

Page 1, line 11ff.

Whereas, on one exegesis, the apostles in Eph. 2:20 are foundations, Peter in Matt. 16 is the rock on which foundations are laid. (Meyer, in THE AIMS OF JESUS, argues that this "rock" is an element in eschatological symbolism).

Ibid., lines 16ff.

In Gal. 2:7, 8 the parallelism is in spheres of exercise of apostolate, rather than in quality of authority given by Christ. (Peter would exercise his missionary function towards the Jews, Paul towards the Gentiles. An ultimate "subordination" of Paul to Peter is not excluded).

Pages 2 and 3 (e.g. page 3, lines 2-5).

There are data in, and omissions from, Mark's Gospel tending to support the tradition that this Gospel relays Peter's teaching; in these elements there is a tendency to humiliate, denigrate, admonish Peter - or to omit what could seem to do him honour - and this tendency is most easily explained if Peter was himself its author. Now note that in Matt. 18:1 the disciples ask Jesus "Who is greater in the kingdom of heaven?" (cf. Mk 9:34 "who is greater"). But in Mk 9:35 the answer to the query runs: "If anyone wants to be first he shall be last of all and a servant of all" (no parallel in Matt. ad loc.). It looks to me as if Peter, conscious that he was the "first" of the Twelve, applied to himself in particular what, in the ipsissima vox Jesu, was a general admonition (and "greater" looks to me more original than "first"); that Peter was first of the Twelve is explicitly stated by Matt. in enumerating the Twelve, 10; 2 (Mk in his parallel passage, 3:16, omits "first" - at this point there was no opportunity to insert a warning about the dangers of primacy, so primacy is not mentioned by Mk = Peter). That "first" means more than "the first name in the conventional list" is suggested by the Gospel question "Which is the first commandment in the Law" - which does not refer to arrangement in a list but to importance). I think, then, that each of the four Gospels bears witness to the primacy of Peter and three of them, at least by implication, take it back to the explicit will of Jesus.

Page 3, para. 2: "no explicit suggestion".

Concedo. However,

(1) one asks why the NT documents are so insistent on this primacy if, at the time of their composition, Peter was already dead (as is implied in John 21)?

(2) If the little flock, after the ascension of Jesus, needed a substituted shepherd to take the place of the Good Shepherd, must not Peter in his turn be replaced when he dies?

(3) "As my Father has sent me, so I send you"; but, as the saying itself implies, the Father sent the Son with authority to transmit his mission and authority. Hence one can infer that the gift conveyed to the apostles (including the gift of primacy to Peter) was conveyed to them with the same authority to transmit it. (Note that this "authority to transmit authority" did not have to be explicitly affirmed by the historical Jesus; it was implicit in the giving of authority to the apostles as authority was given to Jesus by his Father, sc. as transmissible).

Page 4, line 3f: "wherever there is ...".

This cannot be deduced from Canterbury Statement 16 (which refers to apostolic succession but does not say that this by itself is sufficient to ensure that a local Xtn community's existence amounts to an existence of "the Church"). One can of course play about with the words "exist" and "subsist", but - at the very least - a local Xtn community which is not in full communion with the visibly united communion of the bishops who have the bishop of Rome at their head is in an irregular situation. The difficulty could be delicately avoided if we said: "wherever there is a community of Christians legitimately gathered...." (borrowing the word legitimately, without acknowledgment, from Lumen Gentium n.26).

Page 4, last para. "May not be ... unless ...".

I think this restricts the legitimate action of the primacy too much.

(1) Historically, Rome virtually "overrode" Card. Mindszenty and it could hardly be said that M. was "reacting against the faith and unity of the universal Church"; and cf. the virtual or actual clean sweep of the French hierarchy in the aftermath of Napoleon.

(2) What one wants to say is something like: "only grave perils for the faith and unity of the universal Church, or (still more rarely) urgent peril for a local church or group of churches, can justify the papacy acting so as to overrule the local bishops".

Page 6, middle para. "... does not belong ...".

Again I am in difficulties (one would prefer to let Vatican II speak for itself rather than impose interpretations on it). I could agree with some such wording as "... does not imply that a Christian community that is not in communion with the body of such communities which are, through their bishop, in full communion with the see of Rome, are bereft of all the elements which, in combination, constitute a community as the church of God in its own milieu".

Ibid., a little lower down: "as authentic churches".

Has the Catholic Church ever used the word "authentic" in this context?
I should omit it.

Ibid., end of the middle para: "and that it was fully embodied in them".

I should think that precisely what Vatican II did say was that the Church of God is fully embodied in these churches; what it did not say was that it was exclusively embodied in them in such a sense that there was no "churchness" in any other body.

Page 6, last para.

The first three lines seem to me to be unacceptable. A communion that, of its own volition, remains "out of communion" with the see of Rome is either in error (if it denies the obligation of being in full communion) or in schism (if it admits that obligation but refuses to obey it). In the former case, there is a defect of truth, and in the latter a defect of holiness.

Page 7, line five: "This is what ...".

(a) I don't think that magisterium is an office; it is a role.

(b) The teaching role of the Pope is only one element in the magisterium - which, for all ordinary purposes, is the role of the college of bishops and

of individual bishops in their sees (one of which of course is the Roman see). It can be argued that the Pope has no special ordinary magisterium, though he has a special extraordinary one; and this would be the view that I should wish to espouse (the notion of an ordinary papal magisterium is quite modern and has never been officially promulgated).

