

The Local Church and the Universal Church: Zizioulas and the Ratzinger–Kasper Debate

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Abstract

The recent vigorous debate between two distinguished Catholic theologians and churchmen, Joseph Ratzinger and Walter Kasper, both cardinals, regarding the relationship between the universal church and the local church, is analysed. Though to some extent resolved, the debate has also proved rather intractable, because of unacknowledged ambiguities, for example regarding the meaning of the term, 'universal Church', and assumptions, particularly regarding eschatology. Through an examination of key texts in the debate, beginning with the 1992 Vatican letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the Church as communion, which stated that the universal church is 'a reality ontologically and temporally prior to every individual church', both Ratzinger and Kasper are seen as exponents of a western view of 'eschatology as orientation', which John Zizioulas has contrasted with a stronger eastern view of 'eschatology as presence'. It is proposed that this stronger eschatology can help to clarify and resolve underlying issues in the debate.

Many would testify that the Orthodox theological perspectives and emphases of Metropolitan John Zizioulas (1) frequently enable difficult issues which bring Western theology to something of an impasse to be seen from a new angle and in a fresh light. I would like to indicate how it seems to me that his thought can illuminate the recent, much publicised debate between Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and Bishop, now Cardinal, Walter Kasper regarding the relationship between the local church (or 'particular church') and the universal Church.

The debate arose from some points made in the Letter on the idea of the Church as *communion* that was issued in 1992 by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), whose Prefect is Cardinal Ratzinger. Kasper, then Bishop of Rottenburg-Stuttgart, made a sharp critique of these points in a Festschrift article (for Bishop Joseph Homeyer) in 1999, to which Ratzinger replied in an address at the Vatican in February 2000. While the exchanges

continued, Kasper was appointed a cardinal by Pope John Paul II and named as President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) early in 2001.

The main documents relevant to the debate between these two distinguished Catholic theologians and eminent churchmen are listed A–H below, and I shall use these capital letters to designate the texts in references.

- A Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church understood as Communion* ('*Communio Notio*'), 28 May 1992, available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/doc_doc_index.htm
- B 'Church Unity Rooted in the Eucharist', article to mark the first anniversary of *Communio Notio*, in *Osservatore Romano* (English edition), 7 July 1993, pp. 4, 10.
- C Walter Kasper, 'Zur Theologie und Praxis des bischöflichen Amtes', in W. Schreer and G. Steins (eds), *Auf eine neue Art Kirche sein* (München: Kevelaer, 1999), pp. 32–48.
- D Joseph Ratzinger, 'L'ecclesiologia della costituzione «*Lumen Gentium*»', in Rino Fisichella (ed.), *Il Concilio Vaticano* (Milano: San Paolo, 2000), pp. 66–81; also available in Italian and Spanish at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/doc_rat_index.htm
- E Walter Kasper, 'Das Verhältnis von Universalkirche und Ortskirche', *Stimmen der Zeit* 125.12 (December 2000), pp. 795–804. English translation (by Robert Nowell): 'On the Church', *The Tablet* (23 June 2001), pp. 927–30. looser translation (by Ladislav Orsy SJ) was published in *America* (23 April 2001), pp. 8–14. References below are to Nowell's translation.
- F Walter Kasper, 'Present Situation and Future of the Ecumenical Movement'. Presidential address at the Plenary Meeting of the PCPCU, 12–17 November 2001, in *Information Service* n. 109 2002/I-II, pp. 11–20, particularly pp. 15–19. This paper does not refer to Ratzinger or to the debate but is relevant because of its content.
- G Joseph Ratzinger, 'The Local Church and the Universal Church: Response to Walter Kasper', *America* (19 November 2001), pp. 7–11.
- H Walter Kasper, Letter of reply, *America* (26 November 2001), p. 28.

