d’évêques n’en avaient plus le souci effectif.”³²⁹

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ *Ut Unum Sint*, no. 94.

³²⁹ H.-M. LEGRAND, “L’Eglise se réalise en un lieu,” p. 314.

5.8. The Collegial Character of the Episcopate

Multiplication of absolute ordinations (from the 12th century onwards) and non-sacramental conception of the episcopate (from the 13th century onwards) has led to a scission between *order* and *jurisdiction*. This has had for consequence the erosion of the collegial and communal spirit of the patristic period. In this situation only the pope is considered as possessing the full jurisdiction, while bishops possess it as a share in the papal jurisdiction.³³⁰ Vatican II has attempted to rectify it. *Lumen Gentium*, when it spoke collectively of bishops, used the expression, “*collegium... seu corpus episcoporum*.” This expression—unlike the term *episcopate* (very abstract), used by *Pastor Aeternus*—conveys the idea of the dynamic relationship of bishops among themselves. *Collegium* and all its synonyms used by the Council (*ordo*, *corpus*, and *fraternitas*) convey the idea of relationship. The term *collegium*, which is not found in the Bible, is liable to be interpreted differently. Hence, it is necessary to fix its exact meaning: it is not to be taken in the juridical sense as conveyed in the Roman law; it must not be either understood as a gathering of equals who can act only when all are present.³³¹ Rather, we must hold on to the notion of college as it is transmitted by the Christian tradition. The episcopal college succeeds (as to whatever was transmissible) to the college of the Twelve, who were constituted as such by Christ himself. Taking these factors into account, J. Hamer defines episcopal collegiality as follows: “On pourrait la définir comme une responsabilité universelle, revenant à l’évêque en vertu de sa charge de successeur des apôtres, dans la solidarité du corps épiscopal tout entier, sous la direction effective du successeur de Pierre.”³³² This universal responsibility on the level of the entire Church is of divine right. It is exercised in the proclamation of the Word, in the transmission of faith, etc. This universal solidarity is at the heart of the episcopal charge.

The Council has clearly stated how one is established in this relationship: through sacramental consecration and hierarchical communion.³³³ The first thing to be noted here is the fact that, with this conciliar assertion, the rigid line of demarcation between the power of order and the power of jurisdiction is crossed over and the fundamental unity of these two

³³⁰ It may have been influenced by this medieval heritage that Pope Pius XII wrote in *Mystici Corporis* that “although their [bishops’] jurisdiction is inherent in their office, yet they receive it directly from the same supreme pontiff,” *AAS* 35 (1945), p. 212 (*DS* 3804; *ND* 850).

³³¹ Cf. H. DE LUBAC, “Les Eglises particulières dans l’Eglise universelle”, p. 126.

³³² J. HAMER, “Les conférences épiscopales, exercice de la collégialité,” p.967.

³³³ According to *LG* 22, “one is constituted a member of the episcopal body in virtue of sacramental consecration and hierarchical communion with the head and members of the body.” This text must be read in conjunction with the assertion on sacramentality in *LG* 21: “episcopal consecration, together with the office of sanctifying, also confers the office of teaching and of governing, which, however, of its very nature, can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and the members of the college.”

realities, which have but one foundation, becomes now visible.³³⁴ The consecration is by its nature the integration into the ministry entrusted to the whole episcopal body. This principle logically implies the second condition, viz. effective communion with the head and members.³³⁵ This communion (horizontal dimension of collegiality) completes the consecration (vertical dimension). One cannot be in communion with the pope alone, for to be linked to him necessarily signifies to be ‘catholic’, which implies union with all the bishops of the Catholic Church. These two elements constitute the foundation of the relationship that is episcopacy.

Like the apostolic college, the episcopal college too is a permanent and indivisible reality. In this twofold sense it is universal. It is never out of work. Its cohesion manifests itself in diverse manner of exchanges—in the name of their Churches—between bishops or groups of bishops. But its most essential action is exercised on a day to day basis by the simple fact that each bishop teaches in his own Church the same faith and maintains the same fundamental discipline as other bishops in their proper Churches.³³⁶

The council also determined the *potestas* of this college. It is “the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church (*subiectum quoque supremae ac plenae potestatis in universam Ecclesiam*), provided we understand this body together with its head, the Roman Pontiff, and never without this head.”³³⁷ Thus, according to this text, just as the pope is the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church, so also is the episcopal college of which he is the head. According to the Council, all episcopal powers have their foundation in the sacrament of ordination. Only their usage is dependent on the hierarchical communion. Of course, we should not place ‘the hierarchical communion’ on the same level as ‘sacrament’. Mgr Philips has explained this point quite clearly: “on devient membre du collège en vertu de la consécration sacramentelle (*vi consecrationis*) et moyennant la communion hiérarchique (*communione*, à l’ablatif). Le second élément fait plutôt figure de condition que de cause.”³³⁸ That means, according to this exegesis, if the one who is

³³⁴ Their separation was the reason owing to which the medieval theology denied sacramentality to the episcopal consecration; it was also a determinant factor in the development of the relationship between the pope and the bishops, which veiled the collegial spirit of the patristic period.

³³⁵ Cf. J. RATZINGER, “La collégialité épiscopale,” p. 768.

³³⁶ This is what the Catholic tradition calls the ordinary magisterium. This is the most habitual manner of the action of the college. When called for, the college can act also in an extraordinary manner in an ecumenical council.

³³⁷ LG 22.

³³⁸ G. PHILIPS, *L’Eglise et son mystère au II^e Concile du Vatican*, p. 289. But different point of view is held by Cardinal Journet (C. JOURNET, “De la collégialité épiscopale,” p. 127) and G. Ghirlanda (G. GHIRLANDA, «*Hierarchica communio*», *significato della formula nella «Lumen Gentium»*, coll. «*Analecta Gregoriana*» – 216 (Rome: Université grégorienne 1980); “La notion de communion hiérarchique dans le Concile Vatican II,”

consecrated bishop is not in hierarchical communion, he will still receive ontological participation in the sacred charges, but cannot exercise it. The ecumenical potentiality of this position should not be neglected.³³⁹

Primacy need not be opposed to collegiality. Instead, as W. Henn remarked after an analysis of *Lumen Gentium* 19-24, “the idea of an episcopal college is the framework within which Vatican II wishes to describe not only the sacramental nature of the episcopacy, but also the relation between the episcopacy and the primacy of the pope.”³⁴⁰ Although the doctrine of collegiality of bishops brings in a number of modifications to certain ways of representing the doctrine of primacy, the former cannot suppress the latter. In the same way, primacy cannot suppress the episcopate as if it were an instance created by him, for it is also an integral part of the constitution of the Church by divine will.³⁴¹ That is why Ratzinger asserts as follows: “La primauté a besoin de l’épiscopat, et l’épiscopat de la primauté : tous deux doivent être considérés de plus en plus comme complémentaires, et de moins en moins comme se faisant concurrence.”³⁴²

When the Church affirms the office of the bishop of Rome it “does not separate this office from the mission entrusted to the whole body of bishops, who are also ‘vicars and ambassadors of Christ.’³⁴³ The bishop of Rome is a member of the ‘college,’ and the bishops are his brothers in ministry. It should also be said, reciprocally, that the episcopal collegiality does not stand in opposition to the personal exercise of the primacy nor should it relativize

Année canonique 25 (1981) 231-254. A counter opinion is given by Congar in his review on Ghirlanda’s work: Y. M.-J. CONGAR, *Compte-rendu de «Hierarchica communio», significato della formula nella «Lumen Gentium» par G. Ghirlanda, RSPT*, 66 (1982) 93-97).

³³⁹ Writing in an ecumenical mindset, A. de Halleux says that “la «communion hiérarchique», loin de constituer un sacrement qui ferait dériver de l’Eglise catholique romaine l’ecclésialité des Eglises orthodoxes, comporte une dimension spécifique au «patriarcat de l’Occident», qu’il faudrait se garder d’inscrire au programme du rétablissement de la pleine communion avec les patriarcats de l’Orient orthodoxe. La «communion fraternelle» n’est pas seulement le souvenir d’un passé idéalisé, devant inspirer les conditions du dialogue catholique avec l’Orthodoxie, mais elle présente le modèle précis, à la fois sacramentel et canonique, de l’unité à restaurer entre les deux «Eglises sœurs»,” A. DE HALLEUX, “Fraterna communio,” *Irén.*, 58 (1985), p. 308. According to him, the real ecclésiality which *UR* recognises to the Oriental Churches separated from the Roman see permits us to say that they also represent the Church of Christ on earth.

³⁴⁰ W. HENN, “Historical-Theological Synthesis of the Relation between Primacy and Episcopacy during the Second Millennium,” in: *Il Primato del successore di Pietro: Atti del simposio teologico, Roma, dicembre 1996* (Vatican City, Editrice Vaticana, 1998) p. 265.

³⁴¹ “La volonté du pape en tant qu’il exerce l’autorité suprême dans l’Eglise est limitée par une réalité qui fait partie intégrante de la constitution de l’Eglise de par la volonté de Dieu: l’épiscopat. Ce n’est pas seulement en fait que le pape ne peut pas abolir l’épiscopat—car il se priverait du moyen d’exercer son propre pouvoir dans l’Eglise universelle—mais il se trouve en face d’un épiscopat, qui n’a pas été établi par lui comme son corps de fonctionnaires qu’il aurait d’ailleurs le droit, sinon la possibilité pratique, de supprimer. Mais l’épiscopat lui-même est de droit divin, l’essence juridique de l’Eglise est constituée à la fois par la Primauté pontificale et par l’épiscopat, qui, tous deux, procèdent de manière également immédiate de l’institution par le Christ,” K. RAHNER, “Quelques réflexions sur les principes constitutionnels de l’Eglise,” p. 546.

³⁴² J. RATZINGER, *Le Nouveau Peuple de Dieu*, p. 71.

³⁴³ *LG* 27.

it.”³⁴⁴ That means collegiality has a special significance for the primatial office.³⁴⁵ Since episcopate is one of the terms of the relation that is primacy, it must always strive to promote collegiality.³⁴⁶ As M. Buckley has noted, “one can gauge the effectiveness of the primacy by the vitality of collegiality within the Church.”³⁴⁷ When we see bishops flourish as bishops, then we can say that primacy accomplishes its function properly. If, on the other hand, the bishops are seen merely as implementers of curial decisions, then primacy—which has to be an instrument of collegiality—will be failing in its role.³⁴⁸

One of the most crucial ecclesiological questions facing us today is the following: “How to achieve the relationship between the episcopate and the primacy not in terms of dialectical tension, but in terms of support—such support that the contemporary papacy can echo quite authentically the claim of Gregory the Great: “*Meus honor est fratrum meorum solidus vigor*”³⁴⁹

5.9. Collegiality as a Service of the Church

The collegial character of the pastoral government of the Church applies not only to the organisation and juridical relationship, but also to the nature and reality of the Church, at whose service the pastorate is established. As Ratzinger formulates it,

Les discussions autour de la collégialité ne sont pas des discussions entre le pape et les évêques sur la dévolution des pouvoirs au sein de l’Eglise, bien qu’elles puissent, dans les faits, dégénérer facilement dans cette direction et que les personnes qui y sont impliquées doivent se demander sans relâche si elles ne sont pas tombées dans un tel travers.³⁵⁰

In the opinion of J. C. Groot, the documents of Vatican II envisage collegiality “quasi exclusivement dans les aspects qui concernent l’organisation et les rapports juridiques dans

³⁴⁴ CDF, “The Primacy of the Successor of Peter in the Mystery of the Church,” n°6, www.ewtn.com/library/curia/cdfprima.htm.

³⁴⁵ “In any realistic dialog about the primacy, there has to be some consideration of how collegiality is lived, and how, not merely in theory, but in actual fact, the Papal Curia—an administrative structure—relates to and fosters collegiality—a doctrine of faith,” J. R. QUINN, “The Claims of the Primacy and the costly call to Christian Unity,” www.ewtn.com.

³⁴⁶ According to Archbishop J. R. Quinn, it is worthwhile to note that Pope Pius IX, during whose pontificate the dogma of papal primacy and infallibility was defined, “vigorously upheld the public statement of the German Bishops that Bishops are not mere legates of the Pope. This doctrine was more amply articulated in the Second Vatican Council. Such a doctrine cannot be affirmed in theory and denied in practice. Yet there are practical instances which are tantamount to making Bishops managers who only work under instructions rather than true witnesses of faith who teach—in communion with the Pope—in the name of Christ,” *ibid.* See also our *Introduction*

³⁴⁷ M. BUCKLEY, “«Perpetuum utriusque unitatis principium ac visibile fundamentum»,” p. 328.

³⁴⁸ “A primacy that does not strengthen the college of bishops precisely as such would fail to realize the primacy taught by either Vatican Council. It would rather become domination, actually destructive of the vigor of the episcopate and of the life of local Churches by its excessive centralization,” *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 329; Cf. GREGORY THE GREAT, *Epistola ad Eulogium Alexandrium* (“My honour is the firm strength of my brothers”).

³⁵⁰ J. RATZINGER, *Eglise, Politique et Œcuménisme*, p. 23.

l'Église.”³⁵¹ This is especially true of the discussion on the (vertical) relationship between the pope and the episcopate and the (horizontal) relationship among bishops in the form of the council of bishops (*concilium episcoporum*) or the episcopal conference, and the practical consequences of such an organisation for the reflection and the action of the local bishop.³⁵²

5.9.1. *Communio Episcoporum* and *Communio Fidelium*

It is a fact that the collegiality of the pastoral ministers is not simply an organisational factor; it is also the spiritual solidarity of many persons in the unity—in faith—of teaching, sanctifying and governing the activity of the unique Church of Christ. The Church itself is a spiritual solidarity of many persons—*communio fidelium* in the unanimity of one faith, hope and charity for one unique Lord. Both these communions are the fruit of the Spirit who works both in the head and the members. We have here two forms of communion, kept united by the Holy Spirit: *communio fidelium* and *communio episcoporum*. These two forms of communion appeared simultaneously. For when the ecclesial communion is fashioned by the Spirit, the ministry also started, by the power of the Spirit, to function collegially. The Spirit, who came down on all the believers, descended on the Apostles in a special way so that they may carry out the ministry for which they were called. Hence, we cannot attribute a priority to the *communio episcoporum* vis-à-vis the *communio fidelium*. In fact, “tout conduit à penser qu’il faut reconnaître à la communion ecclésiale une priorité non pas temporelle, mais de nature, vis-à-vis de la ‘communio episcoporum’.”³⁵³ If community is in need of ministry, the ministry presupposes community. Besides, ministers are members of the community of the faithful, before they become ministers. “La priorité de la «communio fidelium» lui confère une valeur normative par rapport à la «communio episcoporum.»”³⁵⁴ There is between the *communio fidelium* and *communio episcoporum* a close connection and intimate relationship in virtue of which we find in both one and the same mystery of communion. In both, we are before a spiritual community engendered by the Spirit. In both, it is to the community as a whole, and not to the individual members, that a certain number of prerogatives are recognised. In both, the community cannot be reduced to the sum of its individual members; rather it is a coherent whole. The episcopal college can be seen as a certain crystallisation or a particularisation of the ecclesial communion. In the unanimous teaching and governing activity of the ministerial college, it is the *consensus fidelium* which finds its expression in a concentrated way. It is in

³⁵¹ J. C. GROOT, “Aspects horizontaux de la collégialité,” p. 805.

³⁵² See for details of these issues, our discussion *infra* in the section “Structural expression of communion in Regional Churches.”

³⁵³ J. C. GROOT, “Aspects horizontaux de la collégialité,” p. 812.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

this way that the ministerial teaching has a special authority—as an authentic expression of the faith of the ‘*communio fidelium*.’

However, the awareness of what is common should not lead one to lose sight of what is particular. For the episcopate is a special service within *communio fidelium*. If the episcopal college is a crystallisation of the ecclesial communion, it is in view of the special service the ministerial college has to render in order to ensure the building up of the Church. The ministry, besides being a crystallisation, is also a special service used by the Lord to lead his Bride on the path of life. Hence, there cannot be any opposition between the *communio fidelium* and the special service of the ministers; for if there is an opposition, this service will not lead to the edification of the Church.

5.9.2. Primacy vis-à-vis *Communio Episcoporum* and *Communio Fidelium*

If episcopate is the concentration of the *communio fidelium*, the ministry of the primate can be seen as a concentration in an individual person of both the *communio fidelium* and *communio episcoporum*. This is in view of the special ministry he has to exercise, viz. to be the permanent principle and the visible foundation of the *communio fidelium* and *communio episcoporum*. But neither the former nor the latter is dependent for its existence on the pope, but on the action of the Spirit.³⁵⁵ The primacy can be exercised only in accord with the whole Church and the whole episcopal college. It means that this ministry is always exercised in a collegial context and thereby it possesses a collegial character.³⁵⁶ However, we must desist from making the ministry of the pope dependent on the assent of the faithful and the bishops.

5.9.3. Perichoretic Understanding of Collegiality

J. Ratzinger, underlining the basically collegial character of the ministry of the bishop, has said that “[l]’évêque n’est pas évêque isolément, il l’est seulement dans la communion catholique de ceux qui l’ont été avant lui, qui le sont avec lui et qui le seront après lui.”³⁵⁷ One becomes a bishop by entering into the communion of bishops.³⁵⁸ That is to say,

...le ministère épiscopal existe, de par sa nature, toujours dans la pluralité, dans un nous, qui donne, seul, sa signification à chaque ego. Entrer dans le ministère, chargé de la responsabilité pour l’ordre dans l’Eglise de Dieu, c’est s’insérer dans un nous qui en tant qu’ensemble, transmet l’héritage apostolique. Le

³⁵⁵ If at all we can speak of their dependence on the papacy, it is in the measure in which these two forms of communion are in need of being confirmed in faith.

³⁵⁶ Cf. J. C. GROOT, “Aspects horizontaux de la collégialité,” p. 820.

³⁵⁷ J. RATZINGER, *Eglise, Politique et Œcuménisme*, p. 24.

³⁵⁸ “Le caractère communautaire, le lien mutuel, l’obligation de tenir compte les uns des autres, la collaboration, font partie de la structure essentielle de la fonction hiérarchique dans l’Eglise,” ID, *Le Nouveau Peuple de Dieu*, p. 116.

communautaire, être lié l'un à l'autre, avec égard les uns envers les autres, agir les uns avec les autres, tout cela fait partie de la structure essentielle du ministère dans l'Eglise.³⁵⁹

This tight link between the *one* and the *many* (I and We) is verifiable in every aspect of ecclesial existence, a characteristic which can be, fundamentally, traced back to the mystery of the triune God: “une conception de Dieu, où le Dieu unique et éternel sans entrave à son unité et unicité indivisibles, englobe cependant le nous du Père, du Fils et du Saint-Esprit, l'un n'est pas dans l'unité sous forme d'une monade figée, mais dans la réalité accomplie d'amour infini.”³⁶⁰ Patristic theology called this aspect of Trinitarian mystery as *perichoresis*, according to which “cette unité est un passage de l'un dans l'autre et une compénétration, dynamiques, éternels, d'esprit à esprit, d'amour à amour.”³⁶¹ According to Ratzinger, the unity of the Church as well as that of the episcopate can be better grasped through the category of *perichoresis*.

L'unité de l'Eglise repose sur la périchorèse des «églises», sur la périchorèse du ministère épiscopal, sur la pénétration mutuelle du Nous de la vie multiple, qui est en elle, et dont le représentant objectif est le ministère des successeurs des Apôtres, se manifestant dans le Nous du collège épiscopal.³⁶²

Thus we see that the collegiality of bishops exists because there is fraternity of the Churches; the collegiality of bishops accomplishes its function only when it serves this fraternity and realises itself as a fraternity.³⁶³

5.10. Collegiality and Communion of Churches

That the collegiality of bishops exists because there is fraternity of the Churches is a traditional patristic data. But how far is this vision conveyed by the texts of Vatican II? In what follows, our attempt will be to discover an answer to this question. Examining *Lumen Gentium* 22, we have found that the position of the Council amounts to a positive step forward with regard to preceding ecclesiology which was characterized by the cleavage between the power of order and the power of jurisdiction and the dependence of the episcopate on the pope as the source of its jurisdictional power; it is still not free of an imbalance.

³⁵⁹ J. RATZINGER, “Les implications pastorales de la doctrine de la collégialité des évêques,” p. 45.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² ID, *Le Nouveau Peuple de Dieu*, pp. 116-117.

³⁶³ “Autrement dit, il y a finalement collégialité des évêques puisqu'il y a fraternité de l'Eglise, et la collégialité des évêques n'accomplit son sens que si elle est au service de cette fraternité et que si elle est elle-même réalisée en fraternité et en sens fraternel,” ID, “Les implications pastorales de la doctrine de la collégialité des évêques,” p. 46. Cf. ID, “The Ministerial Office and the Unity of the Church,” p. 54.

5.10.1. The Bishop, his Church and Communion

By episcopal ordination, one is ordained and designated for the care of a local Church; at the same time, *ipso facto*, that ordination makes of him a member of the episcopal college. The details of these two relationships are the subject matter of our discussion here.

Commenting on *Lumen Gentium* 22 Legrand says that “il n’articule pas expressément l’ordination épiscopale et la présidence d’une Eglise effective. [...] Réduite à ce texte, la collégialité pourrait représenter un obstacle pour une ecclésiologie de communion.”³⁶⁴ That is to say, if we remain with this formulation alone, we will be soon confronted with the dilemma as to whether ordination constitutes one first the head of a local Church or rather a member of the college. But, if we are willing to come out of a strictly juridical view and look at the question from a theological point of view, it will not be difficult to see—as Congar has remarked—how it is impossible to either separate or oppose these two points of view.³⁶⁵ It is more opportune to see that “l’ évêque, de par son ordination à la tête d’une Eglise, assure la référence de son Eglise locale à l’Eglise catholique. Il rend présentes en même temps, dans son Eglise, les nécessités inhérentes à la communion avec l’Eglise entière....”³⁶⁶ This view corresponds to the concept of the bishop in the antiquity. Accordingly, although the bishop had jurisdiction only in his diocese, his episcopate authorised him to handle affairs of the regional and universal Church in a synod or a council. According to Legrand, the ecclesial rootage of the episcopate is necessary if we do not want to reduce the episcopal college into a governing body of the universal Church, as had been suggested by K. Rahner.³⁶⁷ As J. Hamer has so beautifully expressed it, “[l]a collégialité est au service de la communion et est en même temps une forme de cette même communion.”³⁶⁸

Besides, if we were to limit the function of bishops only to his diocese and to concede to him only optionally the solicitude for the universal Church, we would be jeopardizing the catholicity of the Church, for “on enferme alors l’ évêque et son Eglise dans une fausse particularité.”³⁶⁹ Being concerned principally with protecting the papal primacy with all possible juridical guarantees, Vatican II has not—thinks Legrand—studied with the same

³⁶⁴ H.-M. LEGRAND, “L’Eglise se réalise en un lieu,” p. 307-308.

³⁶⁵ Cf. CONGAR, Yves M.-J., “La consécration épiscopale et la succession apostolique constituent-elles chef d’une église locale ou membre du collège?” in: *Ministère et Communion ecclésiale* (Paris: Cerf, 1971), pp. 123-140.

³⁶⁶ H.-M. LEGRAND, “L’Eglise se réalise en un lieu,” p. 308-309.

³⁶⁷ Cf. K. RAHNER, “De l’ épiscopat,” in *Eglises chrétiennes et épiscopat*, (Paris-Tours: Mame, 1966), pp. 209, 211, 215.

³⁶⁸ J. HAMER, “La responsabilité collégiale de chaque évêque,” p. 653.

³⁶⁹ H.-M. LEGRAND, “L’Eglise se réalise en un lieu,” p. 309.

assiduity the forms of communion among the Churches, where primacy does not habitually intervene with all its weight.³⁷⁰

5.10.2. Local Churches and Ecclesial Communion

The Church of God cannot exist apart from the local Churches.³⁷¹ “It is in these individual Churches—especially in their Eucharistic celebrations—over which the bishops preside that the Church becomes actual.”³⁷² Their communion constitutes the unity of the Church. Bishops as a college represent, foster and actualise the communion of Churches—a communion that the *munus* of primacy also has to foster.

Here the Church is understood and is experienced as a communion, an event, in which the word and sacraments come into presence and give historical tangibility to God’s offer of salvation and sanctification in Christ to a given people at this time and this place.³⁷³

This actualisation of the Church constitutes the greatest challenge of the episcopate today. Many Catholics do not experience the Church as a vital community. In large anonymous parishes they find themselves isolated. So one of the most urgent needs today is to restore local Churches, ‘in which and out of which’ the universal Church exists, that is, small genuine communities that are eucharistic communities within which one can experience the ecclesial Body of Christ precisely as a community. Episcopal leadership should encourage such small communions and the diocese itself should become communion of communions. Just as the primacy and the episcopal college have to foster the communion of Churches, each bishop has to foster this communion within his local/particular Church.

5.10.3. Communion of Churches to Communion of Bishops

Communion of bishops as embodied in the episcopal college is intimately bound up with the communion of Churches. “Le service que ce collège a le mandat d’exercer à l’égard des églises se fonde sur la force sacramentelle de la consécration épiscopale; soit cadre est la communion ecclésiale avec toutes ses caractéristiques et ses exigences propres.”³⁷⁴ Thus, the fraternity of those who embody their communities is situated within the horizon of the Church

³⁷⁰ However, the Council has not totally ignored this point in that it highlighted the importance of patriarchates (*LG* 23; *UR* 4 et 14; *OE* 11) and episcopal conferences.

³⁷¹ Cf. *LG* 23.

³⁷² M. BUCKLEY, “«Perpetuum utriusque unitatis principium ac visibile fundamentum»,” p. 330.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ G. ALBERIGO, “Institutions exprimant la communion entre l’épiscopat universel et l’évêque de Rome,” p. 266.

catholic which is also a fraternal symphony moved by the Spirit. According to the Council, between these various Churches, there developed a relationship of sisters.³⁷⁵

With the shadow of Vatican I's unilateral affirmation of the papal primacy looming large, Vatican II was careful to balance the episcopal office of the college of bishops with that of the pope, being enlightened by the views of the theologians who had affirmed, during the preceding decades, the essential relationship between the episcopal collegiality and the ecclesiology of communion and the primary value of the latter with regard to the former.³⁷⁶ It is important to know how the rapport between the communion of Churches and the episcopal college is articulated. As G. Alberigo has said, "si cette connexion n'est pas correctement respectée, on risque de parvenir à une discontinuité inacceptable entre collégialité et communion, ce qui aurait des effets désastreux."³⁷⁷

On the one hand, we have to say that a condition of parity characterises the unity in communion of 'sister-Churches'; each of them "is bound to represent the universal Church as perfectly as possible";³⁷⁸ they are constituted in the image of the universal Church;³⁷⁹ in each of them "the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and active."³⁸⁰ At the same time, each of them has its proper vocation: "chacune vit dans une histoire déterminée, est impliquée dans un contexte humain spécifique et aspire à participer à la symphonie variée (LG 13, 22, 23, 32) de la *Catholica*."³⁸¹

On the other hand, in another respect, the different Churches cannot be said to be enjoying parity. For their gifts and their roles within the communion are varied. The 'apostolic Churches,' for instance, enjoy a special place: "[l]'égalité constitutive des églises se compose ainsi d'une inégalité de responsabilités et de fonctions qui prend nécessairement, au cours du temps, des accents et des formes qui changent malgré la fidélité au projet originaire."³⁸²

If communion of bishops is intimately bound up with the communion of Churches, the unequal equality among the communion of Churches is reflected also in the communion

³⁷⁵ UR 14. This theme of sister-Churches has relevance not only in an ecumenical context, but also in intra-Catholic setting. Cf. G. ALBERIGO, "Institutions exprimant la communion entre l'épiscopat universel et l'évêque de Rome," p. 261, n. 2.

³⁷⁶ Cf. K. RAHNER, "Le rapport entre primauté et épiscopat comme cas particulier du rapport entre église totale et église locale," in: *Episkopat und Primat*, «Quaestiones Disputantiae – 11» (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1961); J. HAMER, *L'Eglise est une communion*, "Unam Sanctam – 40» (Paris: Cerf, 1962).

³⁷⁷ G. ALBERIGO, "Institutions exprimant la communion entre l'épiscopat universel et l'évêque de Rome," p. 272.

³⁷⁸ AG 20.

³⁷⁹ LG 23.

³⁸⁰ CD 11.

³⁸¹ G. ALBERIGO, "Institutions exprimant la communion entre l'épiscopat universel et l'évêque de Rome," in: *Les Eglises après Vatican II. Dynamisme et Prospective. Actes du Colloque international de Bologne 1980* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1981), p. 273, hereafter cited as G. ALBERIGO, "Institutions exprimant la communion..."

³⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 274.

within the body of bishops. Fundamentally equal from a sacramental point of view, their authority is varied in function of their services and charisms. These services are exercised in a collegial form. The collegial form of service rendered to the communion of Churches is demanded not by some institutional logic, but by the conviction that only it can serve better the evangelic witnessing of the Church and her effort of proclamation in a world which is increasingly egalitarian. It is therefore absurd to say that the ecclesial communion imprisons the dynamism awakened by the Spirit in rigid and automatic structures.

In this context, one must be also aware of the fragility and imperfection of all institutions invented for the purpose of serving the communion. It is clear that the richness, pluralism and multiplicity of the forms of Christian communion cannot find full 'realisation' in any one of the institutions, however perfected it would be. From the point of view of communion, the event and communion cannot coincide in their extension.

5.11. Concluding Remarks

The purpose of the above discussion on the relationship between primacy and episcopate is part of our attempt to articulate the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church. The point of departure of the discussion was the two lacuna identified in the teaching of Vatican II: (1) the failure to articulate the relationship between the communion of Churches and the episcopal collegiality, and (2) the non-reciprocal relationship between the pope and the college of bishops in which he is the head. The utility of the views of M. Buckley must be judged in this context.