Ibid., line 13.

The word "their" would make sense if the earlier sentences were reformed to cover the points I have just made; otherwise, omit the word which is without meaning in the draft.

Page 8, line 6.

(I think we need to be particularly careful here; we shall be watched with lynx eyes). I don't think it can be denied that papal infallibility is attached to the person of the Pope (though not as a habitual attribute but only as a transient charism). Vatican I says that, in defining, he is invested (pollet) with infallibility. We can say that "infallibility is in some sense personal, rooted in the person, but that it is not to be identified with the person of the pope in an atomistic way" (Kilian McDonnell, in One in Christ, 1979 - 1. I confess I don't quite know what he means by "an atomistic way" in this context!).

Ibid.

On the other hand, I think we should not say that "infallibility is attached to statements". Vatican I does not say that papal definitions are infallible, but that they are irreformable - a deduction from the fact that in defining the pope is infallible.

Ibid.

And here I want to raise a question which is important in my view. When Vatican I says that these definitions are irreformable, does it mean that the verbal statements (through which the pope's intellectual judgment on the issue in dispute is expressed) is irreformable? Or does it mean - I hope it does - that the intellectual judgment is irreformable? It is a question of the meaning that must or may be attached to the Latin word definitio. Of course, in Aristotle a definition is usually taken to mean a combination of words. But is this necessarily the meaning of the Latin word - in our context? Could it not mean "settling the issue" - cf. causa finita est? The question seems to me to be important because

(a) the modern view (since John XXIII's inaugural address to Vatican II) is that the formulations of doctrine are revisable, provided the new wording is "eodem sensu" with the old.

(b) any verbal formula, outside perhaps the realm of mathematics and the sciences that depend on mathematics, is liable to embody, besides the meaning that the speaker basically intended, other meanings that he did also intend, though not basically. I should regard these other meanings in a doctrinal formula as fallible and dispensable (cf. a man who, believing that the sun goes round the earth, stated: "The sun will rise tomorrow at 6.3 a.m." His basic meaning would be acceptable to a Copernicus (and is presumably what he really wanted to convey); but Copernicus would not accept his non-basic meaning - nor should I). If we can agree that Vatican I's definitions are not verbal formulas but intellectual judgments, we shall have to alter the text of the draft at several points. And in any case, I hope we shall consistently correct the draft's repeated references to "infallible" statements (call them irreformable if you must).

Page 9, line 7: "the faith they already hold".

(a) Who are "they" in this passage?

(b) It is commonly affirmed that a new infallible dogma adds nothing to the faith already held; it only renders explicit something that was already implicit. Hence, should we not say: "the reception by the whole Church means that their content will be clarified and become more vitally integrated with the doctrinal definitions they have already explicitly accepted" - or something like that?

Page 9, final para.

I have considerable unease about this whole para. The doctrine of infallibility means that we can trust the teaching Church when it pronounces irrevocably on a matter of "faith or morals"; and can trust the believing Church when it commits itself irrevocably to an element of doctrine pertaining to "faith and morals". To say that it "pertains to the realm of the Church's order" seems to me to be inadequate (though perhaps we could say this of, precisely, papal infallibility). Unless the teaching and believing Church can be thus trusted, it seems to me that the role of the Church in the divine dispensation is undermined. We should hardly want to say that Christ cannot be trusted; ought we to say that the Holy Spirit, speaking through the Church which is Christ's body, cannot be trusted? And dare we say that, in any case, this is all very secondary? It is not secondary but of primary importance that the Gospel should be truly and officially proclaimed "till the end of the age".

Page 10, line 10ff.

No, it is not possible. A so-called indefectible but in fact fallible Church will simply not do. And in the immediately ensuing sentence, must it not be observed that a statement can be true, even certainly true, yet not "infallible" in that sense in which the R.C. Church claims that the Church herself is infallible?

Ibid. - last two sentences of the long para.

(1) "the two infallible definitions given by the bishop of Rome"; this suggests that papal infallibility has only been exercised twice in history. I doubt this view. I incline to hold that papal infallibility is exercised whenever the Pope gives official ratification to a doctrinal decision of a general council as an "article of faith". The bishop of Rome is the only bishop without whose consent such a doctrinal decision remains without final validity (remember the Emperor's anxiety when Leo I delayed his ratification of the Acts of Chalcedon). Hence, I don't see that in granting such ratification the pope is acting only as one bishop among others; he is surely acting precisely as the primus; and, for his consent to make all this difference, it surely must bring into play his infallibility. And indeed, I think that it is in relation to the ratification of the dogmatic decisions of general councils that papal infallibility has its most characteristic and useful and desirable field of operation. I intensely dislike "motu proprio" definitions and suspect that they are nearly always inopportune.

(2) If our Anglican friends are (a) conceding papal infallibility sub conditionibus explicitis vel implicitis laid down by Vatican I (it doesn't mention all the conditions - e.g. the pop's freedom from pressure and his sanity and sobriety) but (b) questioning whether the two Marian definitions fulfil these conditions, then we are at a fascinating stage of the dialogue - but also we are almost over the last hurdle.

B.C. Butler

Bishop B.C. Butler.
31st July 1979.