The Ratzinger–Kasper debate deals with complex and profound issues, only some of which can be addressed in this short space. Central to our discussion here is the fact, not much heeded by the two parties, that 'universal Church' is a term actually capable of various meanings. Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (LG), itself uses 'universal Church' in two different ways: on the one hand, to refer to the final heavenly eschatological Church of all ages, the assembly of all the just 'from Abel ... to the last of the elect' (LG 2), (2) and, on the other, to refer to the present worldwide Church of today (e.g. LG 25). (3) An element of ambiguity is

therefore attached to the decisive principle stated in LG 23, namely that local churches around their bishops are 'constituted after the model of the universal Church'. (4)

It is the second, *worldwide* meaning of 'universal Church' that effectively predominates and is operative in *Lumen Gentium*, probably because Western theology cannot comfortably embrace an eschatology so strong as to believe that the local church, especially in its Eucharist, is actually constituted after the model of the eschatological Church and is, indeed, the icon of the final gathering. (5) Significantly, neither Ratzinger nor Kasper employs such an eschatological idea; perhaps it is simply so unfamiliar that it is not seriously considered. On the other hand, Orthodox theology and ecclesiology use precisely this notion, as is plain from a comment that John Meyendorff directed critically towards Vatican II:

The ancient Church saw in each bishop the head of the 'whole' manifested locally, and this 'whole' was not a geographical concept – the universal Church of 150 or 1966 – but the Body of Christ which includes infinitely more members than the empirical and visible Church can count today, since it includes the Mother of God, the angels and the whole communion of saints. (6)

Meyendorff himself uses the term 'universal Church' to refer here to the worldwide Church, but he clearly rules out any idea of the local church being constituted after the model of the worldwide Church. All local churches are modelled after the final, 'whole' Church.

Ratzinger and Kasper thus appear to be united in espousing the first of the two kinds of eschatology that Zizioulas illuminatingly contrasts in his celebrated book, *Being as Communion*, while Meyendorff obviously espouses the second kind. Zizioulas is actually speaking of apostolic succession, but the passage gives an insight into his fundamental ecclesiological perspective:

I maintain the view that there is a difference between eschatology conceived as *orientation*, and eschatology conceived as a *state* of existence which reveals itself here and now. As orientation, eschatology appears to be the *result of historical process* as the climax of mission . . . , whereas as a state of existence it confronts history already now with a *presence from beyond history*. In the latter case an 'iconic' and liturgical approach to eschatology is necessary more than it is in the former. It is the understanding of eschatology as this kind of *presence* of the Kingdom here and now that requires convocation of the dispersed people of God and of the apostles. As such, this image *presupposes the end of mission*. This proleptic experience of the presence of the eschata here and now – and not simply the orientation towards this end – was there from the beginning (Acts 2:17) and was realised mainly in the Eucharist (*Didache*). It is with *this* kind of eschatology that I wish to relate my subject here. (7)

To the Western mind, eschatology as orientation appears to be common sense. How can the end be other than simply our eventual destination? The Orthodox would say that there is a paradox here that confounds common sense, namely the truth that the

end is *present* and *formative* of the earthly pilgrim Church in the regular celebration of the Eucharist.

In *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*, I argue that Henri de Lubac, one of the great pioneers of Vatican II, is himself an exponent of eschatology as orientation and that this is one of the main divergences between his theology and that of Zizioulas. (8) I further argue that Zizioulas's advocacy of eschatology as presence is essentially connected to his understanding of Christ himself as constituted by the Holy Spirit and so intrinsically *corporate* ('[t]he Church is part of the definition of Christ', (9) he says), whereas Christ for de Lubac is an *individual*, that is, conceivable apart from the Church. (10) Significantly, one of the features of the debate between Ratzinger and Kasper is the fact that they both esteem the theology of de Lubac and invoke him at various points (cf. E, pp. 929–30; G, p. 10; H, pp. 28–29). In a sense, they are both disciples of this outstanding Western master, and the debate between them is an intra-Western debate which could, I respectfully suggest, benefit from a more eschatological Eastern perspective.

The five sections below deal, respectively, with the first five texts of the debate (A–E, in the listing above). (11) The first text must be treated at some length because it lays the groundwork for the debate. A conclusion follows, with mention particularly of the final two texts.