The conception of primacy and episcopacy as *relations*, as he developed, is capable of showing the reciprocity between the two, for neither can be defined or understood without its term of relation or reference. In the case of papacy, the term of reference is the unity of the Church and episcopate. And episcopate has for term of reference the solidarity among bishops (not exclusive of the head of the college) and the communities in which they exercise the leadership. Thus, the *munus* of the pope is basically a service of unity, a service which is basically an episcopal ministry which has attained its full amplitude. In this sense, the function of primacy in no way contradicts the collegial constitution of the Church. As the servant of communion, the pope has also the necessary authority to fulfil his function. But this authority can be seen as habitual and substitutional. The habitual authority consists in keeping a watch over respective individual authorities. The substitutional authority is called for when the individual bishops or their local Churches are unable to fulfil their duties. Undoubtedly, we can recognise here the ideas of Father Tillard appearing in a different form.

We have also seen that the source of collegiality and episcopal powers is the sacramental ordination. The powers, however, cannot be exercised without hierarchical communion, which is the *sine qua non* condition for the episcopal function and corresponding authority. The episcopal ministry, so understood, has a special significance for the relationship between primacy and episcopate. Primacy needs episcopate and *vice versa*. In this sense, the success of primacy is to be gauged in reference to the vitality of the episcopate. That is to say, the relation that exists between primacy and episcopate is not a non-reciprocal relation.

The theologians we have discussed also underline the close relation between *communio ecclesiarum* and *collegium episcoporum*. Accordingly, it is stated that episcopal communion is a crystallisation of the ecclesial communion. So also, the ministry of the pope is a crystallisation, in a single person, of the ecclesial and episcopal communion. That is to say, the collegiality of bishops exists because there is fraternity of Churches. The articulation of this relationship is of crucial importance for a sane ecclesiology. Nonetheless, we have to be aware that a perfect parity does not exist among the various local Churches. This is reflected also in the communion of bishops. Although fundamentally equal from a sacramental point of view, their authority varies according to the charisms and services. Here, we are reminded of Afanasiev who spoke of the hierarchy of churches based on their witnessing authority and the hierarchy of the authority of bishops inasmuch as they are the bishops of these Churches.

With the above discussion, now the stage is set to take up again the crucial question with which we had started this chapter, viz. the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church.

6. Relation between the Local Church and the Universal Church

6.1. Introduction

This attempt to explore the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church, according to the Catholic ecclesiology, presupposes our preceding discussion on the *Realisation on the Church in a Place* as well as the discussion on the *Relationship between Primacy and Episcopate*. We will start with a quick survey of the principal affirmations of the Council with respect to the relationship between the universal Church and the local Churches.

6.2. Principal Conciliar Affirmations on the Relationship between the Local Church and the Universal Church

6.2.1. Two ecclesiological models

We can identify two ecclesiological models which differ from each other in their point of departure. The first model starts from the centre of unity of the Church and moves then to the local Churches. This model is generally identified as universalist. J. A. Komonchak calls it a *descending ecclesiology* or an *ecclesiology from above*. Here the relationship between the universal Church and the local Church is that of the whole and the part. From the organisational point of view, the authority resides in a central organ from which it is distributed to the periphery. This view quite often leads to consider the Church of Rome as the universal Church so much so that the relation between the universal Church and the local Churches is interpreted as a relationship between this Church and other Churches as if the Roman Church was not a local Church herself.³⁸³

The other model moves from the local diversity, where the unique Church of God is incarnated, to reach the universal Church. In Komonchak's view, it is an *ascending ecclesiology* or an *ecclesiology from below*. Here the 'whole' is not conceived as anterior to 'parts.' Rather the unique 'whole' comes into being and is constituted of, in and through the realisation of its many constituents. All the intrinsic and distinctive elements which constitute the reality are individual realisations and the relationship which makes of the individual realisations a single whole is rooted in a common participation in a unique reality which constitutes all of them.³⁸⁴ In this perspective, the universal Church does not have a separate reality from that of the local Churches. The universal Church is the communion of the local Churches.³⁸⁵ Both these models can find their support in the conciliar texts.

6.2.2. Key Conciliar Texts

Key conciliar affirmations on the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church may be found in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963) 41, §2, *Lumen Gentium* (1964) 23, §1; 26, §1 and *Christus Dominus* (1965) 11, §1. In the very first document to be promulgated by the Council, it declared in no unclear terms that a local Church—gathered at the eucharistic celebration around its bishop—is “the pre-eminent manifestation of the Church.”³⁸⁶ *Lumen Gentium* 26 receives this affirmation of the *Constitution on Liturgy* when

³⁸³ We may recall that this point was raised by W. Kasper in this theological debate with Ratzinger. See our discussion on *Ratzinger-Kasper* debate.

³⁸⁴ Cf. J. A. KOMONCHAK, “L'Eglise universelle, communion d'Eglises locales,” pp. 55-64

³⁸⁵ See our discussion on *Ratzinger-Kasper* debate.

³⁸⁶ SC 41 §2.

it states that the “Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called Churches in the New Testament.” Accordingly, the full ecclesial reality of the local Church is based on its eucharistic celebration. In another key formula, *Lumen Gentium* explains the mystery of the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church: after affirming that particular Churches are “*ad imaginem Ecclesiae universalis formatis*,” it quickly added that it is in these Churches and out of them (*in quibus et ex quibus*) that *una et unica Ecclesia catholica existit* (23, §1).

6.2.3. Ambiguities

Many commentators of the Council have, in recent times, spoken of several ambiguities in the conciliar pronouncements on the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church. The assertion of *Lumen Gentium* 23, we have just cited above, is typical: when it asserts that particular Churches are “fashioned after the model of the universal Church,” priority seems to be given to the universal Church, but in its statement that the one and only Catholic Church comes into being in and from the particular Churches, the accent is shifted to the particular Church. This ambiguity is observable also in the perception of one’s belongingness to the Church: it is not clear whether through baptism one becomes, first, a member of the local Church and then only that of the universal Church or vice versa. The same difficulty is encountered in the theology of episcopate. It is not clearly established whether, through episcopal ordination, one is, first, the head of a local Church and then only a member of the college of bishops or vice versa. The reason for this ambiguity seems to be the co-existence, without synthesis, of two visions of the Church we have stated above.

6.2.4. Methodological Option of the Council

It has been observed that the Second Vatican Council’s point of departure was a universalistic vision of the Church.³⁸⁷ This methodological option of the Council has left consequential impact on several issues related to ecclesiology. Here, we are not occulting the fact that the conciliar texts contain some important pronouncements on the Church as a communion of Churches. But unfortunately, the relation between the local Church and the universal Church is often treated and clarified there in reference to the relation between the

³⁸⁷ It is this vision which is reflected in the following statement of Mgr Veuillot, the relator of the commission preparing the schema of *Christus Dominus*, who said it as a justification for why the Council chose to treat first the relationship of the episcopal body as a whole to the universal Church and subsequently only each bishop’s relationship to his Church: “Christ first founded his Church, that means the universal Church, and only afterwards were there constituted particular Churches or dioceses,” *Schema Decreti de pastorali episcoporum munere in Ecclesia. Textus emendatus et relationes* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1964) 10-11, n. 35.

episcopacy and papal primacy. Accordingly, the universal Church is the Church over which the pope presides and the ‘particular’ Church is the community over which a bishop presides. The relationship between the local Church and the universal Church is deduced from the relationship between the powers of the pope and those of the bishops.

Thus, although *Sacrosanctum Concilium* made a crucial statement that the local celebration of the Eucharist around the bishop is “the pre-eminent manifestation of the Church,”³⁸⁸ at that stage of the Council—as G. Alberigo observes—the Council “même en dépassant le monolithisme de l’ecclésiologie universaliste, ne parvenait pas à considérer explicitement l’église universelle comme communion entre les églises.”³⁸⁹ But the situation changes a bit in *Lumen Gentium*: it asserts that the Spirit unifies the Church by means of ministry and communion,³⁹⁰ a communion which has for subjects the particular Churches,³⁹¹ in such a way that the unity of Church can be also called ‘unity of communion.’³⁹² Later on, the same constitution asserts that “*mystici Corporis [...] est etiam corpus Ecclesiarum*”³⁹³ and “*in quibus et ex quibus [i.e. particular Churches] una et unica Ecclesia catholica existit.*”³⁹⁴ Despite these affirmations, laudable as they are, “il est surprenant—dit Alberigo—que le long et tourmenté N. 22, consacré expressément à la doctrine sur le collège des évêques et son chef, ne contienne aucune allusion à la communion entre les églises ni au rapport entre cette communion et le collège épiscopal.”³⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the affirmation of LG 23b mentioned above—“Mystical Body [...] is also the body of the Churches”—is crucial from the perspective of an ecclesiology of communion.

Cette affirmation acquiert toute son importance si on la met en rapport et en synergie avec les autres affirmations qui reconnaissent l’Eglise du Christ vraiment présente dans les communautés locales légitimes, elles aussi appelées Eglises dans le Nouveau Testament et qui, en conséquence, mettent la substance absolue

³⁸⁸ Cf. SC 41; LG, 26a.

³⁸⁹ G. ALBERIGO, “Institutions exprimant la communion...,” p. 260, n. 1.

³⁹⁰ “He unified in communion and in works of ministry, He both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns with His fruits,” LG 4.

³⁹¹ “...within the Church particular Churches hold a rightful place; these Churches retain their own traditions, without in any way opposing the primacy of the Chair of Peter, which presides over the whole assembly of charity and protects legitimate differences, while at the same time assuring that such differences do not hinder unity but rather contribute toward it,” LG 13.

³⁹² “The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who [...] are honoured with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve the unity of communion with the successor of Peter,” LG 15.

³⁹³ LG, 23b.

³⁹⁴ LG, 23a.

³⁹⁵ G. ALBERIGO, “Institutions exprimant la communion...,” p. 260, n. 1. He then adds: “ En vérité, la commission doctrinale du concile affirmait, à titre d’examen des amendements, que dans le texte avaient été exprimées «indoles et ratio collegialis totius episcopatus duplici ex capite, ex ccmunionione interecclesiali iam intiquitus vigente et ex conciliis» (SH XI/3 274-276). Toutefois, le texte définitif a laissé dans l’ombre cette communion qui, au contraire, avait eu dans une rédaction interlocutoire une formulation intéressante : ...”*communione inter ecclesias ope episcoporum enixe commendat*» (SH 22, 61-63),” *ibid.*

et la manifestation principale de l'Église locale dans l'assemblée eucharistique réunie sous la présidence de l'évêque qui la régit comme *vicarius Christi* (cf. *Lumen gentium* n. 26 et 27 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* n. 47: *Christus Dominus* n. 11). Analogue est l'affirmation que les Églises locales peuvent jouir de traditions propres, qu'elles ont chacune leurs grâces propres et leurs charismes particuliers à se communiquer réciproquement (*Lumen gentium* n. 13) et que ceci vaut aussi pour les «novellae ecclesiae... usque plene constituentur» (n. 17). Tout cela prend encore plus de valeur si on le rapproche de l'autre affirmation que, au cours des siècles, se sont constitués entre certaines Églises locales des «coetus organice coniunctos» qui, non seulement jouissent d'une discipline propre ou d'usages liturgiques propres, mais même d'un patrimoine théologique et spirituel propre (n. 23) et que celui-ci trouve une application typique — mais non unique — dans les Églises dites patriarcales, mères de la foi.³⁹⁶

6.3. On the Priority between the Universal Church and the Local Church

It will not be an exaggeration, if we state that the question of priority between the universal Church and the local Church has polarised the post-conciliar ecclesiology. The recent debate between Ratzinger and Kasper is typical. A satisfactory solution to it is hard to find. We can only gather different theological opinions and attempt a synthesis which is faithful to the ecclesiology of communion.

6.3.1. Different Understandings of the Universal Church

When the *CCEO* was in preparation, G. Nedungatt had enumerated the manifold ways in which the Universal Church is understood.³⁹⁷ According to him, it can be understood as: (a) the sum total of local/particular Churches, now divided among themselves or as (b) a federation of Churches more or less united among themselves; (c) *Ecclesia universalis* can be also seen as *Ecclesia universa*, because there is but one Church; (d) according to another view, only local/particular Churches do exist, and the universal Church is an abstraction,³⁹⁸ (e) still another view considers the universal Church as a subsistent entity apart from the individual Churches;³⁹⁹ finally, (f) there are others who identify the universal Church with the Latin Church.⁴⁰⁰ Theoretically, all the above ways of regarding the universal Church is outdated since Vatican II, according to which the one and only Church of God exists in various individual Churches. Thus, according to the Oriental Canonist, “the universal Church is posited in the individual Churches, which constitute it. They are to be regarded not as territorial divisions of the universal Church, but as its portions (*portionem Ecclesiae universalis*’), for the universal Church is present in them, the whole of it though not wholly

³⁹⁶ G. ALBERIGO, “Servir la communion des Églises,” p. 43. The status of *Catholic* patriarchal Churches will be discussed, *infra*, under the title, *Place of Catholic Oriental Churches within the Communion of Churches*.

³⁹⁷ Cf. G. NEDUNGATT, “*Ecclesia universalis, particularis, singularis*,” 75-87.

³⁹⁸ The author calls it an *ecclesiological nominalism* or *conceptualism*.

³⁹⁹ The author calls it an *ecclesiological Platonism*, based on Plato's subsistent ideas.

⁴⁰⁰ The author calls it a *mono-acculturation*.

(*totum in parte, sed non totaliter*).⁴⁰¹ Briefly, in his view, “the universal Church is not *formally* a subsistent entity, but it exists *fundamentally* in the individual Churches at the level of the diocese/eparchy and only in them.”⁴⁰² This understanding of the universal Church conditions its relationship with local/particular Churches: “if it is correct to say that the universal Church subsists in the individual Churches, it is also true that conversely, the individual Churches exist in the universal Church.”⁴⁰³

Prof. Nedungatt also makes a distinction between *Church Catholic* and *Church Universal*. According to him, the Church as it manifested itself for the first time in Jerusalem was *catholic*, i.e. it contained in itself the seeds of other Churches and was destined to be called later the mother of all Churches. But it was not *universal*, because there was but one Church.⁴⁰⁴ If we can make such a distinction between ‘universal’ and ‘catholic’ then we can say that “the universal Church is formally a concept with a corresponding objective content existing fundamentally in the individual Churches, while the catholic Church represents the one and only Church, which is the Body of Christ, in its capacity to recapitulate all humanity and cultures.”⁴⁰⁵

6.3.2. Views on the Priority between the Universal Church and the Local Church

A) Theological Literature

Many theologians⁴⁰⁶ would join G. Alberigo in stating that during the post-conciliar period we observe “des signes alarmants de reprises nostalgiques de l’ecclésiologie universaliste, signes dictés plus par des précautions ecclésiastiques que par un renouveau créatif de cette même ecclésiologie universaliste.”⁴⁰⁷

The following are some of the views formulated in favour of a priority of the universal Church: (a) only the universal Church is comprehensive, including the Church in heaven; the local Church depends on the universal Church, which has absolute ontological priority.⁴⁰⁸ As such, the universal Church has pre-eminence and absolute ontological priority; (b) Christ has

⁴⁰¹ G. NEDUNGATT, “Ecclesia universalis, particularis, singularis,” p. 78.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, n. 19. In this sense, the title of de Lubac’s book, *Les églises particulière dans l’Eglise universelle*, is significant.

⁴⁰⁴ This distinction seems to shed some light on the controversy over the historical priority of the universal Church saying that the Jerusalem Church was universal. Here, Nedungatt is faithful to the Oriental tradition which gives pre-eminence to the interior aspect of Church’s catholicity. Cf. N. Afanasiev, J.-M.R. Tillard and J.D. Zizioulas (*See supra* the chapters two, five and three respectively).

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. W. Kasper, J. Komonchak, H.-M. Legrand, J. Famerée, etc.

⁴⁰⁷ G. ALBERIGO, “Institutions exprimant la communion...,” p. 265.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. B. MONDIN, *La chiesa primizia del Regno* (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1986) 405-418.

founded only the Universal Church and not local Churches;⁴⁰⁹ (c) the universal Church is the exemplary, efficient and the final cause of the local Church;⁴¹⁰ (d) Only the universal Church can be the universal sacrament of salvation;⁴¹¹ (e) only the universal Church is assured of infallibility and indefectibility⁴¹² and holiness;⁴¹³ (f) the universal Church preceded the local Church temporally and ontologically.⁴¹⁴

Explicit assertions of a priority of the local Church are hard to find. B. Forte is one of those who seem to give some priority to the local Church. He defends the primacy of the local Church, because—in his opinion—the Church that is born in the Eucharist is ‘by priority’ (*prioritariamente*) the local Church and also because there is no truly ecclesial act which is not by origin (*originariamente*) an act of the local Church.⁴¹⁵ According to S. Dianich, the necessarily particular event of the communication and reception of faith is the ‘first principle’ of the Church from which all other elements are derived as developments of its universal virtualities. As such, there is a methodological priority of the local event of the Church in the construction of an ecclesiology.⁴¹⁶

B) Recent Magisterium

Post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Paul VI, calls for the balance between the local Church and the universal Church. After affirming that the Church of Christ is a “universal Church without boundaries or frontiers,”⁴¹⁷ the pope exhorts: “Let us be very careful not to conceive of the universal Church as the sum, or, if one can say so, the more or less anomalous federation of essentially different individual Churches. In the mind of the Lord the Church is universal by vocation and mission...”⁴¹⁸ “Nevertheless this universal Church is in practice incarnate in the individual Churches made up of such or such an actual

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. A. BANDERA, “Iglesia particular y Iglesia universal,” *Ciencia Tomista* 105 (1978) 80-87; W. BERTRAMS, “L’ufficio dell’unità della Chiesa e la moltitudine delle Chiese,” *Vita e pensiero* 54 (1971) 271-272; A. D’ORS, “Iglesia universal e iglesia particular,” *Ius Canonicum* 28 (1988) 295-303.

⁴¹⁰ W. BERTRAMS, “L’ufficio dell’unità della Chiesa e la moltitudine delle Chiese.”

⁴¹¹ Ibid; A. BANDERA, “Iglesia particular y Iglesia universal.”

⁴¹² C. COLOMBO, “La teologia della chiesa locale,” *Vita e pensiero* 54(1971) 261-265, A. BANDERA, “Iglesia particular y Iglesia universal.”

⁴¹³ C. COLOMBO, “La teologia della chiesa locale.”

⁴¹⁴ J. RATZINGER, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Essays in Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), pp. 74-77. See also our discussion above on the debate between Ratzinger and Kasper on the same subject.

⁴¹⁵ B. FORTE, *La chiesa icona della Trinità: Breve ecclesiologia* (Brescia: Queriniana, 1984), pp. 48-54 (Fr. trans.: *L’Eglise icône de la Trinité. Brève ecclésiologie*, «Maranatha 4» (Paris, 1985).

⁴¹⁶ S. DIANICH, “Soggettività e chiesa,” in Associazione Teologica Italiana, *Teologia e progetto-uomo in Italia* (Assisi: Cittadella, 1980), p. 116; ID, *La Chiesa mistero di comunione* (Turin: Marietti, 1977) 132-135 (Here he argues that “the Church can only be a local and spatially limited phenomenon.” But it has, as such, a universal intension).

⁴¹⁷ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 61.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid. 62.

part of mankind, speaking such and such a language, heirs of a cultural patrimony, of a vision of the world, of an historical past, of a particular human substratum.”⁴¹⁹ In a significantly balancing tone, the Pope then adds: “The Church *toto orbe diffusa* would become an abstraction if she did not take body and life precisely through the individual Churches.”⁴²⁰ According to him, “Only continual attention to these two poles of the Church will enable us to perceive the richness of this relationship between the universal Church and the individual Churches.”⁴²¹ In this context, what Pope John Paul II said to the Cardinals of the Roman Curia on 21 December 1984 is also worth-mentioning:

Il y a en effet, entre toutes les Eglises particulières un rapport ontologique d’inclusion mutuelle: chaque Eglise particulière, en tant que réalisation de l’unique Eglise du Christ, est d’une certaine manière présente dans toutes les Eglises particulières, dans lesquelles et à partir desquelles l’Eglise catholique une et unique a son existence, (Lumen Gentium, 23).⁴²²

The 1992 letter of the *CDF*⁴²³ posted a serious warning against the one-sided claims for the local Church, fearing that such theses would threaten ‘the ontological and also historical priority of the universal Church over the particular Church.’⁴²⁴ According to Mgr Eyt, this Roman intervention was meant to temper down ‘ecclesiological unilaterality,’⁴²⁵ which considers the local Church in itself as a ‘complete’ subject and the universal Church as a result of the communion of particular or local Churches.

A few years before the *CDF*’s letter was issued, a joint document of several Roman dicasteries, viz. “Draft Statement on Episcopal Conferences,” (1988) also had deplored the tendency “to ignore the ontological and even historical priority of the universal Church over the particular Churches.”⁴²⁶ In its view, “the Church is first of all a single and universal-catholic reality [...], the single ‘communio,’ people of God and body of Christ,” and defends “the primacy of the one and universal Church over the particular and local Churches.”⁴²⁷

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

⁴²² JOHN PAUL II, “Discours aux Cardinaux et à la Curie du 21 décembre 1984,” *DC*, 67 (1985) no. 1889, p. 168 [= AAS 77 (1985), 503-514].

⁴²³ See *supra* our discussion on the background of the theological debate between Ratzinger and Kasper.

⁴²⁴ *CDF*, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion,” no. 91.

⁴²⁵ P. EYT, “L’Eglise comprise comme communion” *NRT* 115 (1993), 321-334.

⁴²⁶ A more detailed discussion of this document will follow later in this study under the title, *Draft Statement (1988)*.

⁴²⁷ “Draft Statement on Episcopal Conferences,” *Origins* 17 (1987-88): 731-37 (735A-B).

6.4. Towards an Understanding of the Relationship between the Local Church and the Universal Church

The question of the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church is not simply a theoretical one; it is, instead, laden with practical implications for maintaining “a proper balance in the realization of a Church unity that would not degenerate into uniformity and a diversity/catholicity that would be faithful to the Church’s essential unity.”⁴²⁸

6.4.1. *In quibus et ex quibus*: Reciprocal Immanence between the Local Church and the Universal Church

According to A. Antón, “it is impossible from a strictly theological viewpoint to assign an absolute primacy to the universal Church or the local Church,”⁴²⁹ if we correctly interpret the conciliar formula, *in quibus et ex quibus*.

The two terms of the formula “in quibus et ex quibus” are equally essential as is the relationship of reciprocity between them. Given those terms, two ways of conceiving the relationship between the universal Church and the local/particular Churches are inadmissible.⁴³⁰

If we were to consider only the first part of the expression (*in quibus*), then “the universal Church would end by being broken up into fully autonomous particular Churches and it would amount to a pure idea only.”⁴³¹ Now, on the other hand, if the accent is laid uniquely on the second term (*ex quibus*) we will be left with a super-diocese of world-wide dimensions, which would totally undermine the theological reality of the local Church as the Church of God.

Of course on the level of mystery, “the universal holds an absolute primacy over the local. Christ has come to call the dispersed children of God and reconcile all humanity with the Father. In the fullness of time the Holy Spirit was sent to every person (*pasa sarka*—Acts 2: 17). The Church comes from the Trinity (*ex Trinitate*).”⁴³² But on the historical level, the Church of God manifests itself for the first time at a concrete place: in the cenacle of Jerusalem. When those gathered received the Spirit, the process of the foundation of the Church ended. The Church, as manifested in Jerusalem, encompasses the whole Christ event. In this historical level, we can speak of a certain priority of the local Church over the universal.

⁴²⁸ A. ANTÓN, “Local Church/Regional Church: Systematic Reflections,” *Jurist*, 52 (1992), p. 568, *hereafter cited as* A. ANTÓN, “Local Church/Regional Church.”

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 569

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 571

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 572.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p. 569

We must here give a particular attention to the Council's affirmation that the particular Church is "*ad imaginem Ecclesiae universalis formatis*." If we do not correctly understand this formula—as H.-J. Schulz⁴³³ has observed—the universality of the visible universal Church can give a mystified under-evaluation of the local Church, clouding the fact that the episcopal local Church does not merely realise the universal Church, but is also, on its own right, *the Church*, freely in communion with other local Churches. This happens when the image of the Body of Christ and members is applied literally to the relation between the universal Church and the local Churches. Actually, we can see such an employment of the image in *LG 23*.⁴³⁴ Here, we must carefully note that the Pauline notions of *σῶμα* and *μέλος* apply only to individual believers and not to the individual Churches. So we cannot use this imagery to interpret the relationship between the local Church and the mystical Body. A direct danger of this misinterpretation by a one-sided reflection of the local Church as a member of the mystical Body is sufficiently avoided elsewhere in the conciliar texts, where it is clearly established that the Church of God exists (*existit*), is present (*inest*) and is operative (*et operatur*) in them.⁴³⁵ In order to do justice to the conciliar vision, as embodied in the expression, *in quibus ex quibus*, we must affirm the reciprocal immanence and transcendence of the universal Church and the local Church, says A. Antón.⁴³⁶ According to Legrand, if the universal Church is a communion of Churches, then the local Churches can be said to be in the image of the universal Church only when there "is agreement with and reception of that which constitutes the communion of Churches."⁴³⁷ A similar view is also held by J. A. Komonchak:

If there are no particular Churches except as "formed in the image of the universal Church," then the latter appears to have priority. But if the universal Church does not exist except as realized in and out of the particular Churches, the latter appear to have priority. But if both statements are true, then perhaps it is best to abandon the language of 'priority' or 'primacy' in order to recognize the inadequacy of the distinction between the universal Church and the particular Churches in a recognition of their mutual interiority or, as some theologians even call it, their circumincession.⁴³⁸

⁴³³ H.-J. SCHULZ, "Ortskirche und Gesamtkirche; Primat, Kollegialität und Synodalität," in: *Eglise locale et Eglise universelle, «Etudes théologique de Chambésy»* (Chambésy: Les éditions du centre orthodoxe, 1981), pp. 177-197.

⁴³⁴ "And this also is important, that by governing well their own Church as a portion of the universal Church, they themselves are effectively contributing to the welfare of the whole Mystical Body, which is also the body of the Churches."

⁴³⁵ Cf. *CD 11*.

⁴³⁶ Cf. A. ANTÓN, "Local Church/Regional Church," p. 571.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁸ J. A. KOMONCHAK, "Roman Working Paper on Episcopal Conferences," in: Thomas J. REESE (ed.), *Episcopal Conferences. Historical, Canonical and Theological Studies* (Washington: Georgetown University

As A. Antón adds, “to presume to resolve the problem in terms of a primacy in time or importance leads one up a blind alley.”⁴³⁹ Instead, in order to be faithful to the primitive vision of the Church as the communion of Churches (which was re-discovered by the Council), we must affirm the reciprocal inclusion of the two members of the formula, *in quibus et ex quibus*.

6.4.2. Simultaneity versus Anteriority

A long chain of theologians, from the 1960s until today, continue to affirm and explain the simultaneity between the local Church and the universal Church. What B. Bazatole asserted, when the Council was still in session, has not lost its value even today:

Vivre au sein de l’Eglise locale, c’est vivre au sein de l’Eglise universelle. Il n’y a pas d’autre moyen pour un chrétien d’être pleinement catholique que d’entrer dans le mystère de l’Eglise tel qu’il se réalise localement. Cette participation à l’Eglise locale ne coupe pas de l’Eglise universelle, mais elle y introduit, et non seulement comme une porte permet d’entrer dans un édifice; il n’y a pas deux actes séparés, l’un par lequel on serait de l’Eglise locale, l’autre par lequel on serait de l’Eglise universelle, car le Corps du Christ est un. Le mystère total de l’Eglise est pleinement réalisé dans l’évêque, son clergé et le peuple.⁴⁴⁰

Congar clarifies the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church in terms of an *osmosis*. According to him, the answer to the question, whether or not the universal Church logically precedes the particular Church, can be both yes and no. From an ontological point of view, when some one is baptised he is aggregated to the Church as such; but from the point of view of concrete procedure, they are aggregated to the Church inasmuch as it exists here and now, in this particular place. In his judgement, the concept, which can suitably take into account the ecclesiology of the local Church and its necessary relation with the universal Church, is that of circumincession or perichoresis.⁴⁴¹ In the Trinitarian theology, perichoresis signifies the presence of divine persons in one another, or their reciprocal interiority.

La Tri-unité de Dieu sera le modèle suprême de l’Eglise. Celle-là n’existe que dans les Personnes; de même l’Eglise une et catholique n’existe que dans les Eglises locales et à partir d’elles (*in quibus et ex quibus*). Il n’existe pas de Super-Eglise séparée des Eglises locales.⁴⁴²

This Congarian view was later taken up by the *International Theological Commission*.⁴⁴³

L’universel «catholique» doit être distingué des fausses figures de l’universel liées, soit aux doctrines totalitaires, soit aux systèmes matérialistes, soit aux fausses idéologies de la science et de la technique, soit

Press, 1989), pp. 177-204, www.georgetown.edu/centers/woodstock/reese/ec/ec-6komonch.htm (24/572004), hereafter cited as J. A. KOMONCHAK, “Roman Working Paper on Episcopal Conferences.”

⁴³⁹ A. ANTÓN, “Local Church/Regional Church,” p. 572.

⁴⁴⁰ B. BAZATOLE, “L’Evêque et la vie chrétienne au sein de l’Eglise locale,” p. 358.

⁴⁴¹ Cf. Y. CONGAR, “Autonomie et pouvoir centrale,” pp. 301-302.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 302-303.

⁴⁴³ ITC, “Thèmes choisis d’ecclésiologie,” 341-342.

encore aux stratégies impérialistes de toute provenance. Il ne peut être davantage confondu avec une uniformité qui détruirait les particularités légitimes pas plus qu'on ne saurait l'assimiler à une revendication systématique de singularité menaçant l'unité essentielle. Entre les Eglises particulières et l'Eglise universelle, il existe donc une intériorité mutuelle, une sorte d'osmose.⁴⁴⁴

Some years earlier, Lubac also conveyed the same idea, when he wrote as follows:

Au coeur de chaque Eglise (particulière) toute Eglise (universelle) est donc présente en principe. Chacune est, qualitativement, l'Eglise. [...] Puisqu'il y a intériorité ou inclusion mutuelle, il y a corrélation radicale, si bien qu'il ne suffirait pas de dire que les églises particulière ont à être insérées dans l'église universelle: elles le sont par leur existence même. Aussi l'église universelle n'est-elle point une d'une unité «fédérative»—comme si les églises particulières pouvaient d'abord se constituer chacune à l'état séparé, quitte ensuite à se réunir: elle est Epouse du Christ. Son unité est «organique et mystique».⁴⁴⁵

Each of these Churches is a living cell in which the whole mystery of the unique Body of Christ is present; they are all in constant communion with other Churches; their ecclesiality is dependent on this openness to others. Hence, it is meaningless to view the relationship between the universal Church and the particular Church in terms of anteriority or primacy. As he explains further,

Pas plus d'ailleurs que l'Eglise universelle ne résulte en un second «moment» d'une addition des Eglises particulières ou de leur fédération, pas davantage on ne saurait considérer ces Eglises comme le résultat d'un découpage d'une Eglise universelle qui leur serait supposée antérieure. Elles proviennent toutes d'une première Eglise particulière, concrète, celle de Jérusalem; elles en sont sorties «comme par bouturage et repiquage».⁴⁴⁶ Une Eglise universelle antérieure, ou supposée existante en elle-même, en dehors d'elles toutes, n'est qu'un être de raison.⁴⁴⁷

The reason is very simple: “There has never been a Christianity without Church, and there has never been a universal Church without particular Churches.”⁴⁴⁸ H.-M. Legrand also rejects a Platonic interpretation as if the local Church is only a reproduction of an ‘ideal Church.’⁴⁴⁹ In Rahner’s view, the relationship that exists between the universal Church and the local Church is so original that it is difficult to find a similar rapport in other societies. The local Church is not merely an agency of the universal Church. It is the ‘very event of the Church universal’. It is not the result of the division of the space occupied by the whole

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 342. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, “Discours aux Cardinaux et à la Curie du 21 décembre 1984,” *DC*, 67 (1985) no. 1889, p. 168.

⁴⁴⁵ H. DE LUBAC, *Les Eglises particulière dans l'Eglise universelle*, pp. 50-51.

⁴⁴⁶ L. BOUYER, *L'Eglise de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), p. 337.

⁴⁴⁷ H. DE LUBAC, *Les Eglises particulière dans l'Eglise universelle*, pp. 53-54.

⁴⁴⁸ H. DE LUBAC, “Petrine Office and Particular Churches,” www.praiseofglory.com/collegiality.htm (21.05.2002). The Lubacian idea, expressed here, is today strongly defended by W. Kasper. See our discussion in “Ratzinger-Kasper Debate,” *supra*.

⁴⁴⁹ H.-M. LEGRAND, “La Réalisation de l'Eglise en un lieu,” p. 152.

Church; it is rather the concentration of the Church exercising her faculty to actualise herself.⁴⁵⁰

Taking part in the discussion on the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church in 2002, in the context of the recent Roman tendency to affirm the priority of the universal Church, J. Famerée clarifies his position:

Les Eglises (diocésaines) locales ou particulières sont à l'image de l'Eglise entière ou universelle; simultanément (et réciproquement), c'est dans ces Eglises locales et à partir d'elles qu'existe l'une et unique Eglise catholique ou l'Eglise entière (universelle). Il n'y a donc pas d'antériorité de l'Eglise universelle par rapport aux Eglises particulières ni de celles-ci par rapport à l'Eglise universelle.⁴⁵¹

Instead, if we are faithful to the conciliar teaching, we must affirm “une intériorité mutuelle ou une circumincession entre Eglises particulières et Eglise universelle, à l'image de la Sainte Trinité, en laquelle il y a simultanité de l'unité et de la trinité (ou diversité): unité dans la trinité, trinité dans l'unité, unitrinité, unidiversité.”⁴⁵² It is in the local Churches, existing in a concrete *locus*, that the Church catholic exists—neither above nor anterior to it, “contrairement à l'affirmation de la Lettre de la Congrégation pour la doctrine de la foi *Communio notio* [...]”⁴⁵³ It is difficult to see how one can see the position of *Communio notio* as compatible with *LG* 23, 1 which affirms simultaneity. René Marlé has got serious doubts about it:

Si l'on se réfère maintenant à l'idée séduisante d'intériorité réciproque entre l'Eglise universelle et les différentes Eglises particulières, comment faire en sorte que cette idée ne soit pas vidée de toute réalité si ces Eglises particulières, prises individuellement aussi bien que dans leur intercommunion, sont toujours en dépendance «ontologique et chronologique» de l'Eglise universelle [...] Peut-il y avoir intériorité réciproque entre deux termes dont l'un n'existerait qu'en dépendance de l'autre, lui-même toujours prédonné?⁴⁵⁴

In Famerée's judgement, it is a typical case of a biased reading of Vatican II—“une relecture qui n'a pas encore reçu l'ecclésiologie de la *communio Ecclesiarum* avec tout ce qu'elle implique de véritable réciprocité entre Eglises locales, y compris celle de Rome.”⁴⁵⁵ But the fact remains: it is difficult to affirm an ontological and chronological anteriority between two realities of which the council said that they are in a relationship of reciprocal interiority.

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. K. RAHNER, *Mission et grâce*, I, 25-26; 32-33.

⁴⁵¹ J. FAMERÉE, “Ecclésiologie catholique,” p. 38.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁴ R. MARLE, “L'Eglise, quel type de communion?” p. 373.

⁴⁵⁵ J. FAMERÉE, “Ecclésiologie catholique,” p. 38.

6.4.3. The Church as a Communion of Churches and the Relationship between the Local Church and the Universal Church⁴⁵⁶

Shortly after the 1969 Synod, A. Antón wrote: “The innovation of Vatican II of the greatest importance for ecclesiology and the life of the Church has been the centering of the theology of the mystery of the Church on the notion of communion.”⁴⁵⁷ Two months before the opening of the 1985 synod, the present pope declared in an address to the Roman Curia: “It would be difficult to find an expression that would be clearer and more profound: the universal Church is presented as a communion of (particular) Churches and indirectly as a communion of nations, languages and peoples.”⁴⁵⁸ Later, the Synod also declared in its turn: “The ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the council’s documents. [...] Fundamentally it is a matter of communion with God through Jesus Christ in the sacraments.”⁴⁵⁹

The importance of the model of communion was stressed also by the bilateral ecumenical dialogues of recent times. The recent document of the Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches, has insisted that the notion of communion (*koinonia*) is of incalculable value in understanding “the multiplicity of local Churches in the unity of the unique Church.”⁴⁶⁰ *ARCIC I*, in its “Final Report,” also maintained a similar view.⁴⁶¹ The *Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue* also arrived at an identical view: “The unfolding of the eucharistic celebration of the local Church shows how the *koinonia* takes shape in the Church celebrating the Eucharist.”⁴⁶²

It is in the context of a communion of Churches that *Lumen Gentium* explained the theological relationship between the universal Church and particular Churches. If we are faithful to the model of the communion of Churches, it is important to maintain a relationship

⁴⁵⁶ Our discussion here presupposes what was presented *supra* under the titles: “Unity as Communion,” “Communion of Churches to Communion of Bishops.”

⁴⁵⁷ A. ANTÓN, *Primado y Colegialidad. Sus relaciones a la luz del primer Sínodo Extraordinario* (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1970) p. 34.

⁴⁵⁸ JOHN PAUL II, “Discours aux Cardinaux et à la Curie du 21 décembre 1984,” *DC*, 67 (1985) n° 1889, 167-171 (= *AAS* 77 (1985), p. 504).

⁴⁵⁹ *Extraordinary Synod, Final Report, II, C, 1: Origins* 15/27 (December 19, 1985), p. 448.

⁴⁶⁰ “The Church: Local and Universal,” A Study Document Commissioned and Received by the Joint Working Group, 1990, in: J. GROS et al., *Growth in Agreement II. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*, p. 864.

⁴⁶¹ “In the early Christian tradition, reflection on the experience of *koinonia* opened the way to the understanding of the mystery of the Church. Although ‘*koinonia*’ is never equated with ‘Church’ in the New Testament, it is the term that most aptly expresses the mystery underlying the various New Testament images of the Church” *Introduction*, 4.

⁴⁶² “The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity,” (Munich, Germany, 30 June-6 July 1982), J. GROS et al., *Growth in Agreement II. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*, p. 655..

of reciprocity between the Universal Church and the particular Church. It is important to avoid all unilateralism.

L'accentuation outrancière de la diversité, du particulier, du local pourrait conduire au morcellement, qui est un appauvrissement comme l'on risquerait de déformer le tout dans l'uniformité qui est aussi un appauvrissement notoire. Si l'un des deux pôles s'affaiblit, la réalité totale se déperit. [...] Il existe une communion intime entre l'Eglise universelle et l'Eglise locale et entre les Eglises locales dans l'Eglise universelle. L'Eglise locale est une manifestation historique, dans l'ordre de la grâce, de toute l'Eglise de Dieu. Le lien, bien plus, l'étroite communion, entre l'Eglise locale et l'Eglise universelle est absolument nécessaire; l'une ne peut vivre sans l'autre. De même l'Eglise locale est d'autant plus Eglise de Dieu et Eglise du Christ qu'elle vit davantage dans l'Eglise universelle, en pleine communion de vie avec elle, et qu'elle est simultanément enracinée dans son terrain socio-culturel particulier.⁴⁶³

No local Church is a monadic entity; each of them live in communion with other local Churches.⁴⁶⁴ If these Churches-in-communion are enriched by the universal communion, they also enrich and render more solid and vibrant the universal communion. Communion with other Churches is essential for the ecclesiality of a Church, for it is an exigency demanded by the very nature of the Church. From the aforesaid, it is clear that there is a mutual compenetration, continual correlation and inseparable interdependence between the local Churches and the universal Church. One should become the norm for the other and vice versa. The Church of God is necessarily one, universal as well as local. The danger which can endanger this rapport between the local Church and the universal Church is a rupture of balance between these two poles or focussing on one pole at the expense of the other.

6.5. Concluding Remarks

In a recent study on the Catholicity of the local Church, J. A. Komonchak affirmed the basically complementary nature of the local Church and the universal Church. In his opinion, the statements of priority—both of the local Church and the universal Church—are not contradictory. As he formulated it,

The option for the priority of the local Church often expresses a desire to present a more accessible and immediate image of the Church, to defend council's call for the responsibility of all members of the Church, or to claim for the Churches room to exercise their own self-responsibility in the face of their specific challenges. In turn the priority assigned to the whole Church often expresses a concern that the unity of the Church not be compromised by various types of particularism and that the universal authority of the pope not be weakened.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶³ F. MWANAMA GALUMBULULA, *Le dynamisme missionnaire de l'Eglise locale...*, p. 30

⁴⁶⁴ "Si l'Eglise locale ou particulière est l'Eglise de Dieu, une, sainte, catholique et apostolique, elle ne l'est pas seule. D'autres le sont comme elle. Elle ne l'est vraiment que dans la reconnaissance et la communion des autres," Y. CONGAR, "Autonomie et pouvoir central," p. 301.

⁴⁶⁵ J. A. KOMONCHAK, "The Local Church and the Church Catholic," p. 431.

Both sets of concerns are valid and legitimate. But the solution to the problem does not consist in asserting the priority of either side. It is a mistake on several counts: a) historically, the Church born on the day of Pentecost was both local and catholic; b) the Churches generated from that mother-Church are the same Church, becoming catholic concretely in different places.⁴⁶⁶ It is a mistake to imagine that the constitutive principles of the Church can ever realise the universal Church except in a local Church or a local Church except as the universal Church. The universal Church does not pre-exist the particular Churches as would a concrete reality pre-exist other concrete realities.⁴⁶⁷ Not only that the universal Church *exists* in and out of the local Churches, but also it is one, holy, catholic, apostolic, indefectible, engaged in mission, etc. only in and through the local Churches.⁴⁶⁸ It is also confusing to claim that there are ecclesial acts which are by priority acts of the local Church (suggesting thereby that they are not that of the universal Church). For the various particular Churches are the self-realizations of the one and the same *catholic* Church. Local options may distinguish one local Church from another, but they do not distinguish a local Church from the universal Church which exists and acts only in the local Churches.

But the real point of comparison is not between the universal Church and any individual local Church, but between the universal Church and the communion of Churches. “In this perspective, the universal Church does not transcend the communion of local Churches: it *is* that communion. For that reason, the universal Church is not a distinct subject of existence, attributes, or activities; it does not exist ‘before’ the local Churches than the latter ‘participate’ in it. Statements about the universal Church are true only *insofar as* they are verified in the local Churches.”⁴⁶⁹

7. Structural Expression of Communion in Regional Churches

7.1. Introduction

It has been remarked by H.-M. Legrand that the conciliar efforts to capture the doctrine of collegiality and communion of Churches in the binomial, ‘pope-bishop,’ has proven to be

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. L. BOUYER, *L’Eglise de Dieu, Corps du Christ et Temple de l’Esprit*, p. 337; H. DE LUBAC, *Les Eglises particulière dans l’Eglise universelle*, p. 53-54; H.-M. LEGRAND, “Inverser Babel,” pp. 328-331; J.-M. R. TILLARD, *Eglise d’Eglises*, pp. 15-36.

⁴⁶⁷ Cf. Y.M.-J. CONGAR, *Ministères et communion* (Paris: Cerf, 1971), p. 131.

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. H. J. POTTMEYER, “Continuité et innovation dans l’ecclesiologie de Vatican II,” pp. 91-116. It is true that many of the attributes predicated to the universal Church may not be equally predicated to a single local Church. An exception to this rule is the mother-Church of Jerusalem: here all that is true of the universal Church is also true of the local Church.

⁴⁶⁹ J. A. KOMONCHAK, “The Local Church and the Church Catholic,” p. 433.

very narrow and reductive. This is felt particularly by those who are engaged in evangelization work and ecumenical dialogue. For we can hardly treat many of the fundamental questions related to inculturation or ecumenical dialogue at the level of individual dioceses.

Les unités culturelles et spirituelles s'expriment dans des aires qui dépassent de beaucoup le territoire diocésain et celle d'une conférence épiscopale nationale. Pour être catholique l'Eglise ne peut pas ne pas être particulière,⁴⁷⁰ c'est-à-dire assumer, en les corrigeant les valeurs culturelles et historiques des peuples qui la composent.⁴⁷¹

This has been the clear teaching of the Council in its decree, *Ad Gentes*. This decree exhorts that Christian life has to be accommodated to the genius and the dispositions of each culture. In so doing, “[p]articular traditions, together with the peculiar patrimony of each family of nations, illumined by the light of the Gospel, can [...] be taken up into Catholic unity. Finally, the young particular Churches, adorned with their own traditions, will have their own place in the ecclesiastical communion.”⁴⁷² In this way, such regional/particular Churches will have a consistency which allow them to act as subject Churches of rights and initiatives.⁴⁷³

LG 23 saw in the episcopal conference one such institution liable to promote a life of communion and exchange, following the example of what ancient patriarchates had achieved in the past, guided by divine providence. But unfortunately, it seems, their development has not taken such a direction. They have become,—to use the expression of *Apostolos Suos*⁴⁷⁴ 6—just “the preferred means for the Bishops of a country or a specific territory to exchange views, consult with one another and cooperate in promoting the common good of the Church,” with a shaky theological and canonical status; it was already modest from the beginning and the recent developments tend to reduce it even more. In other words, their instrumentality is hardly used to promote the formation of regional Churches, after the model of the ancient patriarchates.

Cette inexistence des Eglises régionales particulières dans l'Eglise catholique n'est pas seulement ressentie par ceux qui portent le souci de l'évangélisation et de l'inculturation qu'elle implique. Elle l'est aussi par tous ceux qui se soucient du rétablissement de l'unité des chrétiens, autre grande option de Vatican II.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁰ It may be recalled that for Legrand, unlike for the CIC, the particular Church stands for the grouping of diocesan Churches.

⁴⁷¹ H.-M. LEGRAND, “Eglises locales, Eglises régionales...,” p. 298.

⁴⁷² *AG 22*.

⁴⁷³ See *supra* our discussion of local Churches as subject-Churches.

⁴⁷⁴ *AAS 90* (1998) 641-658.

⁴⁷⁵ H.-M. LEGRAND, “Eglises locales, Eglises régionales...,” p. 300.

If at all, it is given to us to re-discover Christian unity, the various Churches will have to be only ‘united but not absorbed.’⁴⁷⁶ To arrive at this result, it would not suffice to establish strict correlation between the presidency of a local Church and the belongingness to a college. Rather, regional particular Churches must be given a real ecclesiological status.

Based on this initial remark, the following pages will be devoted to two important institutions of contemporary catholic ecclesiastical structure, viz. episcopal conferences (they meant particularly for the Latin Church), which are capable of realising the communion of Churches in a regional level, and the Catholic Oriental Churches which are heirs to the ancient patriarchates and already constitute the communion of Churches.

7.2. Episcopal Conferences as Expressions of Ecclesial Communion and Episcopal Collegiality

7.2.1. Introduction

The Episcopal Conference is one of the ecclesiastical institutions that most attracted the attention of the theologians and canonists during the post-Vatican II period. After a period of initial enthusiasm—during which its ‘pastoral usefulness’ and even ‘necessity’ was highly valued—came a period of distrust. It has been accused of being a threat to the authority of both the individual bishop⁴⁷⁷ and the pope.⁴⁷⁸ And warnings never stopped coming in.⁴⁷⁹ As far as Cardinal Ratzinger is concerned, curtailing the prominence of the episcopal conference is “a matter of safeguarding the very nature of the Catholic Church, which is based on an episcopal structure and not on a kind of federation of national Churches. The national level is not an ecclesial dimension.”⁴⁸⁰ This concern is reflected in many of the documents emanating, in recent times, from Rome. In what follows, our intention is to discover how the institution of

⁴⁷⁶ It is a formula coined in the context of the Catholic-Anglican dialogue at the beginning of the 20th century.

⁴⁷⁷ “According to critics, the authority of the individual diocesan bishop is being threatened by the size, organization, and prominence of the conferences which so outweigh him that his freedom to exercise his own ministry is being compromised,” J. A. KOMONCHAK, “Introduction,” www.georgetown.edu/centers/woodstock/reese/ec/ec-intro.htm (as on 24/5/2004). The Draft Statement on “Theological and Juridical Status of Episcopal Conferences” (1988), for instance, warned against episcopal conferences “being transformed into bureaucratic, decision-making structures.” By the weight of such decisions coming from above, it is feared that individual bishops will “be led to see the episcopal conferences as a sort of super-government of the dioceses,” cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁷⁸ With regard to papal authority [...] the fear is that the conferences might cause a revival of nationalism in the Church,” J. A. KOMONCHAK, “Introduction.”

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. J. HAMER, “Chiesa locale e comunione ecclesiale,” in *La chiesa locale: Prospettive teologiche e pastorali*, ed. A. Amato (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1976), p. 44; “La responsabilité collégiale de chaque évêque,” *NRT* 105 (1983): 641-54; *Synode Extraordinaire: Célébration de Vatican II* (Paris: du Cerf, 1986), p. 602.

⁴⁸⁰ *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), p. 60 [=J. RATZINGER/ V. MESSORI, *Entretien sur la Foi* (Paris: Fayard, 1985)], hereafter cited as *The Ratzinger Report*.

the episcopal conference is understood in Church magisterium and in theological discussions of our time.

7.2.2. Historical Origin of the Episcopal Conferences

In the context of a highly centralised Church, the need was felt among the bishops of Western Europe, during the course of the 19th century, to come together and take common counsel. It all got started with a gathering of bishops at Mechlin (Mechelen) in Belgium in 1830. A few years later, in 1848, the bishops of Germany met for the first time at Würzburg. A year later, it was the turn of the bishops of Austria to organise a national gathering in Vienna. The same year marked the beginning of the national bishops' gathering in Italy too. Before long, this practice spread to other countries like Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Brazil, etc. During the same period, the Propaganda Congregation issued instructions for similar meetings in India and China. The scope of such gatherings was limited to taking common counsel in the face of common problems. Besides this positive reason for the emergence of the episcopal conferences, there are also authors who suggest a negative reason. As they point out, although the Council of Trent decreed the holding of regular provincial councils, their holding had fallen into desuetude owing to stringent regulations in force.⁴⁸¹ Unlike the provincial councils, the new type of episcopal gatherings—although lacking in legislative power—could be held according to the needs of each region, without waiting for a green signal from Rome. According to P. Huizing, among the reasons for the origin of episcopal conferences, what prevailed was not the negative one, but the positive one, viz. the need felt for mutual consultation on new problems which the bishops of a nation or region had in common.⁴⁸²

7.2.3. Vatican Council and After

Although the Episcopal Conference was a preconconciliar institution, the event of the Second Vatican Council provided an opportunity to discover its crucial importance in the life of the Church. The Fathers gathered in them to discuss the issues that came up for debates in the council hall. Episcopal conferences received particular attention in three conciliar documents too. We see *Sacrosanctum Concilium* giving them competency in the local adaptation of the liturgy.⁴⁸³ *Lumen Gentium*, having spoken about the patriarchates of the past which came about by divine providence and which 'enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage,' adds that "in like manner (*simili ratione*) the

⁴⁸¹ Provincial councils could not be held without prior permission from Rome. A pontifical delegate had to preside over them and their decrees had no force of law until they were approved by the Roman curia.

⁴⁸² P. HUIZING, "The Structure of Episcopal Conferences," *Jurist* 28 (1968), p. 165.

⁴⁸³ *SC* 22, 36, 39.

episcopal bodies of today are in a position to render a manifold and fruitful assistance, so that this collegiate spirit (*collegialis affectus*) may be put into practical application.”⁴⁸⁴ An extended treatment of episcopal conference may be found in *Christus Dominus*.⁴⁸⁵

During the conciliar deliberations, “the two fundamental concerns of the Fathers were the doctrinal foundation for conferences and their capacity to make binding decisions.”⁴⁸⁶ Opposing opinions were heard.

The great majority of the fathers who discussed this topic were favorably disposed both to the competency and to its mention in the text in one form or another. Various reasons were given. A lack of unity in doctrine would be destructive, especially in Communist countries. The good of souls requires that there be common responses to common situations and problems, however reticent one might be regarding another type of binding decisions. [...It was also argued] that if the conference’s magisterial competency were not recognized, all supradiocesan activity would be entrusted to the Holy See despite its willingness to favor decentralization.⁴⁸⁷

But as the redaction progressed, the mention on the doctrinal authority of episcopal conference was dropped for reasons of greater brevity. J. Manzanares concludes by saying that “the expression ‘decisions of the episcopal conference’ (*CD* 38) includes both normative texts as well as doctrinal documents even though the primary attention of the council fathers was directed to binding norms.”⁴⁸⁸ Allusion to the doctrinal authority of the episcopal conference can be seen in the Council’s linking of the episcopal conference with the patriarchate: “Who can doubt that both the patriarch and his synod exercise a true magisterium over all the Churches of the patriarchate?”⁴⁸⁹

After the Council, Pope Paul VI, in his decree *Ecclesiae sanctae*, mandated the establishment of episcopal conferences wherever they did not yet exist.

7.2.4. Code of Canon Law (1983)

The 1983 *CIC* treats the question of the magisterial authority of episcopal conferences in numerous canons⁴⁹⁰ particularly in 447; 459, §2; 753; 838, §3.

Canon 447 speaks of episcopal conferences as jointly exercising certain pastoral functions. The term *jointly* refers to the totality of the activities of the conference, in which is included also the magisterial function. From the drafting stages onwards, canon 753 always “spoke of bishops, united in particular councils and in conferences, as subjects of an authentic

⁴⁸⁴ *LG* 23.

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. *CD* 37-38.

⁴⁸⁶ J. MANZANARES, “The Teaching Authority of Episcopal Conference,” p. 240.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁴⁹⁰ The 1983 *CIC* contains thirteen canons dealing with episcopal conferences.

magisterium. [...] If it were merely a matter of a simultaneous magisterium of the bishops, each one for his diocese, there would have been no basis for a discussion since no one could doubt the latter possibility”⁴⁹¹ According to canon 838, §3, following what has been taught by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, episcopal conferences are competent to prepare translations of liturgical books with appropriate adaptations within the limits defined in the same liturgical books, to approve them and publish them “with the prior review by the Holy See.”

7.2.5. Theological Status and Doctrinal Authority of the Episcopal Conference

A) A Controversy over the Teaching Authority of the Episcopal Conferences

According to the Council, the episcopal conference is “an assembly (*coetus*) in which the bishops of a given nation or territory jointly exercise their pastoral office....”⁴⁹² We know that each bishop receives his *munus pastorale* at the time of the episcopal ordination and it includes the teaching office also. Now, as the Council taught, the goal of episcopal conferences is to promote the greater pastoral good which the Church offers humankind within their territory⁴⁹³

[I]t is inevitable that their concern extends to the doctrinal orientation of the faithful. [...] As a matter of fact, episcopal conferences everywhere have understood this and have published numerous doctrinal documents, motivated by their pastoral responsibility and encouraged by the voice of the popes.⁴⁹⁴

For years after the Council nobody seriously doubted the doctrinal authority of the episcopal conferences. “All of a sudden, however, this authority is viewed as a problem, perhaps the most serious problem affecting this new institution.”⁴⁹⁵ Several factors are pointed out as the probable reasons for this changed attitude.⁴⁹⁶ Thus, in the wake of a controversy around a pastoral letter (1983) of the *National Conference of Catholic Bishops*⁴⁹⁷ of USA, entitled “The Challenge of Peace,” the Holy See summoned the representatives of the US episcopal conference as well as those of the episcopal conferences of six European nations for an ‘informal consultation’ at Vatican. In this meeting, chaired by Cardinal Ratzinger, the head of the *CDF* made it clear that “[a] bishops’ conference as such does not have a *mandatum*

⁴⁹¹ J. MANZANARES, “The Teaching Authority of Episcopal Conference,” pp. 249-250.

⁴⁹² *CD* 38, 1.

⁴⁹³ Cf. *CD* 38.

⁴⁹⁴ J. MANZANARES, “The Teaching Authority of Episcopal Conference,” p. 234.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁴⁹⁶ J. Manzanares enumerates the following: a) growing frequency of collective documents, b) their treatment of the relationship between Christian faith and the problems of the temporal order, with significant impact on public opinion, which do not easily lend themselves to unanimous evaluations, c) new ways of preparing such documents in a particular episcopate with the publication of drafts and an invitation for public opinion to offer suggestions, d) the fear of religious nationalism with its risks for the unity of the Church and the concern that the diocesan bishop’s legitimate autonomy is being unduly restricted, e) this magisterium is exercised not only by the plenary assembly but also by other subordinate organs, which are liable to be influenced by pressure groups.

⁴⁹⁷ Hereafter, referred to as *NCCB*.

docendi. This belongs only to the individual bishops or to the College of bishops with the pope.”⁴⁹⁸ It is needless to say that this statement ignited a controversy about the teaching authority of episcopal conferences. Theologians and canonists soon found that so many crucial ecclesiological questions were involved here. F. Sullivan points out some of these questions:

Are there in fact no collegial authorities in the Catholic Church intermediate between the universal college and the individual bishops? Can the regional communions of Churches for which episcopal conferences are established be rightly described as “local” or “particular” Churches, analogous to the patriarchal Churches, whose formation Vatican II attributed to divine providence? Are such “regional communions of Churches” and the conferences that exercise episcopal ministry on their behalf, creations of purely ecclesiastical law, or do they have a theological foundation in the nature of the Church and hence in divine law? Is collegiality the exclusive prerogative of the universal college, or can one rightly describe the pastoral ministry of an episcopal conference on behalf of a regional communion of Churches as an instance of true but partial collegiality?⁴⁹⁹

B) Views of Theologians and the Magisterium

1) *Extraordinary Synod of Bishops (1985)*

It is in the above context that the 1985 Extraordinary Synod was convoked by the Pope. Hence, it was only natural that the Synod gave special attention to the questions we treat. In a paragraph devoted to the episcopal conference, the *Final Report* stated the desire of the Synod as follows:

Since the episcopal conferences are so useful, indeed necessary, in the present-day pastoral work of the Church, it is hoped that the study of their theological ‘status’ and above all the problem of their doctrinal authority might be made explicit in a deeper and more extensive way, keeping in mind what is written in the conciliar decree *Christus Dominus* (no. 38) and in the Code of Canon Law (Canons 447 and 753).⁵⁰⁰

From this statement of the Synod, it is clear that the Fathers of the Synod—let us not forget that most of them were presidents of episcopal conferences—were not ready to agree with the view that episcopal conferences do not have any doctrinal authority and that the term “collegiality” can be used of them only in an “improper sense.”⁵⁰¹ As far as they were concerned, the question of the theological basis of episcopal conferences and their doctrinal authority remained an open question, which called for further study. The Holy Father entrusted this task to the Congregation for Bishops, in collaboration with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Congregation for Eastern Churches, the Congregation for the

⁴⁹⁸ This statement is found in the synthesis of the discussion published by Jan Schotte in: “Vatican Synthesis,” *Origins* 12 (April 7, 1983) p. 692.

⁴⁹⁹ F. A. SULLIVAN, “The Teaching Authority of the Episcopal Conference,” p. 476.

⁵⁰⁰ *Final Report* II, C, 8, *Origins* 15 (December 19, 1985), p. 449.

⁵⁰¹ Cf. F. A. SULLIVAN, “The Teaching Authority of the Episcopal Conference,” p. 479.

Evangelization of Peoples and the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. While this work was in progress, Cardinal Ratzinger re-stated his view in a book published in 1987 that “bishops’ conferences do not have any teaching authority and cannot as conferences make teaching binding.”⁵⁰² In the same year, two professors of the Gregorian University published opposite views on the question: While F. J. Urrutia defended the doctrinal authority of episcopal conferences⁵⁰³ G. Ghirlanda was opposed to it.⁵⁰⁴

II) Salamanca Colloquium (1988)

In the following year, an international and interdisciplinary colloquium was held at Salamanca, Spain (January 3-8, 1988) to make a detailed study of the theological status of the episcopal conference and their teaching authority.⁵⁰⁵ This colloquium, in which eminent ecclesiologists, Church historians and canonists participated, came to the following convergent conclusion regarding the theological status of episcopal conferences:

The theological consistency of the episcopal conferences is seen in the fact that the communion among the Churches of a region is expressed and maintained by the communion among their bishops, who exercise their pastoral function conjointly to serve the proclamation and reception of the gospel in that region. Episcopal conferences are therefore a manifestation of episcopal collegiality, founded in the sacrament of episcopal orders, and in the necessity of the collegial exercise of episcopal ministry in regional Churches for the effective realization of the Church’s mission in today’s world.⁵⁰⁶

Regarding the doctrinal authority of the conferences, it stated that the teaching function exercised by the episcopal conference cannot be simply taken for a simultaneous action of its members, but rather as an action whose subject is the college and not the individuals. In other words, the conference as such is an organ of authentic magisterium.⁵⁰⁷

III) Draft Statement (1988)

The Salamanca Colloquium was immediately followed by a Roman document—“Theological and Juridical Status of Episcopal Conferences”—issued by Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, the then Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops. This *instrumentum laboris* (working paper), the official fruit of the study requested by the 1985 Synod of Bishops, was sent to the bishops soliciting their corrections and emendations. The influence of the prefect of the *CDF*

⁵⁰² *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1987) (The present citation is from the English trans, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Essays in Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), p. 58).