A. The Letter, *Communiois Notio* (1992)

The Letter starts by saying that *communion* 'is very suitable for expressing the core of the mystery of the Church, and can certainly be a key for the renewal of Catholic ecclesiology' (n. 1). It clearly defines 'universal Church' to be the worldwide Church when it says: 'The *Church of Christ*, which we profess in the Creed to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic, is the universal Church, that is, the worldwide community of the disciples of the Lord' (n. 7). 'The universal Church is therefore the *body of the Churches*' (n. 8; cf. LG 23), 'a communion of [particular] Churches' (n. 8). However, the Letter immediately points out that this does not mean that the universal Church is 'the result of a *reciprocal recognition* on the part of the particular Churches' (n. 8). In other words, there is no *priority* of the particular churches; each fundamentally needs 'real communion with the universal Church and with its living and visible centre' (n. 8), that is, the papacy. Again, the worldwide sense of 'universal Church' is clearly operative. There is, indeed, a 'mutual interiority' between the particular churches and the universal Church, and the universal Church can therefore not simply be 'conceived as the sum of the particular Churches, or as a federation of particular Churches' (n. 9). As we shall see, Ratzinger and Kasper agree on such a 'mutual interiority'.

There then follows the most controversial statement in the Letter. 'It [the universal Church] is not the result of the communion of the Churches, but, in its essential mystery, it is a reality *ontologically and temporally* prior to every *individual* Church' (n. 9). In explanation, the Letter says: 'Indeed, according to the Fathers, *ontologically*

the Church-mystery, the Church that is one and unique, precedes creation, and gives birth to the particular Churches as her daughters. She expresses herself in them; she is the mother and not the offspring of the particular Churches. Furthermore, the Church is manifested, *temporally*, on the day of Pentecost ...' (n. 9). What is immediately apparent is that another term has been introduced: the pre-existent 'Church-mystery'. This is the 'essential mystery' of the universal Church, and, being transcendent, is clearly not the same as the universal Church itself as just defined, namely, the 'worldwide community'. Conceptually, it will therefore be important to keep these two notions, the transcendent mystery and the worldwide community, distinct. However, the Letter rather blurs the distinction, by effectively identifying both notions with the Jerusalem community on the day of Pentecost, as we shall see. My thesis here is that this blurring precipitated Kasper's reaction to the Letter (because it enabled interpretations that the CDF did not necessarily intend), and that, if the transcendent mystery is firmly identified as eschatological (which can mean that it is already operative), any danger of such blurring can be prevented.

The Letter explains its stance as follows: 'Furthermore, the Church is manifested, *temporally*, on the day of Pentecost in the community of the one hundred and twenty gathered around Mary and the twelve apostles, the representatives of the one and unique Church and the founders-to-be of the local Churches, who have a mission directed to the world. From the first the Church *speaks all languages*' (n. 9, with footnote reference to Acts 2:1ff.). So, the 'Church-mystery' took this definitive historical form on the day of Pentecost and, in speaking all languages, the Jerusalem Church itself prefigured the worldwide Church of today. The worldwide Church of today is thereby effectively assimilated to the Church-mystery, and the important distinction between these two concepts is effectively blurred.

Kasper subsequently objected that this is an idealisation of the actual historical beginnings of the Church, 'a Lucan construction', and that there probably was no such clear, unitary beginning, but rather 'communities in Galilee in addition to the community in Jerusalem' (C, p. 44; E, p. 929). Why, then, is the idea attractive to the CDF? (12) There is, of course, a biblical warrant, but we may also suggest doctrinal implications of the idea. By translating the transcendent mystery of the Church into an earthly, historical form, it provides a striking precedent for strong cohesion in the earthly, historical Church.

In 1986, Kasper praised a statement from LG 23, namely that: 'it is in these [the particular churches] and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists'. This formula, he said, marked a return to the *communio*-ecclesiology of the first millennium and a parting from 'the one-sided unity-ecclesiology' of the second millennium. It had, correspondingly, great ecumenical potential, particularly with regard to the Eastern Churches. 'The understanding of the unity of the Church as a *communio*-unity leaves space again for a legitimate multiplicity of local churches within the greater unity in the one faith, the same sacraments and offices.' (13) In the Letter of 1992, the CDF quotes the formula of Vatican II, '*The Church in and formed out of the Churches (Ecclesia in et ex Ecclesiis)*', and says that it is 'inseparable' from

another formula, namely, '*The Churches in and formed out of the Church (Ecclesiae in et ex Ecclesia)*' (n. 9).