⁵⁰³ F. J. URRUTIA “De exercitio muneris docendi a Conferentiis Episcoporum,” *Periodica*, 76 (1987), 605-636.

⁵⁰⁴ G. GHIRLANDA, “De Episcoporum Conferentiis deque exercitio potestatis magisterii,” *Periodica*, 76 (1987) 573-603; 637-649.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. H.-M. LEGRAND et al. (ed), *Les Conférence épiscopales : théologie, statut canonique, avenir: actes colloques de Salamanque [3-8 janvier 1988]*, «Cogitatio Fidei – 149» (Paris: Cerf, 1988) [= *The Nature and Future of Episcopal Conferences* (Washington: Catholic University, 1988)]

⁵⁰⁶ F. A. SULLIVAN, “The Teaching Authority of the Episcopal Conference,” p. 480.

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 270-74.

in the preparation of this *instrumentum laboris* is discernible from the position it maintains.⁵⁰⁸ Speaking about the concrete realizations of the episcopal collegiality, this Draft Statement distinguishes between *actio collegialis* and *affectus collegialis*. Accordingly, we can speak of *actio collegialis* only when the whole college is involved. The episcopal bodies which gather the bishops in the name of their pastoral concern, but not in their universality must be seen as generated by *affectus collegialis*. To make use of the notion of collegiality in reference to them is, therefore, analogical and theologically improper.⁵⁰⁹ As far as the doctrinal authority of the episcopal conference is concerned, the Draft Statement gives the following judgement:

The episcopal conferences do not, properly speaking, as such enjoy this *munus magisterii*. [...] The episcopal conferences do not constitute a doctrinal instance; they have no competence to establish doctrinal and moral contents. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the episcopal conference is a contingent structure regulated by law [...]. Now, a contingent structure of a collective, not collegial, character cannot substitute the individual bishop, who in episcopal consecration has been constituted authentic teacher of the faith for his particular Church. Therefore the episcopal conferences do not, as such, properly speaking possess the *munus magisterii*.⁵¹⁰

As might be expected, the reaction to this Roman document was highly critical. It was criticised by bishops and theologians for its neglect of conciliar ideas such as (a) the role of the bishop as head of a particular Church, representing it to the universal Church, (b) the idea of the universal Church as a *corpus Ecclesiarum*⁵¹¹ or communion of communions, (c) the theme of various kinds of ‘organic groups’ of Churches, in which the ‘*Ecclesiarum localium in unum conspirans varietas*’ more splendidly displays the catholicity of an undivided Church.⁵¹² Komonchak observes that this argument of the *Draft Statement* seems to depend on “a speech given by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger to the meeting of the college of Cardinals in the fall of 1985 where he argued that ‘the unity of the Catholic Church preceded the plurality of the particular Churches which are born of it and receive their ecclesial character from it.’⁵¹³ Some of the bishops’ Conferences (e.g. *NCCB*) even judged it as unsuitable “to serve as the basis for an effective discussion of this important issue.” Hence, they called for the drafting of

⁵⁰⁸ According to Jan Schotte, Ratzinger was one of the members of the postsynodal commission which prepared this *instrumentum laboris*. Cf. T. J. REESE (ed.), *Episcopal Conferences. Historical, Canonical and Theological Studies* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1989), viii, n. 7.

⁵⁰⁹ It may be recalled that the same conclusion was reached by *ITC* presided over by Cardinal Ratzinger. According to B. Sesboué, a member of *ITC* himself, the position taken by the commission was not the object of any debate, but was added to the text at the last minute. Cf. B. SESBOÛE, *Le Magistère à l'épreuve* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2001), p. 224, n. 4.

⁵¹⁰ “Draft Statement on Episcopal Conferences,” V, *Origins*, 17 (April 7, 1988), p. 735.

⁵¹¹ *LG* 23.

⁵¹² *LG* 23; see *OE* 2-3

⁵¹³ J. RATZINGER, “De Romano Pontifice deque collegio episcoporum,” (Rome: 1985) trans. as cited in J. A. KOMONCHAK, “Roman Working Paper on Episcopal Conferences.”

“an entirely new working document.”⁵¹⁴ Catholic theologians, historians and canonists also published their contributions in the wake of the issues raised by the Draft Statement. In a collection of essays published in the US in 1989, we find a study by J. Komonchak, sharply criticising the Roman document.⁵¹⁵ In another collection, published in the same year in Germany, it was the turn of R. Sobanski to make a critical analysis of the Draft Statement.⁵¹⁶ The volume published in America contains two studies on the doctrinal authority of episcopal conferences.⁵¹⁷ In the German collection, H. Pottmeyer gives his reflections on the teaching authority of the episcopal conference.⁵¹⁸

IV) Apostolos Suos (1998)

For some time, nothing was heard of the famous Draft Statement. By the end of 1990, a new draft (as per the wish of some of the bishops' conferences) was drawn up. It was the subject of discussion in various Roman dicasteries for a couple of years before the pope in 1996 entrusted the final revision of the text to the *CDF*, at the end of which it was issued as *motu proprio Apostolos suos* (The Theological and Juridical Nature of Episcopal Conferences).⁵¹⁹ The longer part of this letter deals with the history, the nature and the activity of the episcopal conferences—themes which are more familiar. What is specifically new is the pope's teaching on the doctrinal authority of the conferences.

To the question whether they can make such a doctrinal statement, the answer is “yes.” The conditions under which they can do so are the following: (1) It must be a statement issued by the conference in plenary session; not by its doctrinal commission or executive committee. (2) It must have been approved either by a unanimous vote of all the members, or by at least two thirds of the members having the deliberative vote. (3) If it was not approved unanimously, it cannot be published without first receiving the *recognitio* of the Holy See.⁵²⁰

Many have remarked that the conditions laid down for the exercise of magisterium by episcopal conferences render it practically impossible. At no time in the history of the Church, unanimity was expected of a synodal decision. The council, whether local or ecumenical, always strived to achieve consensus and not unanimity.

⁵¹⁴ “Response to Vatican Working Paper on Bishops Conferences,” *Origins*, 18 (December 1, 1988), p. 399.

⁵¹⁵ Cf. J. A. KOMONCHAK, “Roman Working Paper on Episcopal Conferences,” pp. 177-204.

⁵¹⁶ R. SOBANSKI, “Der Entwurf der römischen Bischofskongregation im Licht der Konzilsdebatte des II. Vatikanums,” in: Hubert Müller and Hermann J. Pottmeyer (ed.) *Die Bischofskonferenz. Theologischer und juridischer Status* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1989), pp. 36-43

⁵¹⁷ Cf. A. DULLES, “Doctrinal Authority of Episcopal Conferences,” pp. 207-232; L. ÖRSY, “Reflections on the Teaching Authority of the Episcopal Conferences,” pp. 233-252.

⁵¹⁸ “Das Lehramt der Bischofskonferenz,” in: Hubert Müller and Hermann J. Pottmeyer (ed.) *Die Bischofskonferenz. Theologischer und juridischer Status* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1989), pp. 116-133. Cf. ID, “Was ist eine Bischofskonferenz? Zur Diskussion um den theologischen Status der Bischofskonferenzen,” *Stimmen der Zeit*, 206 (1988) 7, 440f.

⁵¹⁹ Signed on May 21, 1998 and issued on July 23, 1998, cf. AAS 90 (1998) 641-658.

⁵²⁰ F. A. SULLIVAN, “The Teaching Authority of the Episcopal Conference,” p. 485.

One reason for this is that it is highly unlikely that a large group of bishops, each accustomed to making decisions for his own Church, would decide a controverted question in a way that would satisfy every single member. Another reason is that requiring total unanimity would allow one or a very few persons to block a consensus that had been reached by the council with moral unanimity, and thus render the council impotent to achieve its task.⁵²¹

The insistence on Roman *recognitio* (review) is not a novelty. It was required for the decrees of plenary councils. But, as we can see, plenary councils are very rare events; that is not the case with over hundred episcopal conferences meeting every year.

One can imagine how long conferences would have to wait before receiving the *recognitio* that would allow them to publish their doctrinal statements. It would not be surprising if conferences became less willing to put in the time and effort needed to write pastoral letters, especially if the Roman authorities required changes which the bishops felt would make their letters less suited to meet the particular needs of their people.⁵²²

Given such obstacles to the practical and effective exercise of the teaching ministry by episcopal conferences, F. A. Sullivan looks into the motives which might have led the pope to lay down such stringent conditions. It is clear that an authoritative doctrinal statement from the episcopal conference demands the response of *obsequium religiosum* (sense of religious respect) from all the faithful of the region not excluding the bishops. This would raise the question of the source of the authority of this statement. If it is backed by all the members of the conference, it is clear that it carries the authority that each individual bishop gave to it. But, on the contrary, if it is backed by the two-third majority, then the authority will be given to it by the Roman *Recognitio*. If this is taken as a reasonable explanation for requiring the conditions laid down for the issuing of doctrinal statements by episcopal conferences, then—thinks F. Sullivan—one must say that it is “consistent with the theory that teaching authority is properly held only at two levels: at the universal level, by the pope and the whole college of bishops, and at the local level, by the diocesan bishop.”⁵²³ That is, in practical terms, the episcopal conference as such—which is an intermediary instance—does not have teaching authority. According to the disciplinary statement at the end of *Apostolos suos*,⁵²⁴ there are

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 486.

⁵²² *Ibid.*

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, p. 487. In support of his opinion, the author cites the following affirmation of *Apostolos Suos*, no. 13: “The binding effect of the acts of the episcopal ministry jointly exercised within Conferences of Bishops and in communion with the Apostolic See derives from the fact that the latter has constituted the former and has entrusted to them, on the basis of the sacred power of the individual Bishops, specific areas of competence.”

⁵²⁴ “...when the doctrinal declarations of Episcopal Conferences are approved unanimously, they may certainly be issued in the name of the Conferences themselves, and the faithful are obliged to adhere with a sense of religious respect to that authentic magisterium of their own Bishops. However, if this unanimity is lacking, a majority alone of the Bishops of a Conference cannot issue a declaration as authentic teaching of the Conference to which all the faithful of the territory would have to adhere, unless it obtains the *recognitio* of the Apostolic See, which will not give it if the majority requesting it is not substantial. The intervention of the Apostolic See is

two sources for the authority of a doctrinal statement of an episcopal conference. If it is unanimously drawn up, it has the authority which each bishop has over his own faithful. If it lacks unanimity, the episcopal conference has to wait for the Roman *recognitio* before being issued as an authoritative teaching of the conference. In this case, the source of authority is the Holy See. Thus, we see that the motu proprio *Apostolos suos* has answered the question whether or not an episcopal conference can exercise an authoritative teaching function. The answer is yes, but on strict conditions. However, as F. Sullivan has noted, the pope does not clearly answer some of the crucial questions over which theologians and canonists debated for the last two decades.

One of the most disputed of these questions is whether an episcopal conference is a collegial subject of teaching authority, intermediate between the universal college and the diocesan bishop, or on the contrary is not such a subject and has no teaching authority of its own, but must receive it either from Rome or from the individual bishops.⁵²⁵

The majority of theologians and canonists who participated in this long drawn debate agree to consider an episcopal conference as such as an intermediate organ of authoritative magisterium. That is, its teaching function should not be taken simply as a simultaneous action of its individual members.⁵²⁶ But it seems that, at the end of the day, the view that prevailed was that of Cardinal Ratzinger who said: “A bishops’ conference as such does not have a *mandatum docendi*. This belongs only to the individual bishops or to the College of bishops with the pope.”⁵²⁷ These conditions render it incapable of exercising it on its own but only dependent on the authority of the individual bishops or the Apostolic See. As we can see, here we are here bound with a two-tier vision of ecclesiastical structure,⁵²⁸ which cannot envisage any intermediate instance between the pope and the individual bishop, between the local Church and the diocesan Church. To say the least, it is least favourable to the incarnation of the Church of God in a *locus* (both as geographical territory and human space); here, it is the catholicity of the Church which is the loser.

C) Do Episcopal conferences have a Doctrinal Function?

J. Manzanares is one of those who defend the doctrinal function of episcopal conferences. In his opinion, they do have a magisterial function as far as the faithful of their territories are concerned. Then he adds:

analogous to that required by the law in order for the Episcopal Conference to issue general decrees,” *Apostolos Suos*, no. 22.

⁵²⁵ F. A. SULLIVAN, “The Teaching Authority of the Episcopal Conference,” p. 490.

⁵²⁶ Cf. The Salamanca Colloquium and the collective works published in USA and Germany.

⁵²⁷ This statement of found in the synthesis of the discussion published by Jan Schotte in “Vatican Synthesis,” *Origins* 12 (April 7, 1983) p. 692.

⁵²⁸ See *infra* our discussion on “Two Schemas of Church Structure.”

It is not a question of replacing the magisterium of each bishop in his diocese with one involving all the bishops joined in the episcopal conference. Rather it is an effort to respond realistically and responsibly to the exigencies of the good of souls [...] and to give concrete embodiment to the collegial spirit which binds bishops together.⁵²⁹

However, this magisterial function of the conference is not to be seen as a simultaneous action of its members, but must be seen as an action whose subject is fundamentally the episcopal college. That is to say, even though it is not the action of the college as a whole, this act is posited by the college.⁵³⁰ The reason for this view is the following: “A purely simultaneous action would neither imply the slightest innovation about which the legislator would be concerned, nor constitute a problem such as would justify the hesitations in the history of the canon.”⁵³¹ As a matter of fact, the bishops of a region—through their collective documents—“do not seek simply to enlighten one another mutually but rather to exercise their collegial responsibility vis-à-vis the faithful.”⁵³² Hence, Manzanares concludes: “[a]n episcopal conference legitimately established as a unity and acting according to its statutes is capable of exercising an authoritative magisterium and is juridically empowered to exercise it de facto.”⁵³³

Of course, there are some conditions to be met. According to Manzanares, the doctrinal function of the episcopal conferences is subjected to the following conditions: a) the magisterial teaching in question must be drawn up by the plenary assembly, not the other subordinate organs, b) the doctrinal value of the teaching does not depend solely on the subject which publishes it, but also the matter which is treated and the manifestation of the conference’s intent, c) the conference can never exercise an infallible magisterium.⁵³⁴

D) Theological foundations of Episcopal Conferences

The Second Vatican Council provides us with some key passages containing affirmations which can constitute the theological basis for episcopal conferences in their relationships with the successor of Peter and the bishop in his particular Church.⁵³⁵ Our attempt to discover the theological foundations of episcopal conferences is dependent on the ecclesiological perspective we adopt. Hence, we will begin by an appraisal of this.

⁵²⁹ J. MANZANARES, “The Teaching Authority of Episcopal Conference,” p. 253.

⁵³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 254.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*; cf. canon 753.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, p. 254.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁵³⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁵³⁵ *LG* 13; *AG* 20; *LG* 23; *LG* 26; *CD* 11.

1) Two Schemas of the Church Structure

We can discover in the conciliar texts two types of schema on the structure of the Church. The first is *tripartite*, consisting of the universal Church (the pope and the episcopal college/ecumenical council), the particular Church⁵³⁶ (provincial and plenary synods, patriarch/patriarchal synod, episcopal conferences), the episcopal Church (bishop/diocesan synod). This schema, while stressing the unity of the Church, gives greater value to the principle of variety and pluriformity that can enrich unity.⁵³⁷ It can also situate the episcopal conference in its proper place, viz. as an intermediary instance between the supreme authority and the diocesan authority.⁵³⁸ The second schema is *bipartite* and is, unfortunately, more widely known in the Latin Ecclesiology. It consists of two levels, viz. the universal Church (the pope and the episcopal college/ecumenical council) and the episcopal Church and excludes any other intermediary instance from an ecclesial structural point of view. According to this view, the episcopal conference can be seen only as an organ of support and collaboration among the bishops of a particular territory in the exercise of their pastoral ministry.

Of these two schemas, the tripartite one, which is based on an ecclesiology of communion, implies a true, but relative, autonomy to the intermediary instances of ecclesial structure viz. patriarchates and episcopal conferences. Today, when we theologically treat the episcopal conference, it must be done in the context of the grouping of local Churches (regional communion of local Churches) over which it has ecclesiastical authority. According to K. Mörsdorf, we have “to see in these groupings of particular Churches a form in which is manifest the communion of Churches, which subsequently the law must clarify more precisely.”⁵³⁹ This proves “convincingly to what extent a three-levelled constitution of the Church is required to realize communion and thereby the very essence of the Church and to give full recognition to the significance of the catholicity of the Church.”⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁶ See also our discussion *supra* on the terminological ambiguity of the Council.

⁵³⁷ Eastern theologians prefer inverting the order of this schema as: eparchy-patriarchate-communion of Churches.

⁵³⁸ Here, we must be mindful of the fact that from a canonical and juridical standpoint the episcopal conference is not simply an equivalent to the patriarchal synod.

⁵³⁹ K. MÖRSDORF, “L'autonomia della Chiesa locale,” in *La Chiesa dopo il Concilio. Atti del Congresso internazionale di Diritto Canonico, Roma, 14-19 Gennaio 1970* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1972), p. 183, as cited in A. ANTÓN, “The Theological ‘Status’ of Episcopal Conferences,” pp. 198-199.

⁵⁴⁰ H. MÜLLER, “The Relationship Between the Episcopal Conference and the Diocesan Bishop,” 115; cf. J. D. FARIS, *The Communion of Catholic Churches* (New York: Diocese of St. Maron in Brooklyn, 1985), p. 14.

II) The Episcopal Collegiality in its Ontological and Sacramental Foundation

Earlier in this study, we have seen that the episcopal collegiality and the ecclesial communion imply one another. But our problem here is to find out how collegiality and the episcopal conferences are related. Although Vatican II has clearly refused to consider collegiality as the foundation of the episcopal conference, theologians and canonists during the ensuing period seem to agree on such a foundation, with opinions diverging only on certain details of the question. As A. Antón explains, “[i]n the doctrine of collegiality—similar to what it did in the theology of the universal and particular Church—Vatican II chose as a point of departure and on the whole gave greater importance to the perspective of the universal Church.”⁵⁴¹

Thus, the conciliar doctrine of collegiality as found in *Lumen Gentium* and *Christus Dominus* is primarily grounded on the function of the bishops vis-à-vis the universal Church. In the wake of it, a similar methodological option was followed also by the 1983 *CIC*, which—while systematizing the canonical material on bishops—gave priority to their responsibility for the whole Church (cc. 336-348) and only “subsequently it develops the theology of the episcopate, considering the bishops in the exercise of their office as pastors and witnesses of Christ in their respective dioceses. [...] This fact is of decisive importance when it is a question of applying the principle of collegiality to various ecclesiastical institutions, e.g. the synod of bishops, episcopal conferences, etc.”⁵⁴² From an experiential and historical point of view, collegiality is a reality which is first realized in provincial and regional synods and subsequently only in the celebration of ecumenical councils. Episcopal conferences must be also situated in this synodal activity of the particular Church.

Collegiality in all its different forms is founded on the episcopal consecration. By consecrating a new bishop, “the neighbouring bishops testify that they receive him into the order of bishops and that through him his local Church forms part of the communion of Churches. [...] Thus, the episcopal consecration also] renews the bonds of communion between the local Church and the communion of Churches.”⁵⁴³ According to A. Antón, a difference of opinion on the sacramental foundation of the bishop’s mission and ministerial functions has implication for the theological status of the episcopal conference too.

If we accept that in the sacrament of episcopal ordination legitimately conferred on the bishop there is communicated to him not only the power of orders but also that of magisterium and governance while the canonical mission, an essential condition sine qua non for the exercise of these powers in a Church

⁵⁴¹ A. ANTÓN, “The Theological ‘Status’ of Episcopal Conferences,” p. 201.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

hierarchically and socially structured, is only a final juridical determination (*ultima determinatio juridica*) so that such power is really efficacious and ordered to action, the way is open to affirm that Episcopal Conferences act with ordinary (not delegated) and proper (not vicarious) power.⁵⁴⁴

III) The Theological Basis of the Episcopal Conference

Ever since their début in the 19th century, theologians and canonists have affirmed in unison that the episcopal conferences are of ecclesiastical order. But today we can discover some nuances in the interpretation of what is meant by ecclesiastical law. According to some, episcopal conferences are not only of ecclesiastical law, but are also devoid of any theological value.⁵⁴⁵ In the writing of some of these theologians we can also observe an evolution of views, a shift from a position which defends its theological values to a position which rules it out. This is verifiable in J. Hamer and J. Ratzinger.

a) Shifting Views on the Theological Basis of the Episcopal Conference

In a 1963 article,⁵⁴⁶ J. Hamer had affirmed that it is the same collegiality which is at work in both the episcopal college and the episcopal conference. As he then put it,

Il n'y a pas deux collégialités épiscopales: celle qui s'exercerait à l'échelle universelle et celle qui se manifesterait à l'échelle d'une région quelconque. Il n'y en a qu'une seule, mais qui connaît les modalités infiniment variées. C'est l'unique collégialité du corps épiscopal avec le Pape au sommet.⁵⁴⁷

He also insists that we must not relegate episcopal conferences as serving simply a practical purpose:

...les conférence épiscopales, postulés par l'évolution du monde, ne constituent pas seulement un dispositif pratique, mais sont vraiment une expression possible et une manifestation appropriée de la solidarité du corps épiscopal, réalité de droit divin dans l'Eglise du Christ.⁵⁴⁸

By 1976, Hamer's view seems to have changed. As he explains, according to the teaching of Vatican II, the episcopal conference is "a *coetus* in which "the bishops of a given nation or territory jointly (*coniunctim*) exercise their pastoral office..."⁵⁴⁹ Thus, as the term *coniunctim* indicates,

The episcopal conference is situated along the line of the local collaboration of several particular Churches; it is not a reduced form of the episcopal college [Its actions are to be seen as collective rather than as collegial.] All the forms of collaboration among bishops depend on this collegial sentiment. On this ground it can and

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 203-204.

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. Ratzinger, J. Hamer, H. de Lubac, etc.

⁵⁴⁶ J. HAMER, "Les conférence épiscopales, exercice de la collégialité," *NRT* 85 (1963), 966-969.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.969.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁹ *CD* 38, 1.

must be said that the episcopal conference, without having the power to pose collegial acts, is nonetheless a real manifestation of the collegial sentiment.⁵⁵⁰

A similar shift can be seen in Ratzinger too. In 1964, as a theologian he wrote that episcopal conferences “sont préformées dans les «collèges» régionalement différenciés de l’ancienne Eglise et dans leurs activités synodales, et elles sont une variante légitime de l’élément collégial dans la structure de la constitution ecclésiastique”⁵⁵¹ and he even imagined that they might in the future give rise to new ‘patriarchal areas.’⁵⁵² He was then critical of those who deny the theological justification of episcopal conferences, based on the argument that episcopal conferences cannot exercise activity in an obligatory manner vis-à-vis the particular bishops and that the concept of college can be applied only to the total episcopate.⁵⁵³ As he argued, nobody can deny that the supreme power over the whole Church (*suprema potestas in universam Ecclesiam*) belongs only to the entire body of the episcopate in communion with its head. “But in the Church is it always a question of the *suprema potestas*?”—asked Ratzinger. For many of the activities in the Church do not require the supreme power. Hence, he thought that one must take into account the complexity of the notion of collegiality in its particular applications.

Nous devons plutôt dire que le concept de la collégialité indique justement, à côté du ministère de l’union qui reviendra au Pape, un élément multiple et variable dans le détail qui appartient fondamentalement à la constitution de l’Eglise mais qui peut être rendu efficace de nombreuses manières.⁵⁵⁴

Collegiality, which is essential to the constitution of the Church and is of divine right, can be realised in diverse manners.

La collégialité des évêques est l’expression du fait qu’il doit y avoir dans l’Eglise une pluralité ordonnée (sous et dans l’unité garantie par la primauté). Les conférences d’évêques sont donc une des variantes

⁵⁵⁰ J. HAMER, “Chiesa locale e comunione ecclesiale,” pp. 41-43, trans. as in J. A. KOMONCHAK, “Introduction.”

⁵⁵¹ J. RATZINGER, “Les implications pastorales de la doctrine de la collégialité des évêques,” *Concilium* 1 (1965), p. 53. It was originally a 1964 lecture given in Rome and published as “Konkrete Formen bischöfliche Kollegialität,” in: Johann Christoph Hampe, *Ende der Gegenreformation?* (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1964), 155-163. Cf. ID, *Le Nouveau Peuple de Dieu*, pp. 125-126.

⁵⁵² “...on pourrait, sans aucun doute, envisager un jour une forme spéciale de la chrétienté réformée dans l’unité de l’unique Eglise. Finalement, on pourra peut-être, dans un avenir pas trop éloigné, se demander si les Eglises d’Asie et d’Afrique, comme celles d’Orient, ne pourraient pas présenter leurs formes propres en tant que «patriarcats» ou «grandes églises», ou quel que soit le nom que, dans le futur, porteront ces églises partielles dans l’Eglise totale,” ID, *Le Nouveau Peuple de Dieu*, pp. 68-69

⁵⁵³ “Il n’est pas rare de rencontrer l’opinion suivant laquelle les conférences d’évêques manquaient de tout fondement théologique et qu’elles ne pouvaient pas, par conséquent, entrer en action de façon à faire pression sur l’évêque particulier, et que la notion de collègue ne pouvait s’appliquer qu’à l’épiscopat entier agissant comme unité. Cependant nous nous trouvons ici devant un cas où une tendance à systématiser, qui n’avance que unilatéralement et ahistoriquement, échoue,” ID, “Les implications pastorales de la doctrine de la collégialité des évêques,” p. 53.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

possibles de la collégialité qui par elles reçoit des réalisations partielles, qui à leur tour renvoient à l'ensemble.⁵⁵⁵

Between the sixties and now, much has taken place. Ratzinger, the theologian is now the Cardinal Prefect of the *CDF*. Now he seems to hold a different opinion as far as the theological status of episcopal conferences is concerned. In an interview with the Italian journalist Vittorio Messori, he declared, “We must not forget that the Episcopal Conferences have no theological basis; they do not belong to the indispensable structure of the Church as Christ willed it; they have only a practical, concrete function.”⁵⁵⁶ A similar view is reflected in a document entitled “Select Themes of Ecclesiology,” issued by the International Theological Commission, chaired by Cardinal Ratzinger.

L'utilité, voire la nécessité pastorale, ainsi que de leurs regroupements à l'échelle continentale est indiscutable. [...] Ces textes [*Lumen gentium* 22, 23 et *Christus Dominus* 4, 5, 6] ne permettent pas qu'on puisse, en rigueur de terme, attribuer aux Conférences épiscopales et à leurs regroupements continentaux le qualificatif «collégial».⁵⁵⁷

The document continues to state that “the institutions like episcopal conferences (and their continental federations) have to do with the concrete organization or form of the Church (*jure ecclesiastico*). To describe them by such terms as “college,” “collegiality,” and “collegial” is to use language in an analogical and theologically “improper” way.”⁵⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the commission esteems that the Synod of Bishops could be considered as “une expression authentique, quoique partielle, de la collégialité universelle.”⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, cf. ID. *Le Nouveau Peuple de Dieu*, p. 126.

⁵⁵⁶ *The Ratzinger Report*, p. 59. Having accounted for this shift of position found in the writings of the Hamer and Ratzinger, J. Komonchak gives the following remarks: “I know of no place where either Hamer or Ratzinger has attempted to explain the paths of or reasons for their considerable shift in the evaluation of episcopal conferences. Neither has explicitly repudiated the earlier writings,” J. A. KOMONCHAK, “Introduction,” www.georgetown.edu/centers/woodstock/reese/ec/ec-intro.htm (as on 24/5/2004).

⁵⁵⁷ “Thèmes choisis d'ecclésiologie à l'occasion du vingtième anniversaire de la clôture du concile Vatican II (1984),” in: *Commission théologique internationale. Textes et Documents* (1969-1985) (Paris: Cerf, 1988), pp. 343.

⁵⁵⁸ “Thèmes choisis d'ecclésiologie à l'occasion du vingtième anniversaire de la clôture du concile Vatican II (1984),” Documents (1969-1985) (Paris: Cerf, 1988), p. 344 (trans. as in F. A. SULLIVAN, “The Teaching Authority of the Episcopal Conference,” p. 477). The essential structure of the Church is only that which is instituted by divine initiative. The essential structure of the Church “revêt toujours une figure concrète et une organisation (*iure ecclesiastico*) qui sont le fruit de données contingentes et évolutives, historique, culturelles, géographiques, politiques.... La figure concrète de l'Eglise est donc le lieu où se manifestent des différences légitimes, voire nécessaires,” *ibid.*

⁵⁵⁹ “Thèmes choisis d'ecclésiologie....” p. 343.

b) *The Episcopal Conference according to a Dynamic Interpretation of Collegiality*

Behind this unwillingness to give a theological value to the episcopal conferences, we can discover “an excessively rigid conception of the principle of the collegiality of bishops. It is defined as something indivisible which is given in its fullness or not at all.”⁵⁶⁰

There are a number of theologians who, having recognised the character of the episcopal conferences as based on the *ecclesiastical law*, strive to find their theological foundation (e.g. Y. Congar). Accordingly, the *divine law* basis of a reality is not to be interpreted in a strict sense: the divine law based structures “must not be reduced solely to those hierarchical structures guaranteed by the express testimony of Scripture. Basing itself on the data of faith and under the direction of the Spirit, the Church has created structures in the course of history which, while being of ecclesiastical law in themselves, are necessary if the structures of divine law are to be operative....”⁵⁶¹ That is to say, in theological terms, it is difficult to determine concretely the boundaries of divine law and ecclesiastical law in the constitution of the Church. Thus, the council, as important as it is for the life of the Church, is not of divine law in the strict sense; the same is true of episcopal conferences. According to Congar, the theological foundation both of the synodal element in the Church and of the episcopal conference is rooted in a broader concept of divine law according to which the Church is capable of creating its structures while remaining faithful to the elements already determined by its founder.

According to the rigid conception of collegiality stated above, only an act in which the entire college takes part can be said to be collegial. Such an ‘all or nothing’ attitude has in the past led to unfortunate ecclesiological consequences.⁵⁶² Today, fortunately, there exists a general consensus on the fact that there exist degrees of the realizations of the ecclesiality of the Church of Christ and communion of people with the Church. The episcopal collegiality can also be considered in terms of degrees. Thus, distinction is made between strict and proper collegial action⁵⁶³ and collegial activity expressed in terms such as “collegial spirit,”

⁵⁶⁰ A. ANTÓN, “The Theological ‘Status’ of Episcopal Conferences,” p. 204. “Quoique membre du collège par la consécration sacramentelle et la communion hiérarchique, un évêque, pris isolément, ne peut pas poser une action proprement collégiale. Il faut dire la même chose de plusieurs évêques ou même de tous les Evêques. Le seul sujet capable de l’action collégiale est l’ordo episcoporum comme corps, jamais une partie de celui-ci, aussi considérable qu’elle puisse être (LG. 22; *Nota praevia*, 4),” J. HAMER, “La responsabilité collégiale de chaque évêque,” p. 643; Cf. ID, “L’Eglise particulière, présence locale de l’Eglise universelle,” p. 217.

⁵⁶¹ A. ANTÓN, “The Theological ‘Status’ of Episcopal Conferences,” p. 188.

⁵⁶² For instance, in the context of the relationship between the one and unique Church and the many Churches, it held that either all of the ecclesiality of the Church of Christ was present in them or they were not Churches. With regard to the Church membership it was said that either one was fully a member or one was not a member of the Church at all.

⁵⁶³ LG 22; CD 4.

“collegial union,” “solicitude for all the Churches.”⁵⁶⁴ The strict collegial action (*effective collegiality*), which involves the whole college, can be realised in two forms: conciliar and extraconciliar. Besides this,

[t]here exists an exercise of episcopal collegiality not in the strict and full sense of reserved to the action of the whole college, but more or less practical. It is commonly called “collegial spirit” (*affectus collegialis* – LG 23) or affective collegiality. This is not to be reduced to a mere sentiment, but expressing the same ontological sacramental reality as effective collegiality, it preceded it in the historical development of the synodal element in the Church and is ordered to it.⁵⁶⁵

According to Congar, the episcopal solidarity was “expressed throughout the history of the Church in synods, national councils, and today is manifest in Episcopal Conferences.”⁵⁶⁶ A similar view is found in Ratzinger too. He considers episcopal conferences as giving today “le meilleur moyen d’une pluralité concrète dans l’unité. Elles sont préformées dans les «collèges» régionaux de l’ancienne Église et dans leur activité synodale et constituent une variété légitime de l’élément collégial dans la constitution de l’Église.”⁵⁶⁷ Elsewhere he says, “[i]nsofar as the bishops’ conference relates back to the ancient Church’s synodal structure, it can and must be conceived as also an expression of the collegial structural element.”⁵⁶⁸ J. Hamer also agrees with this view, as we have noted above, in his 1963 article.⁵⁶⁹

In his reflection on episcopal conferences, K. Rahner affirmed that the idea of the episcopal conference arises “from the very nature of the Church.”⁵⁷⁰ It is founded on “the right and duty on the part of individual bishops to shoulder their share of the burden of care for the universal Church and so for the members of the Church next to them.”⁵⁷¹ Hence, he did not hesitate to affirm that “the bishops’ conference is a possible and today perhaps even an absolutely necessary expression of an essential element of the Church.”⁵⁷² Episcopal conferences receive “their theological significance from the fact that they derive from a substratum constituted by pluridiocesan circumscriptions which have much in common, be it in their material presuppositions or in their historical evolution as ecclesiastical institutions.”⁵⁷³ As such, they do not belong merely to the juridical order which can be created

⁵⁶⁴ LG 23, CD 5-6, 36-38.

⁵⁶⁵ A. ANTÓN, “The Theological ‘Status’ of Episcopal Conferences,” p. 205.

⁵⁶⁶ Y. M.-J. CONGAR, “Collège, Primauté... Conférences épiscopales: quelques notes,” p. 388.

⁵⁶⁷ J. RATZINGER, *Le Nouveau Peuple de Dieu*, pp. 125-26.

⁵⁶⁸ J. RATZINGER, “Konkrete Formen bischöfliche Kollegialität,” p. 162, trns as in: J. KOMONCHAK, “Roman Working Paper on Episcopal Conferences.”

⁵⁶⁹ J. HAMER, “Les conférence épiscopales, exercice de la collégialité,” p.969.

⁵⁷⁰ K. RAHNER, “On Bishops’ Conferences,” *Theological Investigations* 6 (London and New York: Darton, Longman & Todd, and Seabury, 1974), p. 377.

⁵⁷¹ K. RAHNER, “On Bishops’ Conferences,” p. 378.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 377.

⁵⁷³ A. ANTÓN, “The Theological ‘Status’ of Episcopal Conferences,” p. 190.

and abolished at will, for it is based on the “dogmatic element in which the rights and duties of bishops vis-à-vis the universal Church are rooted (LG 23).”⁵⁷⁴ Intervening in the discussion on the theological status of episcopal conferences, W. Kasper affirms that because of the ontological and sacramental basis of collegiality, it is not simply a juridical reality, that is, it cannot be limited to effective collegiality.

Consequently, affective collegiality also cannot be understood as a purely emotional reality, as a mere collegial sentiment. Affective collegiality is rather an expression of the ontological and sacramental reality of collegiality, and to that degree it is related to effective collegiality as the latter’s basis.⁵⁷⁵

7.2.6. Concluding Remarks

The discussion in this section was inspired by a twofold conviction: (a) that it is impossible to treat the reality of the communion of Churches and the doctrine of collegiality—which is rooted on the former—in the framework of the pope-individual bishops relationship or, for that matter, on the relationship between the universal Church and individual episcopal Churches, and (b) that the development of regional Churches is crucial for the proper articulation of the different levels of ecclesial communion, which has got developed in the course of time guided by divine providence, and that episcopal conferences, like the ancient patriarchate, can promote such a development today.

The difficulty encountered in properly articulating the theological status and doctrinal authority of the episcopal conferences comes from the failure to situate these conferences in the context of the regional communion of Churches, in which the Church of God is to be incarnated. On this point we find convergence of views between Tillard and the theologians we have discussed in this section. The region in question is the *locality* of which Tillard and Legrand spoke, having the twofold meaning: it is both a geographical territory and a human space. The purpose of regional communion of Churches is to allow—as the Council teaches— “[p]articular traditions, together with the peculiar patrimony of each family of nations, illumined by the light of the Gospel, can [...] be taken up into Catholic unity.”⁵⁷⁶ In this context, we can see the episcopal conference as the expression of such regional communion of Churches. When we duly recognise the theological status and doctrinal authority of the episcopal conferences, we are indeed promoting the development of regional Churches.

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that if we understand collegiality in a dynamic way, we can speak of different forms of collegiality, in keeping with the historical situation

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁵ W. KASPER, “Der theologische Status der Bischofskonferenzen,” p. 3, trans. as in J. A. KOMONCHAK, “Roman Working Paper on Episcopal Conferences.”

⁵⁷⁶ AG 22.

and various pastoral necessities. As W. Kasper has remarked, the ontological, sacramental foundation of collegiality is common to all forms of its realization in history which were developed in response to pastoral needs (patriarchate, ecclesiastical provinces and today's episcopal conferences).⁵⁷⁷ According to G. Colombo, what is crucial here is the mission of the Church. In every epoch, the Church is called upon to “find in itself and hence in coherence with its own constitutive principles, the most appropriate form for mission and evangelization.”⁵⁷⁸ It is from this ‘theological’ vision that one must begin discussion on the episcopal conferences, not from the ‘juridical’ vision, because ‘law’ itself is relative to the underlying ‘theological’ principle. By promoting episcopal conferences and, thereby, the regional Churches, we are serving ultimately the catholicity of the Church, as Tillard has said.

7.3. Place of Catholic Oriental Churches within the Catholic Communion of Churches

7.3.1. Introduction

We have found in the preceding section that the promotion of the episcopal conferences amounts to the promotion of regional Churches, because they constitute the expression of the *communio ecclesiarum* in a region. According to the conciliar teaching, the formation of such regional Churches should be inspired by the ancient patriarchates. Therefore, it would be of interest to our subject to explore the status of the Catholic Oriental Churches—which are heirs of the ancient patriarchates—within the *Communio Ecclesiarum* that is the Catholic Church.⁵⁷⁹ In this exploration, we will be guided by the Second Vatican Council's *Decree on*

⁵⁷⁷ “Diese partiellen Formen der Verwirklichung der Kollegialität müssen als Zeichen und Instrument der Kollegialität im Vollsinn verstanden werden,” W. KASPER, “Der theologische Status der Bischofskonferenzen,” p. 3.

⁵⁷⁸ G. COLOMBO, “Communion, Mission, and Episcopal Conferences,” p. 110.

⁵⁷⁹ The fact that the Catholic Church is also a communion of Churches is often ignored in the usual appellation of Catholics as ‘Roman Catholic.’ As Legrand has rightly remarked, “il est vrai, l’Eglise catholique est appelée encore aujourd’hui *Roman-Catholic* ou *Römisch-katholische*, désignation qui a l’inconvénient de laisser dans l’ombre le caractère local de l’Eglise de Rome et de donner à croire à des chrétiens peu informés que l’Eglise catholique n’existe que sous une forme romaine,” H.-M. LEGRAND, “Synodes et conseils,” pp. 195-196. The following table lists the different Churches belonging to the Catholic communion :

#	Names of Traditions	#	Names of Churches
1.	<i>Latin Tradition</i>	01.	Latin Church which used to have such Rites as Ambrosian (Milan), Gallican (Lyons), Mosarabic (Spain).
2.	<i>Alexandrian Tradition</i>	02.	Coptic Church (Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria, Cairo, Egypt)
		03.	Ethiopian Church (Metropolitan of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)
3.	<i>Antiochian Tradition</i>	04.	West Syrian Church (Catholic Syrian Patriarch of Antioch, Lebanon)
		05.	Syro Maronite Church (Maronite Patriarch of Antioch, Bkerke, Lebanon)
		06.	Syro-Malankara Church (Metropolitan of Trivandrum, Kerala)
4.	<i>Armenian Tradition</i>	07.	Armenian Tradition (Armenian Patriarch of Cilicia, Turkey)

the Catholic Churches of the Eastern Rite (Orientalium ecclesiarum). From time to time, reference will be made to the *Code Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO)*.

7.3.2. Multiplicity of 'Particular Churches' in the Unity of the Church (OE 2)

Decree on the Catholic Churches of the Eastern Rite has made a fundamental affirmation on the subject we treat here:

The Holy Catholic Church [...] is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit by the same faith, the same sacraments and the same government and who, combining together into various groups which are held together by a hierarchy, form particular Churches or Rites (*particulares Ecclesias seu ritus constituunt*). Between these there exists an admirable bond of union (*communio*), such that the variety within the Church in no way harms its unity; rather it manifests it, for it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each particular Church or Rite should retain its traditions whole and entire and likewise that it should adapt its way of life to the different needs of time and place.⁵⁸⁰

In order to properly understand the *raison d'être* of the affirmations contained in this conciliar decree, we have to set it against the past domination of the Latin Church over the Catholic Oriental Churches in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Poland, India, etc.

A) 'Orientalium ecclesiarum'

In the light of what we have stated above, the very title of the decree reflects a progress in the Catholic Church's appreciation of the reality of the Eastern Church. For, until the Second Vatican Council, the designation, having currency in the Roman circles, of the totality of Oriental Churches in communion with Rome was simply 'Oriental Catholic Church,' thereby eclipsing the immense diversity of these Oriental Churches. But the event of the Council permitted the Catholic Church to re-discover the ecclesiology of communion and the place of

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| 5. <i>Chaldean Tradition</i> | 08. Chaldean Church (Chaldean Patriarch of Babylon, Irak) |
| | 09. Syro-Malabar Church (Major Archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly, Kerala) |
| 6. <i>Byzantine Tradition</i> | 10. Albanian Church (Apostolic Administrator of Southern Albania) |
| | 11. Bylo-Russian Church |
| | 12. Byzantine Krizevci Church (Bishop of Krizevci, Croatia) |
| | 13. Bulgarian Church (Byzantine Slav Apostolic Exarch of Sophia, Bulgaria) |
| | 14. Greek Church (Apostolic Exarch of Athens, Greece) |
| | 15. Greek-Melkite Church (Patriarch of Antioch, Damascus, Syria) |
| | 16. Italo-Albanian Church (Bishop of Lung, Grottaferrata, Italy) |
| | 17. Rumanian Church (Metropolitan of Fagaras & Alba Julia, Rumania) |
| | 18. Russian Church (Apostolic Exarch of Russia) |
| | 19. Ruthenian Church (Metropolitan of Pittsburg, USA) |
| | 20. Slovak Church (Byzantine Catholic Bishop of Presov, Slovakia) |
| | 21. Ukrainian Church (Major Archbishop of Lviv, Ukraine) |
| | 22. Hungarian Church (Bishop of Hajdudorag, Hungary) |

⁵⁸⁰ OE 2.

local and particular Churches within this communion. It is this re-discovery which prompted the Council “de redonner à la variété des rites orientaux toute sa place.”⁵⁸¹ Thus, diversity takes the place of uniformity.

B) Particular Church or Rite (Church-Rite)

According to the classical usage, the term ‘rite’ refers to liturgical usage in general. Thus in 1215, the 4th Lateran Council (constitutions 4 and 9) “conçédent aux Grecs, principalement, mais à d’autres éventuellement, d’avoir des célébrations liturgiques dans leur propre tradition, pourvu qu’elles ne choquent pas les Latins et ne mettent pas en question l’unité ecclésiale indissoluble entre l’évêque unique et le territoire où il exerce son ministère.”⁵⁸² From the 16th century onwards, the expression ‘oriental rites’ was used in the West, and it referred to liturgical usages and proper disciplines. At the time of Vatican I, the tendency was to limit oriental rites to just the liturgical usage, considering discipline as something which must be the same for all. From the beginning of the 20th century, the concept of rite has been understood to include both the liturgical usage and the proper discipline. This usage of ‘rite’ is based on a false understanding of the identity of the Catholic Oriental Churches, which considered them merely as “des rites liturgiques différents de celui de l’Eglise d’Occident.”⁵⁸³

In this context, *OE 2* marks a major step forward. The Council identifies Rite with a particular Church. Thus, *particulares Ecclesias seu ritus* refers to “des communautés ecclésiales, des groupes ecclésiaux, avec hiérarchie, qui rassemblent organiquement plusieurs Eglises locales et se distinguent des autres groupes par un certain nombre de caractéristiques qu’il reste à préciser.”⁵⁸⁴ This was a revolutionary change.⁵⁸⁵ *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* makes use of the term ‘Rite’ to refer to the Catholic Oriental Churches. Among the constitutive elements of Rite include not only territory, nation, liturgical rite or the liturgical language, but also a formal indispensable element: “the autonomous hierarchical constitution of this grouping with regard to other similar groupings within the Universal Church.”⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸¹ R. METZ, “Rome et les Eglises orientales: Le «Code des canons des Eglises orientales»,” p. 684.

⁵⁸² E. LANNE, “La conception post-tridentine de la primauté et l’origine des Eglise unies,” p. 580.

⁵⁸³ N. EDELBY, “Les Eglises particulières ou rites,” p. 140.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.* When the term particular Churches was first applied to these ecclesial groupings, many in the West read into it a tendency to separatism. For many, there is just one Church: the Church catholic and universal. All others are but rites. Thus, one would admit between the universal Church and the faithful just administrative groupings: dioceses, parishes etc. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 141.

⁵⁸⁵ For after the council of Florence (1439) it was at Vatican II that the Catholic Church willingly gave ear to the Oriental Churches. There is a marked difference between Florence and Vatican II: while at Florence the Latin and Greek Churches were rather antagonistic and the main aim of the council was to do away with the differences between them, at Vatican II, which did not pretend to be a council of union, the oriental positions were received *à priori* as a possible positive contribution to the work of the council.

⁵⁸⁶ N. EDELBY, “Les Eglises particulières ou rites,” p. 141-142.

For the Catholic Church is not simply “a community of faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit by the same faith, the same sacraments and the same government,”⁵⁸⁷ but it is also a communion of “particular Churches or Rites.” In other words, as Mgr. Edelby commented, it is “an *Ecclesia Ecclesiarum*,”⁵⁸⁸ i.e., “de groupes hiérarchisés (éparchies, métropoles, archevêchés, catholicosats, patriarchats).”⁵⁸⁹ There are many material elements which constitute the foundation of the interior unity of a Church in the communion of Churches. The most important among them is, of course, the liturgical rite. Along with the unity given by the liturgical rite, there is also, in diverse degrees, a certain unity of discipline, of theology, of territory, of nation, of an entire historical and cultural patrimony.

Formally a *Church-Rite* is constituted when it is recognised by the Catholic Church as an interiorly autonomous hierarchical community or Churches *sui iuris*, without excluding, however, their necessary communion relationship with other ecclesial communities and with the universal Church. That is to say, Church-Rite exists only when there is a complete organisation which ensures the internal autonomy in communion with other Churches and the universal Church. At the same time, Catholic Oriental Churches should not be seen as a concession from the part of the Roman Church. Often, according to many, the Latin Church alone is *the Church*, and the Oriental Churches are simply tolerated within Catholicism, they are ‘uniates,’ i.e. something annexed to the real Church.⁵⁹⁰ This is false. In fact the *Catholica* is composed of all the Churches in communion with one another and with the Roman Pontiff. *Orientalium ecclesiarum* helps us to avoid any false conception which considers the Rite only in terms of liturgical rites, i.e. those who follow a liturgical rite other than the ‘normal rite’ which is Latin. According to the conciliar vision, the aspect of liturgical rite is just one of the distinctive marks by which a Church-Rite is distinguished from another. Thus, the main contribution of *Orientalium ecclesiarum* consists in favouring an organic conception of the Church, where catholicity is no more considered as synonymous with being *Roman* or *Latin* and unity with uniformity, where there is room for different modes of being, thinking and acting, not only in liturgy, but also in theology, organisation and discipline.⁵⁹¹ When we consider Rites as particular Churches, then it becomes evident that the unity of the Church can be achieved only in the diversity of the Churches unless one makes of this diversity a pretext

⁵⁸⁷ OE 2.

⁵⁸⁸ N. EDELBY, “Les Eglises particulières ou rites,” p. 142.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁵⁹⁰ We may recall here that for a long time, the Oriental Christians who joined the Roman communion were just tolerated as ‘rites’ provided they do not call into question the entire Latin system, whose predominance (*praesantia ritus latini* – an expression used for the first time by Pope Benedict XIV [1740-1758]) they had to accept.

⁵⁹¹ Cf. N. EDELBY, “Les Eglises particulières ou rites,” p. 150.

for eventual absorption or domination by one of these Churches. We must here remember that the unity of the Church has nothing to do with religious imperialism. Catholicism is not a conquering Latinism. Rather it is the fraternal communion of all the Churches in the primacy of the Roman pontiff.

C) Preservation of the Traditions of the Eastern Churches

Having highlighted the place of particular Churches within the Catholic Church, the Council also expresses its desire “that each individual Church or Rite should retain its traditions whole and entire.”⁵⁹² This again amounts to a break with the ‘tradition’ in the Catholic Church from the 16th century onwards. The fate of the Thomas Christians of Malabar is a typical case for demonstrating the Roman attitude towards an ecclesial tradition different from its own. As E. Lanne has forcefully formulated, the Synod of Diamper of 1599 “consacrait pratiquement l’absorption de cette Eglise par les conquérants latins.”⁵⁹³

7.3.3. Equality among Churches (OE 3)

In this discussion on the equality among the Churches, from a Catholic perspective, we will be guided by the following passage from *Orientalium ecclesiarum* 3:

These particular Churches, whether of the East or the West (*particulares Ecclesiae, tum Orientis tum Occidentis*), although they differ somewhat among themselves in rite, [...] that is, in liturgy, ecclesiastical discipline, and spiritual heritage, are, nevertheless, each as much as the others, entrusted to the pastoral government of the Roman Pontiff, the divinely appointed successor of St. Peter in primacy over the universal Church. They are consequently of equal dignity, so that none of them is superior to the others as regards rite and they enjoy the same rights and are under the same obligations, also in respect of preaching the Gospel to the whole world (cf. Mark 16, 15) under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff.

A) ‘Particulares Ecclesiae, tum Orientis tum Occidentis’

In the initial stages of its formulation, *OE* 3 was conceived in such a way as to be applicable uniquely to the Catholic Oriental Churches. This did not please many of the Council Fathers, “as it could have lent itself to incorrect interpretations, as if the Catholic Oriental Churches had to be considered an appendix of the Catholic Church, thus confirming the misconception of some people that the Catholic Church was primarily the Latin Church or the Western Church.”⁵⁹⁴ This paved way for the reformulation of the paragraph⁵⁹⁵ with a universal bearing so that all particular Churches, whether oriental or Latin (*tum Orientis tum*

⁵⁹² *OE*, 2.

⁵⁹³ E. LANNE, “La conception post-tridentine de la primauté et l’origine des Église unies,” p. 577.

⁵⁹⁴ C. PUJOL, “The Care and Organization of Particular Churches (Second Vatican Council Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* n. 4),” p. 214.

⁵⁹⁵ It was added *in extremis* in October 1964 by the demand of the Melkites.

Occidentis), came under its range.⁵⁹⁶ As C. Pujol has rightly remarked, reformulation was done “less with a view to the Latin Church than to the Oriental Churches, which latter, unlike the Latin Church, had been more strongly feeling the need to defend themselves.”⁵⁹⁷ According to the perspective of this article, the Latin Church is also one of the particular Churches like others. The oriental Rites, far from being appendices, are Churches in the same manner as the Latin Rite. Accordingly, in the words of Mgr Edelby, “il y a dans l’Eglise une «*praesantia Pontificis Romani*», mais il ne devrait pas y avoir une «*praesantia ritus latini*».”⁵⁹⁸ It is regrettable that this basic equality of Churches, firmly affirmed by the Council, was not adopted by the 1983 *CIC*.⁵⁹⁹

B) Reasons for the Equality of Churches

According to *OE 3*, all the particular Churches are “entrusted to the pastoral government of the Roman Pontiff [...]. They are *consequently* of equal dignity....” The fact that the Council firmly affirms the equality of particular Churches is indeed a positive thing, but reason given to this equality, viz. that *they are equally entrusted to the pastoral care of the Roman Pontiff*,⁶⁰⁰ seems to be unsatisfactory from the point of view of Oriental Churches. For it is neither the only nor the most important reason for the equality of Rites. As Mgr Edelby explained in his commentary on *Orientalium ecclesiarum*, all the Churches are not entrusted to the Roman Pontiff *aequali modo*. The Church of Rome is entrusted to him as its bishop, the province of «*Latium*» as its Metropolitan, Italy as its Primate, the West as its Patriarch and finally all the Church in his capacity as successor of Peter in his universal primacy.⁶⁰¹ In other words, it is incorrect to say that the pope exercises an equal power on all the Churches. However, it must be underlined that “en tant que successeur de saint Pierre dans sa primauté sur l’Eglise universelle, exerce également ses prérogative primatiale à l’égard de toutes les Eglises sans distinction.”⁶⁰² According to J. Ratzinger,

⁵⁹⁶ “With this assertion the council solemnly set aside the view that the Latin rite, being the rite of the Roma Church, was superior to the Eastern rites, a view which was generally held, officially taught, and widely put into practice in the past,” G. NEDUNGATT, “Equal Rights of Churches in the Catholic Communion”, p. 1.

⁵⁹⁷ C. PUJOL, “The Care and Organization of Particular Churches (Second Vatican Council Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* n. 4),” p. 215.

⁵⁹⁸ N. EDELBY, “Les Eglises particulières ou rites,” p. 159.

⁵⁹⁹ “It is regrettable that while canonising the equality of Christ’s faithful as physical *persons*, the 1983 Code of Canon Law has overlooked the conciliar norm of the juridical equality of the *Churches* in the Catholic communion,” G. NEDUNGATT, “Equal Rights of Churches in the Catholic Communion”, p.1.

⁶⁰⁰ CCEO 43: “he enjoys supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power in the Church, which he can always freely exercise”; CIC 331: “he has supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power in the Church, and he can always freely exercise this power.”

⁶⁰¹ Cf. N. EDELBY, “Les Eglises particulières ou rites,” p. 164.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 165.

The extreme centralization of the Catholic Church is due not simply to the Petrine office but to its being confused with the patriarchal function which the bishop of Rome gradually assumed over the whole of Latin Christianity. Uniformity of Church law and liturgy and the appointment of bishops by Rome arose from the close union of these two offices. In the future they should be more clearly distinguished.

Then accepting unity with the pope would no longer mean joining a unified administration but simply fitting into the unity of faith and fellowship. [...] And someday perhaps Asia and Africa should be made patriarchates distinct from the Latin Church.⁶⁰³

C) Zones of Authority of the Bishop of Rome in the Catholic Church

G. Alberigo⁶⁰⁴ has given an interesting adaptation to the ancient distinction of the threefold zones of the papal power, first evoked by P. Batiffol.⁶⁰⁵ Thus, within the Catholic communion we can distinguish three different spheres, which may demand different forms of the exercise of papal authority.

I) *Latin Churches of ancient Christianity*

We can identify a well-defined sphere, constituted by the Latin Churches of the ancient Christianity which is situated in the West Atlantic and which accepted the Council of Trent. The Communion of these Churches were regulated, during the last couple of centuries, by the personal form of papal authority, to which was associated lately the synod of bishops. We have here a communion of Churches where there is a tendency to favour the elements of uniformity mixed with strong signs of differentiation.

II) *Latin Churches of Newly Evangelised Lands*

We can recognise another sphere constituted by the Western Churches born after the Council of Trent especially through the process of missionary implantation. Here too, the ecclesial communion was directed by Rome according to the personal form. Yet it took place in a context which is different, historically and socially, from the 'Atlantic' Churches. These Churches belong to the Latin American, African, Indian and Far Eastern contexts. This sphere of ecclesial communion demands solutions which a central office like *Propaganda fide* is incapable of furnishing.

III) *Catholic Oriental Churches*

Yet another sphere of ecclesial communion is constituted by the Catholic Oriental Churches, "which conserve the witnesses of a strong synodal practice at different levels and which, although in full communion with the Church of Rome and its bishop, always felt a

⁶⁰³ J. RATZINGER, "Primacy and Episcopacy," *Theology Digest*, 19 (1971), p. 206.

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. G. ALBERIGO, "Institutions exprimant la communion entre l'épiscopat universel et l'évêque de Rome," p. 287-288.

⁶⁰⁵ Cf. P. BATIFFOL, *Cathedra Petri*, pp. 41-59.

difficulty to approve the preference given to the personal form of the exercise of government which is not at all easy to harmonise with their deep synodal conscience.”⁶⁰⁶

D) Territoriality and Oriental Catholics

1) Personal character of a Particular Church

As *OE 2* sees it “the Holy Catholic Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit by the same faith, the same sacraments and the same government.” That is to say, “l’élément territorial n’entre pas dans sa définition, comme c’est le cas, en revanche, dans celle de l’Etat. Par conséquent, s’il y a sur un territoire plusieurs Eglises particulières cela ne peut constituer un obstacle, puisqu’elles aussi ont le caractère personnel, du fait qu’elles unissent les fidèles du même rite, c’est-à-dire ceux qui furent baptisés dans le rite, ou le devaient être, ou y ont adhéré avec la permission requise. Ce caractère personnel de la société ecclésiastique est aujourd’hui confirmé par la définition du diocèse, donnée par le Concile.”⁶⁰⁷

The principle of territoriality is slowly substituted by the principle of personality as the foundation of ecclesial organisation.⁶⁰⁸ In the light of this development, no Rite must be condemned to limit itself to what it is. To put it differently, no Rite must be deprived of the means to develop itself legitimately. This principle is often hindered by a false thinking that “l’Eglise latine (confondue avec l’Eglise catholique) est partout chez elle dans le monde, alors que les Eglises orientales ne sont vraiment chez elles qu’en Orient. [...] cette conception géographique des Eglises est définitivement écartée par le Concile.”⁶⁰⁹ According to the mind of the council, “[p]artout dans le monde, orientaux et occidentaux sont chez eux et jouissent des mêmes droits.”⁶¹⁰ That is to say, the terms oriental and occidental do not have any more their geographical significance. Eastern Churches are not any more Churches found only in the East just as the Western Church is not a Church found only in the West. “Etre d’une

⁶⁰⁶ G. ALBERIGO, “Institutions exprimant la communion entre l’épiscopat universel et l’évêque de Rome,” p. 287-288.

⁶⁰⁷ G. ŘEZĂC, “Sur l’extension du pouvoir des Patriarches et, en générale, des Eglises orientales sur les fidèles de leur rites,” p. 111; cf. *CD 11*. We may here note that this view, usually defended by the Catholic Oriental Churches, is different from the view held by theologians like Tillard, Legrand and, on the Orthodox side, by Zizioulas, Schmemmann and Meyendorff.

⁶⁰⁸ “According to the Oriental conception ecclesiastical law is per se personal, and so, communities of different rites or customs can and must live each under its jurisdiction in the same territory.,” P. PODIPARA, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of Thomas Christians*, p. 50.

⁶⁰⁹ N. EDELBY, “Les Eglises particulières ou rites,” pp. 179-180. Cf. *CD 11*. The same view is taken by 1983 *CIC*.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

Eglise orientale, ou de l'Eglise occidentale, c'est appartenir à un mode d'être ecclésiale différent."⁶¹¹

II) The Anachronic Aspect of the Territorial Principle

It is true that the principle of territoriality was greatly venerated in the antiquity.⁶¹² Therefore "l'idéal serait qu'il y ait pour chaque territoire *una sedes*, et sur ce siège *unus sedens*."⁶¹³ It is based on this traditional principle that the 4th Lateran Council (Ch 9) had forbidden multiplicity of hierarchy in the same territory. Accordingly, *Propaganda Fide*, in a letter to the Archbishop of Paris, dated 12 May 1890, wrote:

C'est une maxime générale de cette Sacrée Congrégation que les Patriarches de rite oriental ne puissent exercer leur juridiction hors de leurs patriarcats et que, par conséquent, les prêtres et les fidèles de tout rite oriental, ayant leur domicile hors de leurs patriarcats respectifs ou, également, dans les limites de ceux-ci, mais n'ayant pas de curé de leur rite, soient soumis à l'Ordinaire latin du lieu dans lequel ils demeurent, spécialement dans les diocèses latins.⁶¹⁴

The same norm was employed by Leo XIII in his Constitution *Orientalium dignitas* (30 November 1894): "Anyone of an Eastern rite that resides outside the patriarchal territory will be under the administration of the Latin clergy."⁶¹⁵

But this principle was often violated and did not any more correspond to the reality. Initially, the Patriarch had exclusive power in his territory; subsequently it was gradually reduced—owing to schism and divisions as well as Islamic invasion—into a 'personal' authority, i.e. applicable only to a determined number of subjects in a given territory. This transformation, which took place mainly in the East, did not touch the Western Church until the Crusades. With the Crusades (from the 11th century onwards), Latin circumscriptions were established in the Oriental territories.

La conséquence en fut que le principe de la délimitation territoriale des patriarcats et de la non-ingérence d'un Patriarche dans le territoire des autres fut définitivement dépassé. C'était la première fois que le patriarcat romain et l'Eglise occidentale s'installaient sur les territoires des patriarcats orientaux [...], y créant les patriarcats latins de Jérusalem (1099) et d'Antioche (1100). [...] le fait du dépassement des limites territoriales par le patriarcat romain et l'Eglise occidentale par rapport à celles d'Orient demeura et fut même

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁶¹² I Constantinople, canon 2.

⁶¹³ N. EDELBY, "Les Eglises particulières ou rites," p. 180.

⁶¹⁴ "Maxima est generalis huius Sacrae Congregationis, quod Patriarchae ritus orientalis exercere nequeant propriam jurisdictionem extra eorundem patriarchatus, et consequenter, quod sacerdotes et fideles cuiuslibet ritus orientalis domicilium habentes extra respectivos patriarchatus sive etiam intra limites eorum, sed non habentes parochos proprii ritus, subiciuntur Ordinario latino loci in quo morantur, praecipue in dioecesibus latinis," Cardinal COUSSA, *Epitome praelectionum de Iure ecclesiastico orientali*, vol. I, Grottaferrata, 1948, p. 229.

⁶¹⁵ "Quicumque Orientalis, extra patriarchale territorium commorans sub administratione sit cleri latini..." *Collectanea S.C. de Propaganda Fide*, II, n. 1883, For English trans. LEO XIII, *Orientalium dignitas*, 30 November 1894, www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113orient.htm (21.7.2004)

renforcé avec la quatrième croisade, qui conduisit à l'occupation de Constantinople et à la création d'un patriarcat latin en 1204, suivie, peu après, de celui d'Alexandrie (1209).⁶¹⁶

This state of affairs (i.e. “la coexistence de différentes Eglises orientales et de circonscriptions latines sur le territoire même des patriarcats orientaux”⁶¹⁷) continued even after a part of Oriental Churches entered into communion with the Church of Rome. Besides this, the massive immigration in modern times has not either helped maintain the principle of territoriality.

La norme de la territorialité de la juridiction fut ainsi, au moins dans ces régions, mise définitivement de côté, perdant sa valeur universelle, et fut remplacée, jusque dans l'Eglise catholique, par la norme de la personnalité de la juridiction, c'est-à-dire juridiction sur les personnes d'un certain rite ou une Eglise seulement, dans un territoire déterminé, principe que les différentes Eglises séparées respectaient déjà depuis des siècles.⁶¹⁸

Besides, this personal principle is not incompatible with the conciliar teaching, which—having rejected the vision that considers particular Churches as departments of the universal Church—holds these Churches as concrete realizations and representations of the *Catholica*. As G. Nedungatt has said, “where several intermingling Christian communities are recognized as ecclesial, the local Church ceases to be simply singular and is to be seen as the local replica of the vast and complex *ecumene* with an ecclesiological mystery and an ecumenical problem.”⁶¹⁹ Here, the Trinitarian theology can help us discover the compatibility of the presence of different rites and jurisdictions in the same place with a sane ecclesiology of communion.

Each of the Persons of the Trinity is distinct One from the Other, but there is only one God, since the three persons have one and the same Divinity or Divine nature. Again, the distinctions of Persons being kept intact, each Person is in each of the other two. The different rites in the same territory can in like manner be united among themselves. Each must keep its distinction with its priests, bishop, jurisdiction, Churches, etc. insisting on its identity, cultivating the theology, spirituality and so on, proper to each. Keeping their distinction in this way, they can be many, but One in Faith and Charity under the Supreme Authority of the Roman Pontiff.⁶²⁰

This compels us to consider the particular Church not simply as a geographically circumscribed and territorially limited community, but as ‘the portion of the People of God.’⁶²¹ In the traditional static civilisations, geographical unity or proximity was the

⁶¹⁶ G. ŔEZĂC, “Sur l'extension du pouvoir des Patriarches et, en générale, des Eglises orientales sur les fidèles de leur rites,” p. 106.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁹ G. NEDUNGATT, “Autonomy, Autocephaly,” p. 28.

⁶²⁰ P. PODIPARA, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of Thomas Christians*, p. 56.

⁶²¹ CD 11.

condition for the maintenance of the unity of a group. But in this age of social mobility and mass communication this is no more the case.⁶²² Now “it is possible for a particular Church to be spread out all over the globe without pretending to become the universal Church. Here the concept of the local Church breaks down, and the particular Church takes over.”⁶²³ As a result, in many places of the world, hierarchies of different families are found superposed in the area of the same episcopal see within the unique Roman Catholic Communion. In this context, “[l]a territoire ne suffit plus à les distinguer. Le pluralisme ecclésial doit être définitivement admis.... Le rêve d’une Eglise par territoire, d’un Evêque par siège, d’une Eglise par cité, d’un autel par l’église et d’une liturgie par autel est définitivement dépassé.”⁶²⁴ This calls for a changed understanding of jurisdiction. It should be no more considered as bound up with a territory. Rather “it should be coextensive with the particular Church itself,” which is not any more contained in the traditional territory (*territorium proprium*). Hence, the norm that *Patriarchas et Episcopos nil posse extra limites proprii territorii in sui Ritus fideles sibi tamen non subditos*, despite their rootage in tradition, is gradually sidelined if not totally neglected during the second millennium.

In this context, it is also necessary to see the ancient canons, prohibiting multiple jurisdictions, in their proper context, viz. the problem of a hierarch encroaching on the competence of another colleague. Applying these canons, given their historical conditionality, “in the modern context of mass emigration and the dislocation of whole sections of the People of God is to regard the hierarchy as the normative point of reference for the Church—a hierarchological stance. The canons in question have not envisaged the legitimacy or not of particular Churches being spread out on the face of the earth and intermingling with other particular Churches with or without a local unity.”⁶²⁵

E) Equality in Pastoral Care

According to the mind of the council, by reason of its Rite, no Church should enjoy more rights or bear more obligations. Hence, the Council affirmed: “none of them is superior to the others as regards rite and they enjoy the same rights and are under the same obligations.”⁶²⁶ It also added: “Means should be taken therefore in every part of the world for the protection and advancement of all the particular Churches (*Ecclesiarum particularium*) and, to this end, there

⁶²² As G. Nedungatt has remarked, the authorities of the universal Church cannot “...hinder the faithful of a particular Church from exercising the fundamental human right to emigrate anywhere and be built up with proper hierarchical organs into a fuller Church,” G. NEDUNGATT, “Autonomy, Autocephaly,” p. 30.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁶²⁴ N. EDELBY, “Les Eglises particulières ou rites,” p. 181.

⁶²⁵ G. NEDUNGATT, “Autonomy, Autocephaly,” p. 30.

⁶²⁶ *OE* 3.

should be established parishes and a proper hierarchy where the spiritual good of the faithful demands it.”⁶²⁷

The above text is only a logical consequence of what was affirmed in *OE 3*, according to which “l’Eglise latine n’est au sein de l’Eglise catholique qu’une Eglise particulière, bien que la plus nombreuse et, pour différentes raisons, la plus importante en fait, mais seulement une Eglise particulière, dont les droits et les devoirs sont en soi égaux à ceux de toute autre Eglise particulière orientale, ou rite, comme on a l’habitude de dire dans l’Eglise catholique.”⁶²⁸ If the Latin Church, being one particular Church among others, can exercise its jurisdiction and pastoral care in all parts of the world, there is no justifiable reason why the Catholic Oriental Churches cannot do the same with regard to their faithful living outside their territory. It is just a matter of justice. Otherwise there is no point in talking about equality of rites or particular Churches. And the conciliar doctrine in *OE 3* will not be anything more than pious thinking, far apart from the concrete situation on the ground. What we want to underline is the fact that “aucun Rite n’est destiné à disparaître.... Aucune Eglise-Rite n’est une institution de transition.”⁶²⁹ Positively put,

... tous les Rites seront maintenus, non seulement dans leurs territoires d’origine, mais partout dans le monde. Actuellement, l’Eglise latine se considère partout chez elle, alors que les Eglise Orientales ne sont vraiment admises, à pleine droits, qu’en Orient, où elles ont pris naissance.⁶³⁰

In other words, they ought to be defended for their existence and preservation and for their maintenance, whether of their rites and traditions or of their rights and obligations: for such is the desire of the Catholic Church and such is the exigency of the very nature of the particular Churches.⁶³¹

But merely a defensive attitude will not suffice for the protection and the preservation of these Churches; often it can be counterproductive: it would render Churches too ‘anaemic’ to be active in mission and pastorate. For no living organism can survive on defence alone. Rather, it should grow and reach its proper perfection. Hence, it is wrong to think that the Catholic Church just tolerates the diversity of Rites. Rather she wills positively this diversity and multiplicity of Churches. That is why *OE 4* mentions, along with the protection of the particular Churches, the urgency of their growth (both intrinsic and extrinsic). Within the Church, appropriate care must be given to the formation of the personnel so that the spiritual welfare of the faithful is ensured, to the apostolic activities, improvement of parishes and

⁶²⁷ *OE 4*.

⁶²⁸ G. ŔEZĂC, “Sur l’extension du pouvoir des Patriarches et, en générale, des Eglises orientales sur les fidèles de leur rites,” p. 107.

⁶²⁹ N. EDELBY, “Les Eglises particulières ou rites,” p. 176.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶³¹ C. PUJOL, “The Care and Organization of Particular Churches (Second Vatican Council Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* n. 4),” p. 215.

dioceses, etc. This internal growth and strengthening should go hand in hand with external growth: “that is to say, that each particular Church should be able to extend the territorial reach of its activity, whenever it is necessary or suitable, without being obliged to remain enclosed in a certain territory. This supposes that it has the possibility and the means to organize itself also outside its own territory [...] in order to pursue its mission to look after the welfare of its faithful, wherever they might be.”⁶³²

Thus, it is clear from *OE 4* that the Council wanted not only the protection of particular Churches, but also their increase. The Council is clear in its wording: “Means should be taken therefore *in every part of the world (ubique terrarum)* and it concerns *all the particular Churches (omnium Ecclesiarum particularium)*.” The purpose of this provision was

...from the very beginning to win for these Oriental Churches the possibility and the faculty to organize themselves also outside their own territory, in spite of the difficulties frequently raised. The competent pre-conciliar and conciliar Oriental Commissions were aware of the obstacles to such an organization; but they wanted to surmount them by the recognition of the right of each particular Church to establish and organize itself in any part of the world where the good of its own faithful required it.⁶³³

Of course, the Council did not want the growth of particular Churches to be achieved in an uncontrolled manner. That is why it expressed its mind in a conditional manner. The sole condition for the growth of the Church outside the *territorium proprium* is the spiritual welfare of the faithful. So, according to the Council, wherever the spiritual good of the faithful will be positively promoted, “there should be established parishes and a special hierarchy” (*constituantur paroeciae atque propria hierarchia*). To this must be added another consideration:

...it cannot be said that the spiritual good of the faithful is sufficiently taken care of, as a general rule, by the mere fact that these faithful are in the charge of priests of another rite, or that these faithful can practise the Christian life in the midst of a community belonging to a different rite. The faithful who for whatever reason are obliged to practise their Christian life in an environment ritually different from their own will hardly feel the whole impact of religion, which, though it is the same in all the rites, is now being presented under a form and with rites different from their own, and very often unknown to them. [...] The result of all this can easily be either that the faithful become estranged to the practice of Christian life or that they are incorporated in another religious organization that is closer to them, sometimes even outside the Catholic Church.⁶³⁴

This is contrary to the mind of the Council as expressed in *OE 5*: “Churches of the East, as much as those of the West, have a full right and are in duty bound to rule themselves, each in accordance with its own established disciplines, since all these are praiseworthy by reason of

⁶³² *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 218-219.

their venerable antiquity, more harmonious with the character of their faithful and more suited to the promotion of the good of souls.” Besides, “all members of the Eastern Rite should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their legitimate liturgical rite and their established way of life.”⁶³⁵ This wish of the Council cannot be achieved without the faithful being served by their own pastors, who can nourish them with the spiritual riches as they are handed down in their ecclesial tradition. The basic guiding principle in all pastoral dispositions should be the spiritual welfare of the faithful.⁶³⁶ Hence, every Church should be given the possibility to extend her maternal solicitude, making the particular Church present—with its rites and manner of living the religion—where her faithful live. For Rites, according to the Catholic understanding, are not simply concerned about certain ways of celebrating liturgy. Rather they must be taken as

...a living reality, incarnate and expressed in the everyday life of the people. The rites are in fact a definite form of life, of practising the Christian religion; they are as it were an incarnation of the gospel teaching received by each believer under the garb that best suits his temperament, his situation, his mode of thinking and acting; so much so that the different formulae, the different rites and liturgical actions, as well as the various ways of administering the sacraments and of celebrating the sacred liturgy, and even the several types of hierarchical government are nothing but a particular form of receiving the teaching of the Gospel, of living it and making of it a living spirit.⁶³⁷

In this context, any move to deprive the faithful of the possibility to practise their own rite and to force them, in whatever manner, to conform to another mode of life will not surely lead to their spiritual welfare. It is also interesting to note that the Council, in its desire to ensure the spiritual welfare of the faithful, called for the safeguarding and growth of each particular Church by erecting new parishes and dioceses or even patriarchates. The reason is simple:

Les Eglises orientales auxquelles semble revenir comme droit quasi naturel, comme aux Eglises-mères, le soin des fidèles de leur rite, où qu'ils se trouvent, sont également les plus aptes à l'exercer, tant en raison de l'intérêt qu'elles y ont, pour ne pas perdre ces fidèles et, par là même, diminuer numériquement et sous d'autres aspects, qu'en raison de leur meilleure préparation à un tel devoir.⁶³⁸

⁶³⁵ *OE*, 6.

⁶³⁶ My personal experience as a Syro-Malabar priest in contact with the Syro-Malabarians in Switzerland for the last couple of years has confirmed this conviction. Ever since my arrival in this country, in response to the ardent desire of our faithful spread out in different parts of Switzerland, we have succeeded in organising *Qurbana* (Holy Eucharist) centres in Zürich (4 places) Schaffhausen, Bern, Fribourg, Olten, Aarau, Basel and Bellinzona. It is a gratifying experience for me as a priest to notice the enthusiasm with which our faithful come, in ever increasing numbers (in contrast to emptying Churches in most part of the West!), to participate in the Divine Liturgy, to experience, live and celebrate their common belongingness to a unique ecclesial heritage. That is to say, only a faithful-oriented—and not territory oriented—pastoral policy will serve the welfare of the faithful and of the Church.

⁶³⁷ C. PUJOL, “The Care and Organization of Particular Churches (Second Vatican Council Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* n. 4),” pp. 221-222.

⁶³⁸ G. ŘEZÁČ, “Sur l’extension du pouvoir des Patriarches et, en générale, des Eglises orientales sur les fidèles de leur rites,” p. 110.

The task of providing proper structures for the pastoral care of the Oriental faithful outside their traditional territory is left to the competent authorities (local bishop, Congregation for the Oriental Churches and the Roman Pontiff). The application of the conciliar prescription is not without practical difficulties; that is why the Council itself advises:

The hierarchs of the different individual Churches with jurisdiction in one and the same territory should, by taking common counsel in regular meetings, strive to promote unity of action and with common endeavour to sustain common tasks, so as better to further the good of religion and to safeguard more effectively the ordered way of life of the clergy.⁶³⁹

In the light of the conciliar teaching enunciated above, it is interesting to take note of the situation of the thousands of Syro-Malabar Catholics residing outside their *territorium proprium*, an area to which they were arbitrarily confined ever since the arrival of the Portuguese to India in 1498. Until quite recently, the Syro-Malabar Church was prevented from giving pastoral care for their numerous émigré faithful⁶⁴⁰ in different Indian cities where the Latin rite was already in place.⁶⁴¹ As P. Chittilappilly wrote in 1970,

The problem takes on a still more unfair outlook when compared with the condition of their non-catholic Christian brethren, who can practise their rite wherever they go in the country, and their hierarchs without any difficulty can look after them, whereas the oriental Catholics are deprived of this legitimate spiritual comfort. This creates prejudice and contempt for the Catholic Church. The danger of perversion also is not lacking, especially among the Catholics who do not know much of the doctrinal differences and who are attracted by the similarity of the liturgies. For others, the deprivation of the proper rite might cause indifference to religion, which is quite possible in a changed atmosphere, whereas if there were priests of the rite and tongue, such a crisis could be effectively avoided. For the immigrant Malabarians the danger of indifference is greater than perversion of faith.⁶⁴²

In order to rectify this unjust situation, the Holy See intervened in 1987. In a letter to the Catholic bishops of India,⁶⁴³ Pope John Paul II ordered that the pastoral needs of Oriental Catholics residing in Latin dioceses be attended to⁶⁴⁴ and announced the erection of the

⁶³⁹ OE 4.

⁶⁴⁰ “We have to note here that the Syro-Malabar immigrants in question are ‘immigrants’ in their own fatherland, the whole of which was their ecclesiastical territory at one time, and it was the illegal policy of the Latin missionaries that restricted this territory to a corner of South India,” P. PODIPARA, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of Thomas Christians*, p. 51.

⁶⁴¹ Such restrictions were not operative in the *territorium proprium* of the Syro-Malabar Church, i.e. a separate Latin Hierarchy is established in Kerala since several decades.

⁶⁴² P. CHITILAPPILLY, “The Territorial Extension of the Malabar Church,” in: J. VELLIAN (ed.), *The Malabar Church. Symposium in honour of Rev. Placid J. Podipara CMI*, «Orientalia Christiana Analecta - 186» (Roma: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1970), p. 286.

⁶⁴³ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, “L’unité et la collaboration entre les rites,” *Lettre aux évêques de l’Inde*, DC, No. 1947 (1987) pp. 890-892.

⁶⁴⁴ “En ce qui concerne le soin pastoral des croyants des rites orientaux qui vivent dans des diocèses de rite latin, en accord avec l’esprit et la lettre des décrets conciliaires *Christus Dominus* 23, 3 et *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* 4, les Ordinaires latins de ces diocèses doivent pourvoir dès que possible à une pastorale adéquate des fidèles de ces rites orientaux par le ministère des prêtres ou par des paroisses du rite, là où cela serait indiqué,

eparchy of Kalyan for the Syro-Malabarians who reside in the areas of Bombay (Mumbai) and Pune.⁶⁴⁵ Besides the diocese of Kalyan, erected in 1988, a new diocese—St Thomas diocese of Chicago—was erected in 2001 for the Syro-Malbarians living in the USA and Canada. It is needless to say that these are steps in the right direction. Similar initiatives in favour of the Malabarians in other areas of India were expected. But the results have been so far very meagre. The present position of Rome on this question is embodied in the following words of Pope John Paul II to the Syro-Malabar Bishops who came on an *ad limina* visit to Rome in May 2003.

I am certain that you will continue to work closely with your Brother Bishops of the Latin Rite and the Holy See to ensure that Syro-Malabars throughout India and the world receive the spiritual support they deserve in strict respect for canonical dispositions which are, as we know, appropriate means for the preservation of ecclesial communion. [...] This must always be done with respect towards the local bishops, who are placed by the Holy Spirit to govern the holy Church of God in union with the Roman Pontiff, the Pastor of the Universal Church.⁶⁴⁶

We may point out in this regard—without denying the importance of working closely with the Bishops of the Latin Rite—the fact that a firm stance taken by the Holy See (in fulfilment of its obligation to oversee the communion of Churches) contributed more, in the recent past, to the protection of the rights of the Syro-Malabar Church in the Country of its origin.

F) Equality in Evangelisation

It is a false idea that only the Western Church was and is carrying out the work of evangelisation. The Oriental Churches were also in the past eminently missionary.⁶⁴⁷

In the entire history of Christendom it was the East Syrian Church, sometimes called Nestorian, that did the greatest and the most extensive missionary work till the 12th century or 13th century....the East Syrian Church lit the flame of faith mainly through their monks, from Mesopotamia and Persia to the farthest lands, to Turkey, China, Mongolia, and Japan. The faithful of this Church were more numerous during the 12th and 13th centuries, roughly 80 million compared to the members of the Latin and Byzantine Churches which taken together were only about 40 million.⁶⁴⁸

These Oriental Churches still have this right and duty to evangelise. But unfortunately there are some who think that “les Eglises Orientales catholiques ont tout juste le droit de

ou bien par un vicaire épiscopal doté des facultés nécessaires, là où les circonstances l’indiqueraient,” JOHN PAUL II, “L’unité et la collaboration entre les rites,” No. 5 c.

⁶⁴⁵ “Étant donné le nombre des catholiques du rite syro-malabar dans la région indienne de Bombay-Pune, on peut considérer que la situation actuelle est suffisamment mûre pour l’établissement d’une éparchie de rite syro-malabar. J’autorise donc la Congrégation pour les Églises orientales à procéder dans ce sens,” JOHN PAUL II, “L’unité et la collaboration entre les rites,” No. 5 c.

⁶⁴⁶ JOHN PAUL II, “Address to Syro-Malabar Bishops on Ad Limina Visit,” Vatican, 13 May 2003 (=DC, No. 2298 (2003) 788), No. 4.

⁶⁴⁷ We may recall the mission work of Byzantine Churches among Slavs, Nestorian Church in Persia, India, Mongolia and China, etc.

⁶⁴⁸ Mar A. D. MATTAM, “Missionary Consciousness of the Thomas Christians”, p. 106.

survivre, en s'occupant de leurs fidèles. L'action apostolique auprès des non-chrétiens serait réservée à l'Eglise latine."⁶⁴⁹ This view was corollary to the general tendency of the pre-Vatican II period to centralise everything in Rome. Thus, there was (and there is) a Roman Congregation specialised in the evangelisation of the peoples. According to E. Lanne, the policy of reserving evangelization mission to the universal jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff is theologically paradoxical and amounts to undermining the duty and right of local Churches to engage in *ad gentes* mission.⁶⁵⁰ Thus, in the past, Melkite Church in Israel was prohibited for a certain time from engaging in missionary work among the Jews for the reason that it was the prerogative of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.⁶⁵¹ Another typical case is that of the Syro-Malabar Church.

While affirming the equal right of Rite-Churches, the Council makes a special mention of the field of evangelisation with the clause, "also in respect of preaching the Gospel to the whole world."⁶⁵² Commentators have pointed out that the reason why the right to preach the gospel is especially mentioned among the rights of Rite-Churches is to be traced to the situation as it existed then in India.⁶⁵³ Whereas the Indian Latin Church owes its existence to the Portuguese missionaries who started coming to India from the 16th century onwards, the Church of the Thomas Christians, which flourished in the land from the beginning of Christianity itself, "had been systematically confined to their corner of south-west India and prevented from having missions in other parts of India."⁶⁵⁴

The Malankarians and the Malabarians, the Christians of the West and East Syrian (Chaldean) rite respectively [...] were not permitted to extend their missionary activity to their pagan Indian brothers

⁶⁴⁹ N. EDELBY, "Les Eglises particulières ou rites," p. 169.

⁶⁵⁰ " Mais théologiquement c'est cette situation même qui est paradoxale: que la mission puisse avoir été réservée à la juridiction universelle du pontife romain; que chaque Eglise locale ne sente pas comme son premier devoir non seulement de maintenir la chrétienté et d'évangéliser ceux chez lesquels elle se trouve implantée, mais aussi de porter l'Evangile dehors; que l'accomplissement de ce devoir ait été même laissé aux initiatives privées sous l'égides de Rome; qu'il ait même fallu parfois que Rome soutienne ces initiatives privées et les défende contre des responsables des Eglise locale trop myopes pour voir qu'il n'y a pas d'Eglise sans évangélisation, sans annonce de la bonne nouvelle à ceux qui ne l'ont pas encore entendue. Tout cela pose dans le principe même la question de la nature évangélisatrice de l'Eglise locale. Dans quelle mesure la mission est-elle une composante nécessaire de la nature de l'Eglise ? Et réciproquement, dans quelle mesure l'Eglise est-elle une composante nécessaire de la nature de la mission ?" E. LANNE, "L'Eglise locale et l'Eglise universelle", p. 505.

⁶⁵¹ Following strong reaction from the Melkites, the Holy Office stepped back and asked the Oriental Congregation to declare that nothing prevents the Melkite hierarchy in Israel to engage in missionary activity among the non-Christians in that country.

⁶⁵² OE 3.

⁶⁵³ Cf. J. HOECK, *Documents of Vatican II*, ed. by Herbert Vorgrimler, Vol. 1, (London, 1967) p. 315.

⁶⁵⁴ R. F. TAFT, "Eastern Catholic Churches (Orientalium Ecclesiarum)," in: A. HASTINGS (ed.), *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 138, *hereafter cited as* R. F. TAFT, "Eastern Catholic Churches."

because the territory had been assigned to Latin rite missions,⁶⁵⁵ which rite after all reached back in that part of the globe hardly a few hundred years. This was considered not only unjust but also short sighted because the Malabarian Church is going through a period of awakening of priestly and religious vocations of unheard proportions.⁶⁵⁶

It is to this unjust situation that *OE 3* brings a corrective. Ever since 1962, new missions have been given to the Syro-Malabar Church in North India so that it can, on its own, fulfil the God-given mandate to preach the Gospel. Today, there are nine mission dioceses of the Syro-Malabar Church in North India.⁶⁵⁷ However, it must be noted—with much regret—that persistent request for further mission territories in India, put forward by the Syro-Malabar Missionary institutes like *Missionary Society of St Thomas the Apostle*, is still awaiting a favourable response from the competent ecclesiastical authority. As always, arguments based on the archaic principle of territoriality block the prospects of such institutes fulfilling their vocation as missionary institutes of their Mother Church, which is still blessed with abundant missionary vocations.

In this context, it is vital to elaborate the relationship between Rite-Church and evangelisation. Often it is suggested that what is important is to evangelize and not to bother about the Rite. It smacks of a lack of understanding of the full significance of the Church. Church is by its nature a communion of Churches (Individual Churches).⁶⁵⁸ A Rite is not simply some external ceremonies but it is Gospel message concretized and presented in a form to be lived.

It is Christianity in concrete, that is to say, the teaching of Christ handed down through the generations by authentic tradition, and involves Christian worship or liturgy, spirituality and ecclesial discipline. The Church of Christ consists in these individual Churches. There is no universal Church as such without the Churches in communion.⁶⁵⁹

A missionary who is in the field preaches in the name of the Church. For evangelization is an ecclesial act.⁶⁶⁰ It may be then asked why, in the act of evangelisation, we should insist on

⁶⁵⁵ The Sons and daughters of the Syro-Malabar Church had to join latin Rite dioceses and congregations (and change their Rite!) before becoming a missionary in their proper country!

⁶⁵⁶ V. POSPISHIL, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (New York, 1965), pp. 13-14, as cited in X. Koodapuzha, *Faith and Communion of St Thomas Christians* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, 1982), pp. 164-165. “Les catholiques latins sont des nouveau venus et tiennent néanmoins à traiter leurs frères orientaux comme des étrangers dans leurs propres pays... Les malabars n’ont pas jusqu’ici le droit d’avoir des paroisses de leurs rite oriental en dehors de leurs territoire. Plus encore : défense est faite aux prêtres malabars de missionner dans leur rite. S’ils veulent être missionnaires, ils doivent s’agrèger au rite latin. C’est ce que beaucoup ont fait, sacrifiant leur rite pour sauver leur vocation missionnaire,” N. EDELBY, “Les Eglises particulières ou rites,” p. 172.

⁶⁵⁷ These dioceses are: Chanda (1962), Sagar (1968), Satna (1968), Ujjain (1968), Jagadapur (1972), Bijnore (1972), Rajkot (1977), Gorakhpur (1988) and Adilabad (1999).

⁶⁵⁸ *OE 2*.

⁶⁵⁹ Mar A.D. MATTAM, “Missionary Consciousness of the Thomas Christians”, p.115.

⁶⁶⁰ “Evangelization is for no one an individual, and isolated act; it is one that is deeply ecclesial....” *Evangelii Nuntianti*, no. 60.

the Rite. Why should, for instance, the Syro-Malabarian missionaries take their Rite to the North Indians? The answer is to be drawn from the fact that Rite is Christianity in the concrete. As we know, Christian message is never abstract; it is always transmitted as an incarnated reality. When the missionaries follow their proper Rite, they are only sharing their riches and patrimony with the new believers. But as evangelizers, they should not interfere with their social customs or culture. They should rather encourage the new believers to develop their own new Christian way of life adapted to them. It would amount to their response to the Gospel and Christian faith encountered in the preaching, life and ecclesial living of the missionary.

7.3.4. Autonomy of Oriental Catholic Churches (OE 5, 9, 16)

Notwithstanding the basic equality of particular Churches or Rites,⁶⁶¹ these Churches, however, “differ somewhat among themselves in rite [...], that is, in liturgy, ecclesiastical discipline, and spiritual heritage....”⁶⁶² Owing to this fact, the Council affirms that “the Churches of the East, as much as those of the West, have a full right and are in duty bound to rule themselves, each in accordance with its own established disciplines, [which are...] more harmonious with the character of their faithful and more suited to the promotion of the good of souls.”⁶⁶³ In order to bring out the ecclesiological importance of this solemn declaration, it is necessary to link it with another affirmation of the Council in *LG 23*:

...preserving the unity of faith and the unique divine constitution of the universal Church, [the various Churches, established in various places by the apostles and their successors] enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage. Some of these Churches, notably the ancient patriarchal Churches, as parent-stocks of the Faith, so to speak, have begotten others as daughter Churches, with which they are connected down to our own time by a close bond of charity in their sacramental life and in their mutual respect for their rights and duties. This variety of local Churches with one common aspiration is splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided Church.

As the ground for this ecclesiological affirmation, *OE* cites canons 6 and 7 of the First Council of Nicaea which recognised the patriarchal rights of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. In this context, we can pose the question of the autonomy of Catholic Oriental Churches within the communion of Catholic Churches. The right and duty of Churches to rule themselves according to their own law is affirmed, by the Council, as a pre-condition for the re-establishment of unity.⁶⁶⁴ This affirmation indirectly evokes the fact that the autonomy of the Oriental Churches was not always respected in Catholicism. Now, the all important

⁶⁶¹ *OE* 2.

⁶⁶² *OE* 3.

⁶⁶³ *OE* 5.

⁶⁶⁴ *UR* 16.

question is the following: What is the nature and content of the autonomy of a Catholic Oriental Church?

From the Oriental perspective, the patriarchal institution, which pre-dates the great schisms, is “une authentique épiphanie de l’Eglise une et indivise dans la communion des Eglises locales représentées par leurs évêques.”⁶⁶⁵ *CCEO*, inspired by the affirmation of *OE 5*, designates the Catholic Oriental Churches by the term *Ecclesiae sui iuris* (i.e., Churches with proper right or autonomous Churches⁶⁶⁶).

A community of the Christian faithful, which is joined together by a hierarchy according to the norm of law and which is expressly or tacitly recognized as *sui iuris* by the supreme authority of the Church, is called in this Code a Church *sui iuris*.⁶⁶⁷

It is, first of all, a community of faithful administered by a hierarchy. This community’s status of being *sui iuris* must be recognised by the pope or an ecumenical council. What is remarkable here is the fact that Rite is no more considered merely under the aspect of liturgy, but in terms of an entire patrimony, which includes, besides liturgy, also theology, spirituality and discipline.⁶⁶⁸ These Rites come from one of the following great traditions: Alexandrian, Antiochian, Armenian and Chaldean and Constantinopolitan. Oriental Catholic Churches *sui iuris* are or may be a) a patriarchal Church, b) a major archiepiscopal Church c) a Metropolitan Church or e) other Churches *sui iuris*. Among these various types of Churches, the degree of autonomy varies and it is manifested especially in the election of their head. A patriarch is canonically elected by the synod and then he has to ask ‘ecclesiastical communion’ with the Roman Pontiff. A Major Archbishop is also canonically elected by the Synod of bishops of his Church, but his election must be confirmed by the pope. The Metropolitan of a Metropolitan Church is appointed by the pope from a list of three names suggested to him by the bishops of this Church.

With regard to the status of patriarchal Churches, we have to take into consideration the affirmations of Vatican II. Their origin is not attributed to the express will of Christ, but to the

⁶⁶⁵ D. SALACHAS, “Chercher ensemble les formes du ministère pétrinien: Un canoniste oriental répond à l’invitation du Saint Père,” *FZPhTh*, 49 (2002) 1/2, p. 254, *hereafter cited as* D. SALACHAS, “Chercher ensemble les formes du ministère pétrinien.”

⁶⁶⁶ The very promulgation of *CCEO* indicates the framework of autonomy enjoyed by Oriental Catholic Churches. It was desired by many that the Code be promulgated jointly by Pope and the heads of the Oriental Churches: “il ne serait pas contraire et incompatible avec l’ecclésiologie catholique sur la primauté romaine, si à la suprême autorité de l’Eglise, à savoir au pontife romain, étaient associés les chefs des Eglises Orientales dans l’acte de la promulgation du Code du droit canonique oriental, d’autant plus que le Pape Jean Paul II, suivant le désir de son prédécesseur Paul VI, reconnaît que ce Code «a été fait par les orientaux eux-mêmes» Finalement, la proposition n’a pas été acceptée...,” D. SALACHAS, “Chercher ensemble les formes du ministère pétrinien,” p. 255.

⁶⁶⁷ *CCEO* 27.

⁶⁶⁸ Cf. *CCEO*, 28 § 1

Divine Providence.⁶⁶⁹ The conciliar teaching on the unique divine constitution of the Universal Church supposes the Petrine ministry of the bishop of Rome within the universal communion of local Churches.⁶⁷⁰

Mais au sein de différentes Eglises Orientales, surtout patriarcales, leurs propres structures ecclésiales et canoniques ne répondent pas simplement à une exigence d'administration traditionnellement synodale, mais surtout à une exigence fondamentale de sauvegarder leur unité interne et leur communion universelle, avant tout avec le Siège apostolique de Rome.⁶⁷¹

As far as the autonomy of Oriental Catholic Churches is concerned, affirmation of *OE 9* is of paramount importance.

The patriarchs with their synods are the highest authority for all business of the patriarchate, including the right of establishing new eparchies and of nominating bishops of their rite within the territorial bounds of the patriarchate, without prejudice to the inalienable right of the Roman Pontiff to intervene in individual cases (*salvo inalienabili Romani Pontificis iure in singulis casibus interveniendi*).

According to Mgr Néophytos Edelby, this passage is revolutionary from the point of view of Catholic Oriental Churches:

Le principe énoncé dans ce paragraphe est appelé à révolutionner toute la discipline actuelle des Eglises Orientales qui retrouvent, par lui, leur autonomie canonique interne, parfaitement compatible avec la primauté romaine. Il permet aussi d'envisager dans les relations avec l'Eglise orthodoxe, une formule d'union qui sauvegarde leur traditionnelle autonomie interne de gouvernement.⁶⁷²

Here the canonical autonomy of the Catholic Oriental Churches is presented as reconcilable with the Roman Primacy. What is crucial here is how we interpret the clause, “*salvo inalienabili Romani Pontificis iure in singulis casibus interveniendi*.” According to Mgr Edelby, “du fait que le Pape peut, de droit, intervenir dans toutes les affaires ecclésiastiques, même les plus petites, il ne s’ensuit pas qu’il doive intervenir, de fait, dans toutes les affaires et qu’aucune mesure ne peut être prise sans son consentement ou sa confirmation.”⁶⁷³ In other words, the pope intervenes only when the supreme authority of an Oriental Church (patriarch with the synod) is defaulted.⁶⁷⁴ As far as the autonomous existence of the Catholic Oriental Churches is concerned, this principle is of crucial importance: “ce principe est appelé à garantir aux Eglises Orientales leur autonomie canonique interne, parfaitement compatible

⁶⁶⁹ Cf. PHILIPS, Gerard, *L'Eglise et son mystère au IIe Concile du Vatican*, p. 313.

⁶⁷⁰ *UR 14* clearly describes the traditional role of the see of Rome within the communion of Churches: “For many centuries the Church of the East and that of the West each followed their separate ways though linked in a brotherly union of faith and sacramental life; the Roman See by common consent (*Sede Romana moderante communi consensu*) acted as guide when disagreements arose between them over matters of faith or discipline.”

⁶⁷¹ D. SALACHAS, “Chercher ensemble les formes du ministère pétrinien,” p. 256.

⁶⁷² N. EDELBY, *Les Églises orientales catholiques. Décret “Orientalium Ecclesiarum”* (Éd. du Cerf, Paris, 1970), p. 355.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

⁶⁷⁴ See our discussion *supra* on the distinction between the habitual and substitutional exercise of the papal authority under the title, “Functions of the Papal Primacy” at 5.7.

avec la primauté romaine.”⁶⁷⁵ Of course it must be borne in mind that the autonomy of the Catholic Oriental Churches is not an absolute autonomy in the sense of a complete independence vis-à-vis Rome or an autocephaly as it is understood in the Orthodox Church. However, the right recognised to the Roman see to intervene *in singulis casibus* must not be taken for a right to intervene *in omnibus casibus*, but in particular cases, and only when it is needed. It is clearly envisaged in *OE* 24⁶⁷⁶ and *UR* 14.⁶⁷⁷ The Roman intervention was in view of the unity of the Church. All other interventions of Rome were always resisted in the East.⁶⁷⁸ That is to say, in an ordinary situation, “the patriarchs with their synods are the highest authority for all business of the patriarchate.”⁶⁷⁹ Only when this superior instance of authority defaults should the bishop of Rome intervene. Thus, “le Pape devient le garant du fonctionnement canonique de la synodalité, garant de l’unité dans la foi et l’ordre canonique des Eglises orientales catholiques «sui iuris», et dans l’Eglise universelle.”⁶⁸⁰

A) Jurisdiction of the Catholic Oriental Patriarchs

As R. Metz has said, “[I]a juridiction des patriarches est le point sensible, l’aspect le plus contesté de la législation du nouveau Code.”⁶⁸¹ It has occasioned stiff opposition from the part of the Oriental patriarchs and severe criticism from the part of the ecclesiologists and canonists. Being the head and father of his Church, it was naturally expected that the patriarch with his synod could exercise jurisdiction over all the faithful of the patriarchal Church.

Or le Code introduit une nette distinction entre le territoire qui constitue l’ancien patriarcat et celui qui se trouve en dehors des limites du territoire patriarcal traditionnel. Dans le territoire de l’ancien patriarcat, pratiquement limité à l’Orient, le patriarche jouit de tous les droits qui reviennent à l’autorité suprême d’une Eglise autonome, comme l’est une Eglise orientale de droit propre. En revanche, hors du territoire de l’Eglise patriarcale, ses droits sont limités; l’autorité romaine y apporte des restrictions: le patriarche n’est pas autorisé à y exercer le pouvoir législatif; la nomination des évêques revient à Rome.⁶⁸²

⁶⁷⁵ D. SALACHAS, “Chercher ensemble les formes du ministère pétrinien,” p. 257.

⁶⁷⁶ “For many centuries the Churches of the East and of the West went their own ways, though a brotherly communion of faith and sacramental life bound them together. If disagreements in faith and discipline arose among them, the Roman See acted by common consent as moderator” (*Sede romana moderante communi consensu, si dissensiones circa fidem vel disciplinam inter eas orirentur*).

⁶⁷⁷ “For many centuries the Church of the East and that of the West each followed their separate ways though linked in a brotherly union of faith and sacramental life; the Roman See by common consent acted as guide when disagreements arose between them over matters of faith or discipline....”

⁶⁷⁸ “Sans doute le Pape peut de droit intervenir dans les affaires ecclésiastiques des Eglises Orientales, mais il ne s’en suit pas qu’ordinairement il exerce ce droit dans toutes les affaires et qu’aucune mesure ne peut-être prise sans son consentement ou sa confirmation,” D. SALACHAS, “Chercher ensemble les formes du ministère pétrinien,” p. 258.

⁶⁷⁹ *OE* 9.

⁶⁸⁰ D. SALACHAS, “Le «status» ecclésiologique et canonique des Eglises catholiques orientales «sui iuris» et des Eglises orthodoxes autocéphales,” p. 36

⁶⁸¹ R. METZ, “Rome et les Eglises orientales: Le «Code des canons des Eglises orientales»,” p. 689.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*

In *OE 7* “by an Eastern patriarch, is meant the bishop to whom belongs jurisdiction over all bishops, not excepting metropolitans, clergy and people of his own territory or rite, in accordance with canon law and without prejudice to the primacy of the Roman Pontiff.” Here the mention that his authority can be exercised over all the faithful of his own *territory or rite* is significant. For the *rite* in question is not limited to the *territorium proprium*. Also in this definition, the expression “without prejudice to the primacy of the Roman Pontiff” (*salvo primatu Romani Pontificis*) must be taken note of. Here the patriarchal authority is not understood according to the juridical concept of subordination to the papal authority, but rather according to the ecclesiological concept of ‘canonical communion,’ regulated according to the laws established by the supreme authority of the Church.⁶⁸³ That is to say, the patriarch exercises his authority as father and head⁶⁸⁴ over his Church, but always in a synodal context and without prejudice to the power of each bishop in his eparchy and the power of the Synod of bishops of the patriarchal Church. *CCEO* expressly avoided the term *jurisdiction*; it used instead *potestas*, for in the Orient, the power of the patriarch was never seen as a jurisdiction over bishops, he was rather an *inter pares* enjoying necessary authority. He is the *prôtos* of his Church.⁶⁸⁵ He exercises his authority in the context of the Synod and in the Synod.

According to the Apostolic Constitution *Sacri canones*, “[t]he Patriarch and the Synod participate, by canon law, in the supreme authority of the Church.” Before Vatican II, the authority of the Patriarch was considered as having been given by the pope.⁶⁸⁶ Vatican II wanted to establish a balance between the authority of the patriarch and that of the pope. According to Mgr Edelby, the patriarchal authority in no way takes away the authority of the pope. But at the same time, “[i]l est faux de croire que l’autorité patriarcale, comme toute

⁶⁸³ “ Il y a différents degrés d’autonomie juridique relative dont les Eglises Orientales catholiques jouissent dans la communion avec le Siège-apostolique: Eglises patriarcales, Eglises archiépiscopales majeures, Eglises métropolitaines, et autres Eglises *sui iuris*. Sans doute il y a une différence évidente entre l’exercice de l’autorité du pontife romain à l’égard de l’Eglise latine [...] et l’exercice de cette même autorité à l’égard des Eglises Orientales *sui iuris*, surtout des Eglises patriarcales, dont plusieurs se glorifient d’avoir été fondées par les apôtres eux-mêmes (*UR 14*), et dans lesquelles les patriarches, avec leurs Synodes, constituent l’instance supérieure pour toute affaire de l’Eglise patriarcale (*OE 9*). Le Pape intervient quand cette instance supérieure fait défaut; ainsi le Pape devient le garant du fonctionnement canonique de la synodalité, garant de l’unité dans la foi et l’ordre canonique des Eglises Orientales catholiques *sui iuris*. Mais pour remplir cette tâche de modératrice de la communion de toutes les Eglises, il faut évidemment que l’Eglise de Rome ait les moyens de cette tâche, non seulement dans l’ordre juridique mais au plan de l’organisation, de l’information, de la communication,” D. SALACHAS, “Chercher ensemble les formes du ministère pétrinien,” p. 271.

⁶⁸⁴ *CCEO 55*.

⁶⁸⁵ Cf. 34th Apostolic Canon.

⁶⁸⁶ *Cleri sanctitati*, canon 216. “Entre-temps, en Occident les canonistes répandent la sentence que c’est Rome qui accorde aux patriarches d’Orient leurs «privilèges» et leurs pouvoirs plus étendus. De leur part, les orientaux, très attaches à l’histoire, n’arrivent pas à imaginer la possibilité d’une semblable systématisation théologique,” G. PHILIPS, *L’Eglise et son mystère au IIe Concile du Vatican*, p. 315.

autorité supra-épiscopale, n'est légitime que dans la mesure où elle est une participation déléguée de la primauté romaine.⁶⁸⁷ Since the authority of the Patriarch and the patriarchal synod was recognised by the ecumenical Council (supreme authority in the Church), it is rightly said that these participate, by canon law, in the supreme authority of the Church. At the same time, a Catholic Patriarchal Church cannot be said to be enjoying an absolute autonomy (as does an autocephalous Church of the Orthodoxy). According to D. Salachas, "en vertu de la doctrine catholique concernant le ministère du successeur de Pierre dans la communion universelle des Eglises, ministère voulu par le Christ, l'autonomie des Eglises patriarcales catholiques est réelle, effective, mais relative."⁶⁸⁸

B) Positive Contributions of the Institution of Patriarchate

A retrospective regard into the history of the Church from the early times until today will reveal how important a role was played by the institution of patriarchate as far as the Eastern Christianity was concerned. But for this institution and the liturgy, the Christianity in the East would not have traversed the centuries:

Il est intéressant de noter que parmi les facteurs qui ont maintenu le christianisme vivant en Orient, les deux plus importants sont l'institution patriarcale et la liturgie. Le patriarcat est en effet la clef de voûte de tout le christianisme oriental. Méconnaître cette institution presque aussi vieille que l'Eglise, c'est sur le plan œcuménique bâtir sur du sable. Ce n'est pas seulement à cause de leur origine apostolique que les patriarchats sont vénérables, mais aussi et surtout parce qu'ils ont fait l'histoire des dix premiers siècles et ne cessent d'être pour l'Eglise universelle une source d'enrichissement. Les titulaires des sièges apostoliques en effet sont des personnages si importants, que pour les juger l'ancienne discipline n'exigeait rien moins qu'un concile œcuménique. Qu'on se rappelle Nestorius, Dioscore, Pyrrhus et même Chrysostome au pseudo-concile du Chêne. Ces deux facteurs, patriarcat et liturgie, manquèrent à l'Afrique chrétienne de saint Augustin, qui a sombré dans le naufrage. «Poussière d'évêchés sans tête, dit un grand écrivain de l'Afrique chrétienne, au moment de la débâcle, alors qu'en Orient c'est le patriarche lui-même qui traite directement avec les autorités occupantes et assure la survie à la religion chrétienne.»⁶⁸⁹

In the present time, when various local/particular or regional Churches are striving to become incarnate in their milieu, patriarchal Churches can serve as models of successful inculturation. They are the living examples of how the Word can be received in diverse cultural mould and geographical locations without prejudice to the essentials of Christian

⁶⁸⁷ EDELBY, N.; DICK, I., *Les Églises orientales catholiques, Décret Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, "Unam Sanctam – 76" (Paris, 1970), pp. 316-317.

⁶⁸⁸ D. SALACHAS, "Chercher ensemble les formes du ministère pétrinien," p. 263. As we have alluded earlier, according to CCEO, the full power of patriarch is limited to the *territorium proprium*. Outside it he has authority only in liturgical matters.

⁶⁸⁹ J. TAWIL, "Eglise Orientale: hier et aujourd'hui," p. 413. It is interesting to note that when Peter the Great, the Russian Czar wanted to weaken the Russian Church, the best way he found was to suppress the patriarchate, which so remained until 1917. So did the Communists: after the death of Tykhon (1925) this institution was suppressed until the end of the World War II.

faith.⁶⁹⁰ Ecumenical relevance of the patriarchates is also immense. Ecumenically sensitive theologians have alerted time and again that the existing Oriental Catholic Patriarchates are a test case for Latin ecclesiology.⁶⁹¹

L'ecclésiologie patriarcale a peut-être plus de chance à long terme pour le dialogue catholique-orthodoxe que l'ecclésiologie de l'Eglise locale épiscopale, vers laquelle il s'est présentement orienté. Cette dernière, encore que sacramentellement mieux fondée, répond moins à la réalité des développements canoniques sur lesquels achoppe la communion. Elle menace de faire buter le dialogue sur la primauté contre l'ecclésiologie actuellement prédominante parmi les théologiens orthodoxes, selon lesquels il n'y a d'autre réalité ecclésiale que l'Eglise locale diocésaine et le synode des évêques.⁶⁹²

Much depends on how the Catholic Church succeeds in clarifying and distinguishing the primatial and patriarchal functions of the Roman see and its bishop.⁶⁹³ Before the schism the Roman primacy was exercised in the East uniquely for the defence of faith and canonical order of apostolic tradition and ecumenical councils. It is to this fact that the *UR* alludes in 14, §1: "For many centuries the Churches of the East and of the West went their own ways, though a brotherly communion of faith and sacramental life bound them together. If disagreements in faith and discipline arose among them, the Roman See acted by common consent as moderator." That is to say, the popes of the period did not seek to govern the Oriental Churches and they did not have the pretensions to confer the power of jurisdiction to the patriarchs.

Au vu de la situation actuelle du dialogue entre les Eglises catholique et orthodoxe, considérer la légitimité pastorale de l'épiscopat orthodoxe comme résultant d'une concession implicite du Saint-Siège paraît une fiction juridique inconsistante. En définitive, le défaut de communion avec le Siège apostolique romain ne prive l'Eglise orthodoxe, du point de vue catholique, que d'un lien canonique régulateur de l'unité qu'elle exprime et garantit.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹⁰ Cf. *UR* 4.

⁶⁹¹ Cf. *Voix de l'Eglise en Orient. Choix de textes du patriarche Maximos IV et de l'épiscopat grec melchite catholique* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1962).

⁶⁹² A. DE HALLEUX, "Fraterna communio," p. 307.

⁶⁹³ "En ce qui concerne le pouvoir et la fonction du pape, il est clair que la tradition orientale reconnaît à l'évêque de Rome une autorité particulière dans l'Eglise. Il faut toutefois distinguer cette reconnaissance des diverses formes que l'exercice de cette autorité a assumées de ses formulations dogmatiques. Sur le premier point, il est évident qu'elle diffère de l'autorité patriarcale effective du pape dans le monde occidental et qu'il n'est pas question que la reconnaissance de l'autorité de l'évêque de Rome puisse signifier la soumission de l'Eglise orthodoxe à cette autorité patriarcale du pape (cf. *UR* 16). On peut espérer que la formulation dogmatique ne veut pas dire autre chose que ce qui a déjà été affirmé en termes clairs par les papes Léon I^{er} et Gélase I^{er}. Cette formulation en son temps n'a pas été attaquée par l'Orient qui avait pourtant là-dessus une conception différente," Mgr Damaskinos PAPANDREOU, in *Oriente Cristiano*, 15, 1975, pp. 7-25, p. 22. The above text is from Irénikon, 47, 1975, p. 221.

⁶⁹⁴ A. de HALLEUX, "Fraterna communio," p. 308.

7.3.5. Concluding Remarks

The *CCEO* makes mention of more than 200 times the need for the intervention of the Apostolic See of Rome (by way of license, consent, assent, revision, dispensation, approbation, confirmation etc.) which affects different aspects of the life of the Catholic Oriental Churches such as:

...le fonctionnement et le pouvoir des Synodes, la vie des instituts religieux et de leurs membres, l'état clérical, les associations des fidèles, les assemblées des patriarches et des évêques des différentes Eglises *sui iuris*, l'activité missionnaire, les universités catholiques et ecclésiastiques, les instruments de communication sociale, la vie liturgique et l'administration des sacrements, surtout du manage, la suppression des personnes juridiques, l'aliénation des biens temporels, l'administration de la justice, les tribunaux, les sanctions pénales etc.⁶⁹⁵

In the light of a sane ecclesiology of communion and the principle of subsidiarity,⁶⁹⁶ many of these disciplinary questions could be left to the authority of Patriarchs and patriarchal synods⁶⁹⁷ in conformity with the conciliar affirmation in *OE* 9.

Without denying the fact that the territorial principle was revered in the past, ever since it was promulgated by the Second Ecumenical Council,⁶⁹⁸ it is possible to envisage adaptations in view of the Changes in the modern society. This is possible, as D. Salachas has said, by the promulgation of a *ius a Romano Pontifice approbatum* in order to effectively meet the pastoral Challenges of the diaspora.⁶⁹⁹ This is clearly stated by the present prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, His Beatitude Ignace Moosa Daoud.

Les Eglises Orientales catholiques doivent être en mesure d'organiser effectivement une pastorale propre et adaptée de leurs fidèles en situation de diaspora, évidemment en profonde communion et réelle concertation avec les évêques locaux d'autres Eglises *sui iuris*.⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁵ D. SALACHAS, "Chercher ensemble les formes du ministère pétrinien," p. 272.

⁶⁹⁶ According to this principle, "a larger social body with more resources does not routinely absorb the role or functions of smaller and less powerful bodies. But it does help and support the smaller bodies to be able to fulfill their own role. This principle, enunciated first by Pope Pius XI in 1931 in his encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno", gained wider understanding in the Church through the Encyclical of Pope John XXIII "Mater et Magistra". These two encyclicals, however, speak of this principle in regard to secular society," J. R. QUINN, "The Claims of the Primacy and the costly call to Christian Unity." Pope Pius XII, in an address to newly named Cardinals in 1946, applied it to the internal life of the Church. Cf. *AAS*, 38 (1946), pp.144-46. According to 1983 *CIC*, "the principle of subsidiarity which must all the more be applied in the Church since the office of the bishops and their powers are of divine law," "preface," *Codex Iuris Canonici* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983); p. xxii, n.5, (Latin text).

⁶⁹⁷ What is said of the patriarchs and patriarchal synods applies also to the two Churches of Major Archiepiscopal right, viz. Syro-Malabar Church and the Ukrainian Church.

⁶⁹⁸ I Constantinople (381) Canon 2.

⁶⁹⁹ Cf. D. SALACHAS, "Chercher ensemble les formes du ministère pétrinien," p. 264.

⁷⁰⁰ Cf. *OR*, 13.10.2001. It seems, however, that the Holy See is not yet ready for a change of norms in force. Cf. A. SODANO, *OR* 24.11.2001.

8. Conclusion

In this rather lengthy chapter, we have dealt with issues relative to the subject of our research, viz. the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church. Our aim, in this endeavour was twofold: to make an appraisal of the *status questionis* of the topic, on the basis of the writings of some of the contemporary Catholic theologians, to sketch out a perspective for the future. The sections on “Realisation of Church of God in a Place,” “Ratzinger-Kasper Debate on the Relationship between the Local Church and the Universal Church,” and “Relationship between Primacy and Episcopacy” were preparations for making a clear appraisal of the “Relation between the Local Church and the Universal Church.”

The final section on “Structural Expression of Communion in Regional Churches” was meant to explore perspectives for the present and future of the *communio ecclesiarum* that is the Catholic Church. Here we examined two ecclesiastical institutions, which can be correctly conceived and articulated only within a tripartite ecclesiastical structure. The difficulty encountered in properly articulating the theological status and doctrinal authority of the episcopal conference comes basically from the defect of a bipartite system which can only envisage two poles: that of the universal Church and the local diocesan Church (or eparchy), or, parallelly that of the supreme authority in the Church (the pope individually and the episcopal college together with its head) and the individual bishops. In this perspective, only these poles are endowed with theological legitimacy and doctrinal authority. In a tripartite ecclesiastical structure, on the contrary, it is not difficult to see the episcopal college as inseparably bound up with the communion of Churches realised in an intermediary level, in function of the Church’s need to incarnate itself in a *place*, conceived both as geographical space and human space. It is its rootage in the *communio ecclesiarum* of a region which gives to the episcopal conference its legitimacy and authority. In that way, it can today realise *similiter* what ancient patriarchates realised in the past, and of which the present-day Catholic Oriental Patriarchal Churches are witnesses and models.

As far as the Oriental Churches *sui iuris* are concerned, a clear doctrine is enshrined in *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* which has affirmed the *ecclesial* status of Eastern Catholic communities (that is, they are not simply *rites*) and as distinct Churches they have similar rights and duties as the Latin Church (*OE* 3). In this context the Council has also clearly stated that means should be taken to help and promote not only the preservation of these Oriental Churches (as if they were just museum pieces!) but also their development and organic growth. From it follows their right to govern themselves (*OE* 5). Here, the recognition

of and the respect for the traditional rights and privileges of the patriarch (and patriarchal synod), as the Father of all those who are members of his Church, are of primordial importance (*OE* 9). Affirming a doctrine is one thing, its implementation is quite another thing. Failure to implement the above conciliar perspectives during the post-conciliar period has been a cause of tension between the Holy See and most of the Catholic Oriental Churches. What is at stake is “the right of these communities to be individual Churches in the full sense, with the freedom to govern their own affairs everywhere as during the first Christian millennium, to live in accord with their own traditions, and to spread by their own missionary efforts unhampered by artificial restrictions imposed from without.”⁷⁰¹ Much more can be done in this area “without prejudice to the primacy of the Roman Pontiff”⁷⁰² and with respect to the spirit of communion of Churches and with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity.

⁷⁰¹ R. F. TAFT, “Eastern Catholic Churches,” p. 137.

⁷⁰² *OE* 7.

GENERAL CONCLUSION:

CONVERGENCE BETWEEN THE EAST AND THE WEST

Discovering the areas of convergence between the Eastern and the Western ecclesiology on the question of the relationship between the local Church and the Church universal has been the goal of this study. It is now time to make a global evaluation of our project and weigh and classify our findings. In so doing, we must have in mind the occulted status of local Churches in the Catholic ecclesiology during the pre-Vatican II period and its eventual re-discovery thanks to a renewed appreciation of the primitive ecclesiology. In this development, the contribution of the Oriental ecclesiology has been substantial. In this context, the present study can be seen as an attempt to account for the mutual encounter between the Catholic and the Orthodox traditions and the fruitful contribution of this encounter to the ecclesiology of these traditions.

Ours has been a comparative study around two protagonists: N. Afanasiev, representing the Orthodox tradition, and J.-M. R. Tillard, representing the Catholic tradition. On a second level, by presenting the views of other theologians from both the traditions, we wanted to make a twofold dialogue possible: a dialogue between each of the protagonists with other theologians of his proper tradition and a dialogue between these two groups of theologians, to turn it finally into a dialogal encounter between the Catholic and Orthodox ecclesiology. In what follows we will present a synthetic summary of this encounter, highlighting the areas of convergence and difference between the Catholic and Orthodox traditions on the question of the relationship between the local Church and the Church universal.

Afanasiev is noted for his exaggerated accent on the independence and autonomy of the local Church with regard to other Churches and the radical opposition between the local Church and the universal Church to the point of denying the existence of the latter. We have seen that this option of his must be judged in the context of the Orthodox diaspora which gave—as Schmemmann has said—“an ‘existential’ dimension to such problems as unity,

jurisdiction, nationalism.”¹ Limiting his reflection to the Church of God in Christ as it is realised in the eucharistic assembly, Afanasiev thought he could develop an ecclesiology where the overarching influence of a universal Church—as exemplified by the national Churches of the Orthodoxy, particularly the Russian Orthodox Church—could be avoided, thereby finding a theological solution to the jurisdictional conflicts ravaging the Diaspora Orthodoxy of his time. Living in the West and actively engaged in dialogue with many of the Catholic theologians, Afanasiev was also influenced in his thinking by the ecumenical movement.

When we look at the manner in which he develops his ecclesiology, we are impressed by the rigour of his analysis. Clearly defining the frontiers of his research, he moves from an initial assumption that the primitive ecclesiology is radically different from the predominant ecclesiology of his time, which he characterises as universalist. The sources of the primitive ecclesiology, which he characterises as eucharistic, are traced back to certain chosen Pauline passages and patristic texts. This methodology conditions the whole of Afanasievan ecclesiological system. He has clear assumptions, systematic procedures, logical argumentation and convincing conclusions—but all these hold good only within the limits set by him; beyond these limits, they may prove to be partial, and even fallacious. Thus, he has a predilection for the Pauline image of the Body of Christ, but he leaves out other images which are also indispensable to the grasp of the mystery that is the Church. He rightly underlines that St Paul wrote to precise local Churches. But he conveniently ignores the fact the Apostle had in mind also all “those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.”² The same biased approach is observable in his interpretation of patristic sources. As we have shown in our discussion, embellishing Ignatius of Antioch as the worthy heir to the Pauline eucharistic ecclesiology, he sidelines the Ignatian passages where one could find allusions to a universal vision of the Church. We have also seen that the Afanasievan interpretation of Cyprian is highly flawed.

J.-M. R. Tillard, as a theologian, was also influenced by the ecumenical movement of the post-Vatican II period. In the early phase of his theological career, his research was concentrated on religious life. But as his involvement in the ecumenical movement got intensified, we find in him a shift of interest: like Afanasiev, he too wanted to go to the

¹ A. SCHMEMMANN, “Russian Theology,” p. 181.

² 1 Cor 1:1. “In Korinth ist also die «Kirche Gottes» anwesend; die Ortsgemeinde darf und kann nicht anders verstehen als die Repräsentantin des endzeitlichen Gottesvolkes. Aber sie ist auch nicht allein «Kirche Gottes»; sie soll sich an die anderen Gemeinden erinnern, die alle an ihrem Ort den Namen des gemeinsamen Herrn Jesus Christus anrufen,” R. SCHNACKENBURG, “Ortsgemeinde und «Kirche Gottes»,” p. 37.

biblical and patristic sources of ecclesiology and build upon them an ecclesiology of communion which can promote not only the ecumenical rapprochement but also improve the intra-ecclesial life of the Catholic Church. But unlike Afanasiev who limits himself to St Paul's letters to Corinthians, Tillard draws not only from St Paul but also from St John and the Catholic Epistles. Tillard's patristic sources are also more numerous. This wider perspective gives a character of comprehensiveness to Tillard's ecclesiology.

Afanasiev was right in affirming that there was a predominance of the universalist ecclesiology in modern times not only in the Western but also in the Eastern ecclesiology. However, he slightly went wrong when he affirmed that the Eucharistic Ecclesiology was the *only* ecclesial vision during the primitive times, for, as we know, a universal vision of the Church was not totally absent then. Instead, this latter vision was subjected to the predominantly eucharistic vision, just as in modern times, the eucharistic vision was not totally absent when the universalistic vision gained upper hand.

The Afanasievan ecclesiology is based on the basic premise that the Church of Christ in the fullness of its reality is present and manifested every time and every place where Eucharist is celebrated. That is to say, the identity between the local Church and the Church of God is central in the ecclesiology of Afanasiev. On this point we can find some closeness between the views of Afanasiev and Tillard. If Afanasiev built his ecclesiological system on the Eucharist, Tillard was no different: The Eucharist was at the heart of his theological reflection too. The eucharistic synaxis is, according to him, the place where the goal of the *Gospel of God* is manifested and realised and this goal is none other than communion which is realised through reconciliation. At the synaxis, the Pascha of Christ becomes contemporaneous with the celebrating community; consequently, the divided humanity is transformed into a fraternal community. On this subject, the contributions of Legrand are also very significant. As in Tillard, in Legrand too, the Gospel calls for the reconciliation in order to undo the Babel. The other Orthodox theologians we have seen also insist on the inseparability of the realities of Christ, the Eucharist and the Church. Using the category of 'one' and 'many' Zizioulas has given a broader biblical dimension to this relationship. According to him, from a pneumatological point of view, the *One* (Christ) can be properly understood only in relationship to the *Many* (the community of the faithful). That is to say, the Church, the Body of Christ is simultaneously one and many. This mystery becomes an event during the eucharistic celebration, when the multitude is united into one Body.

According to Tillard nothing in the Church can escape the all-encompassing dynamism of communion: the everyday life of the local Church is a theatre of the symphony of charisms

and their corresponding services. This calls for a practice of synodality in the local level. According to Afanasiev, the basic principle of ecclesial life is ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, 'being always together and gathered for the same thing'. This communal nature of the local Church is fully manifested in the eucharistic assembly. Here, we discover the local Church as a communion of charisms and ministries. The ministry of the *proéstōs* is fully inserted into the multiplicity of charisms and services of a local Church. The goal of this ministry is to coordinate and unify various charisms and services into a symphony, so that they may contribute towards the edification of the Church of God. So far the view of Afanasiev has coincided with that of Tillard. Moving further, we discover differences too: whereas in Afanasiev, the *proéstōs*' role as the eucharistic president qualifies him for becoming the head of a local Church, in Tillard the opposite is true; it is his leadership in the local Church which makes of a bishop the eucharistic president. In his conception of the local Church, Afanasiev seems to be content with the eucharistic presence of Christ; hence the ministry is conceived in function of the eucharistic celebration. For Tillard, the apostolic *martyria* constitutes the very axis of ecclesial life and faith. Therefore, the need of the ministry is closely bound up with a local Church's need to be in communion with the Apostles, to live in the memory of its origins. It is in this role that a bishop becomes first the head of a local Church and then its eucharistic president. In Afanasiev too, the *proéstōs* is a successor of the Apostle; but according to him, this succession must be seen as a topological succession, a succession to the place occupied by the Apostles during the original eucharistic assembly. If we turn to Zizioulas, we find another interesting development: for him, the Church is turned to the past as well as to the future. The apostolic succession, in his opinion, must be seen as a continuity of the Church with the apostolic college and the community of the Church in its eschatological setting. Using the category of the 'one' and the 'many,' he also shows the parallelism between the Christ-Church and Bishop-Church relationships. Just as Christ (one) cannot be understood without the Church (many), neither can the Bishop (one) be properly understood without his community (many). However, we have observed a difference between the Catholic and Orthodox positions with regard to the relationship of the bishop to his community: the Orthodox in general tend to give priority to the local bishop's being the head of the local Church; the Catholic theologians we have discussed prefer to hold together a bishop's headship of a local Church and his membership in the episcopal college without giving priority to either, because, according to them, the specificity of the ministry of a bishop is to be a bond between the local Church and the universal Church.

Convergence between Afanasiev and Tillard can be found also in their view on the catholicity of the local Church. According to Afanasiev, because the Church, manifested and present at the eucharistic assembly, is fully the Church of God (thanks to the fact that Christ is fully present there), all the attributes of the Church of God can be predicated to the local Church.³ Therefore, the local Church must be fully catholic. Tillard also tells us that a local Church is always catholic because it is never separated from that which makes her *catholic*. However, here too, Tillard is more comprehensive: while Afanasiev understands catholicity uniquely in a qualitative-intensive sense (a point on which there is a convergence between Afanasiev and the other Orthodox theologians we have seen), Tillard—in giving priority to the internal aspect of catholicity—does not exclude the extensive-quantitative sense. Besides, Tillard conceives catholicity in relationship to the *Mysterion* or *Gospel of God*. The Church is catholic because it constitutes a portion of humanity reconciled to God, where—owing to this communion with God—all walls of division are demolished. Whenever and wherever the Church of God is incarnated, the *katholou* (totality) of the Church of God, the totality of God's gifts is present. Hence, a local Church cannot be but catholic. The theological significance of locality is a point where we find some divergence between Afanasiev and Tillard. For the former, the place is only an accidental category as far as the theological conception of a local Church is concerned. For the latter, the 'local' is constitutive of the becoming of a local Church: it is the mould in which the Church of God is incarnated. On this point, Legrand is quite close to Tillard. According to Legrand, locality stands for both geographical territory as well as human space (standing for culture, patrimony, value system, religious and spiritual tradition, social customs, etc of the people or a nation). According to these Dominican theologians, the theological significance of locality is not unrelated to the catholicity of the Church: in their view, locality is at the service of catholicity.

The missionary dimension of the local Church is another area where we find much divergence between Afanasiev and Tillard. Whereas the missionary dimension of the local Church is missing in Afanasiev, for Tillard, it is an integral part of ecclesiology. The local Church in the Afanasievan ecclesiology is an ideal Church, an earthly representation of the eschatological messianic community (a view, shared also by Zizioulas); basked in the eschatological bliss, the Afanasievan local Church is hardly moved by the missionary dynamism. In Tillard, the mission of the Church must be set in the general context of the *Gospel of God*, whose content—communion through reconciliation—is manifested and

³ Of course, from the Catholic point of view, it is difficult to see a local Church as infallible.

realised at the eucharistic assembly. Therefore the eucharistic assembly (and hence the local Church) should be the hearth from where the flame of missionary dynamism should proceed. The local Church is sent to the nations so that a humanity according to God may be formed from out of the divided humanity. In this perspective, the goal of the mission and that of the *Gospel of God* coincide: it is the transformation of humanity into ‘a humanity according to God.’ The humanity being transformed is not one without roots. In the process of this transformation the *flesh* of a people becomes the *flesh* of Christ. Therefore, inculturation does not constitute a subsequent stage in the *ecclesiogenesis*, rather the two constitute a simultaneous event. Once this event has taken place, the Church of God in all its potentiality exists there. Hence, this new Church should constitute a base from which the missionary dynamism should proceed.

The local Church is also sent to other sister Churches, with whom she shares the same faith but not the same eucharistic table. Both Afanasiev and Tillard explored on the ways and means of achieving Christian unity. Both insist a lot on the basic unity which exists among the divided Christian Churches and the need to build on them. For Afanasiev, who was concerned mainly with the reunion between the Catholic Church and Orthodox Churches, the foundation of unity is the Eucharist. Since there is valid Eucharist in both, the rest can be ignored. This is where Tillard seems to differ. He is more dynamic in his approach. Rather than remaining content with *the given*, he calls for efforts and steps to overcome differences and division. In his opinion, the goal of ecumenism is to let the divided communities to be caught up in the dynamism of reconciliation so that the divided communities and Churches may be transformed into a *Church of Churches*.

According to the Eucharistic Ecclesiology developed by Afanasiev, Christ and the Church are closely bound together and the Church of God is fully realised and manifested in every eucharistic assembly thanks to the full presence of Christ. This is the context in which he speaks about the independence and autonomy of local Churches, which means—in his perspective—a local Church does not depend on any other Church or juridical instance for being what it is: the Church of God manifested in a place. Arguing further, in the context of finding ways of establishing communion with the Catholic Church, he says that if a local Church celebrates the Eucharist, then it must be considered as the concrete realisation of the Church of God. This view of Afanasiev, as we have shown in our discussions, is hardly tenable in the wider perspective of the Eastern and Western theological tradition. He seems to focus his attention uniquely on the eucharistic presence of Christ which renders possible the full manifestation of his ecclesial Body, the Church. Although he speaks about the ontological

unity and communion between eucharistic assemblies, this communion remains very static in the Afanasievan system; a dynamic relationship with another eucharistic community is not at all constitutive to the ecclesiality of a local Church. It has everything needed for being the Church, that is, it has the eucharistic presence of Christ. As we have seen, the Eucharist is only one of the constitutive elements of the Church of God. That is to say, a local Church cannot be reduced to eucharistic celebration alone; for the Church is more than the eucharistic celebration. Here it is clear that, in his hastiness to find a solution to the problem of Christian disunity from within his ecclesiological system, Afanasiev failed to give due regard to the doctrinal orthodoxy as a criterion of ecclesiality. For when faith defaults, it is difficult to see how a community can be considered as the realisation of the Church of God even when there is a eucharistic celebration presided over by a bishop.

It is here that we must complement the Afanasievan ecclesiology with that of Zizioulas, Schmemmann and Meyendorff. All the three insisted on the constitutive character of the communion as far as the ecclesiality of a local Church is concerned. On the basis of the trinitarian theology, they show how it is possible to define the Church as a communion in its innermost being. Just as unity and multiplicity co-exist in a primordial manner in the Trinitarian mystery, so also is the Church ontologically one and many. That is to say, communion and oneness coincide in ecclesiology. According to the trinitarian perspective, neither hierarchy among the local Churches nor their unity should be prejudicial to the independence and autonomy of the local Churches. However, this independence and autonomy is not absolute, it is conditioned by communion. According to Schmemmann, a local Church can remain as Church only when it has ‘the universal conscience of the Church,’ for communion is part of the very nature of the Church; it belongs to its *esse* (and not simply the *bene esse* as Afanasiev seems to think). Trinitarian theology is used to explain the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church. Just as in Triune God, many are as primary as one, so too in the Church, unity is inconceivable without multiplicity. The Church is therefore ‘one by being many, and many by being one.’ This means, diversity also belongs to the *esse* of the Church; without diversity the Church cannot exist. In this context, the tendency to oppose the multiplicity of the local Churches and the universal Church is a wrong one, because the Church is not *first* one and then many or *vice versa*, but at once one and many. According to Zizioulas, the very nature of the Eucharist forbids us to oppose the local Church to the universal Church, as did Afanasiev; it does not lead us to the priority of the local Church over the Universal Church, but to their simultaneity. This is a point on which Tillard and Legrand, and most other Catholic ecclesiologists also agree. That is to say, views

held by Ratzinger and some of the recent magisterial documents are not reflected in the ecclesiology of most of the Catholic theologians we have considered. They tend to align their position with that of the Orthodox, that is, they prefer to hold the idea of simultaneity. Thus, according to Congar, only the eucharistic mystery allows us to grasp the Church as communion of Churches. In his opinion, it is a mistake to imagine that the constitutive principles of the Church can ever realise the universal Church except in a local Church or a local Church except as the universal Church. The universal Church does not pre-exist the particular Churches as a concrete reality might pre-exist other concrete realities. According to Komonchak, it is confusing to claim that there are ecclesial acts which are by priority acts of the local Church (suggesting thereby that they are not that of the universal Church). For the various particular Churches are the self-realizations of the one and the same *catholic* Church. According to Tillard, without a radical openness to other Churches, a local Church cannot be *Ekklesia tou Theo*. In his view, the local Churches manifest the *Catholica*, that is to say, local Churches exist so that *Catholica* takes a concrete form. Thereafter, only in them does *Catholica* exist, i.e., inasmuch as realised in human flesh. As Lubac has beautifully formulated it, a universal Church existing outside and apart from the local Churches is only a mental construct. This is also the view of Kasper. According to him, one must affirm the simultaneity of the universal Church and the local Church, because the pre-existent reality is the *whole* Church, which is both universal and local. Hence, one cannot attribute priority to the universal Church.

In this context, the Orthodox conception of synodality draws our attention. According to Schmemmann, synodality belongs to the essential constitution of the Church. His reasoning is based on the Trinitarian rootage of the Church: because Trinity is a council par excellence, the Church, which is constituted after the model of Trinitarian communion, must be also conciliar in a constitutional way. According to Zizioulas, it is the Spirit who makes the symbiosis between the *one* and the *many* possible. This pneumatological approach is developed also by Catholic theologians, particularly Congar. According to him, it is the Spirit who makes the local Church a 'WE,' where we can see a symphony of charisms, an idea which is very strong in Tillard too. Synodal institutions, which are considered as instruments of the communion of Churches, help maintain the balance between the local Church and the Church Catholic spread out in the whole world. Just as an over-emphasis on integrity and catholicity of the local Churches should not endanger their synodality, neither should the synodal communion of these Churches undermine the integrity and catholicity of each one of them. That is to say,

synodal institutions must help the unity of various local Churches emerge as a *symphony* of diverse ways of living the same faith.

In the course of this study, we were able to identify a Catholic contribution towards the theology of synodality. It is the idea of local Churches as subjects, developed by Congar, Ratzinger and Legrand. They have shown that only in a pneumatological approach, dear to the Orientals, can one see the subjective identity of a local Church. Although all the local Churches are bestowed with a multiplicity of pneumatic charisms, none of them can have a monopoly of all the charisms; this calls for the communion between them. In this context, a subject Church must be seen as one that promotes the diversity of groups and persons, and their communal relationship. It also lives in a relationship of synodality with other similar subject Churches.

On the subject of the role of the Church of Rome and its bishop in the *communio ecclesiarum*, we can discover convergence in Afanasiev and Tillard. Although, according to Afanasiev, the communion with other local Churches is not constitutive of the ecclesiality of a local Church, its importance is not ignored by him. Unlike Khomiakov, he maintains an irenic attitude towards the role of the Church of Rome (hence, of its bishop) within the communion of Churches. According to him, Rome is a Church-in-priority and its bishop has a priority (and not juridical power) and this priority must be seen as an authority of witnessing. The goal of this authority is service—to come to the aid of other sister-Churches, to oversee the communion of Churches. Only in the context of love and concord can this authority exist. Tillard too, based on his historical research, comes to the conclusion that the *principalitas*, attributed to Rome, does not come from a juridical power, rather it is based on the weight of faith and example in witness. It is an authority which enables the Church of Rome to represent mind of the *whole, communio ecclesiarum*. It was a fraternal service so that all Churches in communion may remain in fidelity to the *depositum fidei*. Briefly, both Tillard and Afanasiev hold that the Church of Rome is a servant of communion and its primacy is a service of communion. According to Legrand, as a subject Church, the Roman Church is also inserted into the synodality of Churches. The Orthodox in general consider communion with Rome as relevant to the *bene esse* rather than the *esse* of the Church. On this point, the Catholic view is divided. According to some, hierarchical communion with the bishop of Rome and other members of the college of bishops is constitutive of the episcopal ministry, hence of the ecclesiality of the episcopal Church. According to others, this hierarchical communion is only a condition; it does not affect the ontology either of the episcopal ministry or of the Churches embodied by the bishops. We find an echo of the second view in the following words of

Tillard: “la primauté du siège de Rome n’est pas constitutive de l’ecclésialité à un degré aussi essentiel que l’épiscopat local.”⁴ Tillard, however, clearly recognizes the importance of communion with the see of Rome: it is necessary for the horizontal communion of Churches.

When it comes to the relationship between primacy and collegiality, we do not have to expect much from Afanasiev as he limited his exploration to the level of local Churches. When he spoke of the supra-local collaboration or rather mutual reception, it was based on the Eucharist and the independence and autonomy given to each local Church by the eucharistic mystery. In Tillard and most of the Catholic theologians we have considered, the proper articulation of the relationship between primacy and episcopate occupies a major part of their ecclesiological elaboration. In his interpretation of *Pastor Aeternus*, Tillard has shown that primacy can be and must be measured by the episcopate and that it is basically an episcopal *munus*. Explaining further the episcopal nature of the primatial ministry, Tillard also explores the meaning and significance of the pope being the bishop of Rome. In his view, since *sedes* and *sedens* are inseparably related, identity of the *sedens* is to be drawn from the identity of the *sedes* itself. Here, Tillard and Afanasiev maintain similar point of view. Similar is the view of Zizioulas when he remarks that a *prôtos* (a metropolitan or a patriarch) owes his position and authority to his being the bishop of a local Church. All the Orthodox theologians we have seen, including Afanasiev, are appreciative of the doctrine of episcopal collegiality, because it is part of the synodal structure of the Church. But they are not very enthusiastic about the doctrine of collegiality developed by Vatican II, because the relationship between primacy and episcopacy as explained there is incompatible with the synodal conception of the Church. The reason given is that the Council has not articulated the relationship between bishops and their Churches. In this context, the contributions of Tillard are particularly significant. According to him, as the bishop of a Church whose vocation it is to be at the service of the communion of Churches, the pope must be also considered as a servant of communion or as a sentinel of communion. Therefore, in his dealing with local bishops, the pope should adopt attitudes and actions which favour communion among local Churches and their bishops. It is here that Tillard sees the utility of the principle of subsidiarity. Accordingly, the bishop of Rome as the *principium unitatis* intervenes in the affairs of local Churches only when it is called for: mainly to awaken the local bishops to their responsibilities and to provide them with help when it is needed. When he is obliged to take resolute measures in order to save a particular local Church from losing its identity or falling

⁴ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L’Eglise locale*, p. 90..

apart, such actions may not be seen as overriding the authority of the local Church or its bishop.

The above Tillardian view is shared by contemporary Catholic theologians like Legrand and Buckley. In this respect, Buckley's consideration of primacy and episcopate as *relations* is innovative and useful, particularly to show the reciprocal relationship between the pope and the college of bishops in which he is the head—an aspect hardly developed in Vatican II and in the recent magisterium. As Buckley explained, neither papacy nor the episcopate can be understood without its term of relation or reference. If the term of reference of the papacy is the unity of the Church and the episcopate, that of the episcopate is the solidarity among bishops (not exclusive of the head of the college) and the communities in which they exercise the leadership. Buckley's distinction between habitual and substitutional authority of the papal *munus* is also significant. The habitual authority consists in keeping a watch over respective individual authorities. The substitutional authority is called for when the individual bishops or their local Churches are unable to fulfil their duties. Undoubtedly, we can recognise here the ideas of Father Tillard appearing in a different form.

The Catholic theologians we have discussed underline also the close relationship between *communio ecclesiarum* and *collegium episcoporum*, an idea prominent in the Oriental ecclesiology. According to them, the episcopal communion or the collegiality must be considered as a crystallisation of the ecclesial communion; in the same way, the *munus* of the pope must be seen as a crystallisation, in a single person, of the two communions, that of the Churches and that of the bishops. That is to say, the collegiality of bishops exists because there is a fraternity of Churches. The articulation of this relationship is of crucial importance for a sane ecclesiology.

In order to achieve the osmosis between primacy and episcopate, between *communio ecclesiarum* and *collegium episcoporum*, the Catholic Church has to equip herself with synodal institutions capable of translating communal and synodal dynamism penetrating every aspect of the Church. Synodality must be the rule of ecclesial life not only at the local and the universal level but also at the regional level. Tillard has the impression that the institutions responsible for translating synodality into the dynamics of the life of the Church have not so far succeeded in properly articulating the *munus* of the Roman pontiff and the *munus* of the episcopal college. As we noted during our discussion, today many of the Catholic theologians from the West are closer to the Oriental view, according to which, it is impossible to treat the reality of the communion of Churches and the doctrine of collegiality—which is rooted on the former—in the framework of the pope-individual bishops

relationship or, for that matter, on the relationship between the universal Church and individual episcopal Churches. This calls for the development of regional Churches, which can give expression to the different levels of ecclesial communion, developed in the course of time guided by divine providence. It is in this way we have considered the role of the episcopal conferences as an institution which can promote the development of regional Churches. Although such ideas are developed also in Tillard, contributions of Legrand, Antón and Komonchak must be considered as determinant in this regard. According to them, the difficulty encountered in properly articulating the theological status and doctrinal authority of the episcopal conferences comes from the failure to situate these conferences in the context of the regional communion of Churches, in which the Church of God is to be incarnated. The purpose of regional communion of Churches is to allow *locality* to be assumed into the catholicity of the Church. In this context, they prefer to consider the episcopal conference as the expression of such regional communion of Churches. When we duly recognise the theological status and doctrinal authority of the episcopal conferences, we are indeed promoting the development of regional Churches. When we promote regional Churches, we are promoting the Catholicity of the Church, a dominant idea in Tillard too.

While introducing this study, it was remarked that it has to be seen also in the background of the status of the Catholic Oriental Church within the Catholic communion. Heirs to the ancient apostolic heritage as developed in the East, their visions on ecclesial life, mutual relations among the Churches and hierarchs, pastorate and Church government, etc. are not easily accessible if we remain within the framework of the Universal Ecclesiology in which there is no place for intermediary instances of ecclesial organisation and synodality. In this context, our exploration of the orthodox ecclesiology has been useful in that it permitted us to see how the relationship between the local Church and the Church universal is perceived in an ecclesiology of synodality. It is also heartening to observe that quite a few contemporary Western Catholic theologians have adopted this Oriental view into their ecclesiology. This is where we find the significance of Tillard, Legrand and other Catholic theologians we have considered. Only in this context—that of communion of Churches, their fundamental equality—can we speak of the place of Catholic Oriental Churches within the Catholic Church. As Churches, incarnated in a *place*—signifying not only territory (as many tend to interpret it) but also human space which surpasses territorial boundaries and include culture, patrimony, value system, spirituality, language and lot more—Catholic Oriental Churches (or Churches *sui iuris* as *CCEO* designates them) have their own physiognomy, identity and individuality formed by their proper theology, spirituality, liturgy and discipline. According to

the legislation in force, these Churches can be fully subject Churches of rights and obligations only within the so-called *territorium proprium* (the geographical area in which they originated), a limitation which is prejudicial not only to the welfare of their faithful but also to the fulfilment of the missionary call of each of these Churches.

It is here that we have to judge the validity of the ancient principle of territoriality, highly esteemed not only by most of the Orthodox theologians we have seen but also by Tillard and Legrand. The arguments in support of a jurisdictional unity in any given place must be gauged in its context. The ancient legislation on this matter was provoked by the widespread undue interventions of bishops in the affairs of the neighbouring Churches. When such situations are absent, it is not impossible to question its relevance. Tillard's interpretation of the ancient canonical principle of 'one bishop per city' must be read in the context of the importance he gives to locality in his ecclesiological system. According to him, the *local* is the basic mould in which the *Ekklesia tou Theou* is incarnated (let us remember that *local* is not merely a territory). It is in this context that he says that "le rattachement de toute la diversité humaine d'un lieu ou d'un espace géographique à l'évêque de la sedes manifeste la réalité de l'Eglise de Dieu comme fruit de la réconciliation universelle."⁵ A similar view can be found also in Legrand. Zizioulas, Schmemmann and Meyendorff share the same opinion. But we must remember that each time, the theologians in question speak from within their proper ecclesial tradition. So the position of Tillard and Legrand is acceptable in the context of the Latin tradition. So too, Zizioulas, Schmemmann and Meyendorff, despite belonging to two national Churches, are joined together by the Byzantine Tradition; their national Churches have in common the same theological, liturgical, canonical and spiritual traditions. Unifying the faithful of these national Churches, living in Diaspora, according to the principle of territoriality may be helpful in preventing the national or ethnical principle taking an upper hand in the life and organization of the Church. But we may seriously doubt whether they will argue with the same enthusiasm—in the event of a reunion with the Catholic Church—for a Church structure based uniquely on the principle of territoriality. In fact, applying blindly the principle of territoriality in the case of various Churches having distinct theology, liturgy, discipline and spirituality is tantamount to a disregard for their historical becoming, in which the providence of God was also involved. In this question, what should prime is the good of the faithful. It is clear that a jurisdictional conflict within the same ecclesial tradition is not for

⁵ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L'Eglise locale*, p. 282.

the good of the faithful. But it is not a reason for sacralising the principle of territoriality. It should be adopted only where the good of the faithful is ensured.

This consideration of the Catholic Oriental Churches invites us to reconsider the structure of the Church universal. As Tillard has said, Church is penetrated by the dynamism of communion. It is expressed not only in the local and the universal levels, but also in the intermediate or regional level. Thus, just as the universal Church can be considered as a communion of Churches, so can also the regional Church be considered as a communion of Churches. Thus, the present-day episcopal conferences can be considered as expressions of regional communion of Churches. However, the concept of regional Churches, based uniquely on a geographical region is hardly suitable to the present-day Catholic Oriental Churches for the simple reason that their faithful are spread out throughout the world. Territory can no more serve as an identifying mark in the case of these Churches. But everywhere the faithful of these Churches are united by the same theological, liturgical, canonical and spiritual tradition. This calls for a changed understanding of jurisdiction, at least in the case of the Oriental Catholic Churches: if its purpose is the good of the faithful, instead of being bound up with a territory, it must be co-extensive with the Church *sui iuris* which is no more contained in the traditional territory (*territorium proprium*). Ecclesiastical organisation and pastorate must always have the good of the faithful in view. Only in this way, can Catholic Oriental Churches grow and develop as subject Churches within the Catholic communion.

At the end of this study, what are our findings? Based on our study, it is possible to affirm safely that on the question of the relationship between the local Church and Church universal the Catholic and the Orthodox views are more convergent than divergent. (It is true that the same result would not have been attained if our comparison had been made between theologians less open to ecumenical dialogue and exchange.) Both sides agree on considering the local Church as the Church of God manifested in a particular time and place. For both, the Eucharist plays a central role in the conception of the identity of the local Church. Except for Afanasiev, most of the theologians we have studied tend to affirm the simultaneity of the local Church and the universal Church, inspired as they are by the trinitarian perichoresis. We can also observe a common insistence on the synodality of Churches, the intimate link between the ecclesial communion and the episcopal collegiality. For both, the Church of Rome is at the service of the communion of Churches, and hence the bishop of that *sedes* is a servant of communion. Regarding the details of the function of the bishop of Rome, divergences still exist between the Orthodox and the Catholic. What is particularly novel and interesting in our

findings is the tendency found among some of the Catholic theologians, despite contrary signals from the recent magisterium, to insist on the urgency of the development of regional Churches in conjunction with the synodal institutions of the Catholic Church, so that the relation between the *local* and the *universal* in the Church may be better articulated in Catholic ecclesiology. In this development, Oriental Churches, particularly Catholic Oriental Churches (as bridges between the East and the West) can serve as models of local incarnations of the Church of God.

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¹ For a comprehensive listing of the works of Father Afanasiev, see P. PLANK, “Schriftenverzeichnis,” in: *Die Eucharistieversammlung als Kirche. Zur Entstehung und Entfaltung der eucharistischen Ekklesiologie Nikolaj Afanasievs [1893-1966]* (Würzburg: Augustinus Verlag, 1980), pp. 41-47.

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