One consequence of the CDF's approach is a strong emphasis on the papacy, which stands at the centre of the earthly, historical Church, as Peter stood in the midst of the community on Pentecost day (cf. B, p. 4, below). What the Letter says about Baptism may already be seen as significant in this regard:

Every member of the faithful, through faith and Baptism, is inserted into the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. He does not belong to the universal Church in a *mediate* way, *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. (n. 10)

Now, the First Vatican Council defined papal primacy in the following terms:

We teach and declare that, in the disposition of God, the Roman Church holds the pre-eminence of ordinary power over all the other Churches; and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, which is truly episcopal, is immediate. (14)

The definition teaches that all the faithful around the world are subject to the jurisdiction of the Pope not in a mediate way, through their adherence to the local bishop, but in an *immediate* way. We can see that the statement about Baptism in n. 10 of the Letter is structurally similar to it. Of course, Baptism most fundamentally inserts us into the *transcendent* mystery of the Church (cf. Col. 3:1–4). However, the fact that the way in which the insertion is described in the Letter so clearly echoes the definition of papal primacy invites us to interpret the Letter as speaking also, and equivalently, of the way in which we belong, by Baptism, to the universal Church in the sense of a worldwide fellowship that is not bounded by one's own particular church, especially since the Letter then says: 'whoever belongs to one particular Church belongs to all the Churches, since belonging to the *communion*, like belonging to the Church, is never simply particular, but by its very nature is always universal' (n. 10). In fact, much later in the debate, having just heard Kasper describing the effect of Baptism in similar terms, Ratzinger went so far as to say: 'this statement clears up the controversy' (G, p. 11). Kasper, I think, would not be so sure.

We see that the Letter moves readily and almost imperceptibly between transcendent and worldwide understandings of the Church, that is, between the Church-mystery and the 'universal Church'. Belonging to the transcendent mystery of the Church, which is the very core of our Christian identity, effectively translates into membership of the worldwide fellow-ship of the Church under the jurisdiction of the Pope. A little further on, the Letter explicitly recalls the definition of Vatican I that papal primacy essentially involves 'a truly episcopal power, which is not only supreme, full and universal, but also *immediate*, over all, whether pastors or other faithful' (n. 13; cf. DS 3064), and then itself says:

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. (n. 13)

Clearly, the Letter on communion is very much also a letter on papal primacy, understood as the key to that unity of the Church which has been transmitted down to the present from the day of Pentecost when the Church was born in the single unified gathering to which the Letter refers. The Letter also quotes Vatican I's teaching that the Roman Pontiff is 'the perpetual and visible source and foundation' of the unity not only of the episcopate but also of the entire Church (n. 12; cf. DS 3051–57), and then comments: 'This unity of the episcopate is perpetuated through the centuries by means of the *apostolic succession*, and is also the foundation of the identity of the Church of every age with the Church built by Christ upon Peter and upon the other apostles' (n. 12).

This is a firmly and, indeed, purely historical account of the Church's identity, very different in appearance from the eschatological statement of Zizioulas that the Church 'is what she is by becoming again and again what she will be'. (15) However, the Eucharist, which is the repeated occasion of the Church's becoming for Zizioulas, is also notably prominent in the Letter. In n. 11, there is almost a direct echo of Zizioulas when it says: 'it is precisely the Eucharist that renders all self-sufficiency on the part of the particular Churches impossible', (16) and the CDF's warning against eucharistic ecclesiology fostering a 'one-sided emphasis' on the local church (n. 11) directly corresponds to Zizioulas's own criticism of the 'localism' of eucharistic ecclesiology's pioneer, Nicholas Afanassieff. (17)

In fact, the CDF shows that it wants to relate the papacy intimately to the Eucharist: 'the existence of the Petrine ministry ... bears a profound correspondence to the Eucharistic character of the Church' (n. 11). (18) Zizioulas could, perhaps, make a rather similar statement, for he too, from a rigorously eucharistic standpoint, regards a universal primacy as something required 'in an ecclesiology of communion'. (19) Zizioulas is also committed to a mutual interiority of the local church and the 'universal Church' (understood as the 'Catholic Church in the World'), and considers that the requirement that a new bishop be ordained by at least two or three bishops from neighbouring churches is an expression of that fundamental principle. (20) Were he to envisage the ministry of a universal primate being also an expression of that principle (cf. the statement in n. 13 of the Letter, above), he would, of course, be reaching that position by his own distinctive route. Based on an eschatological understanding of the Church, he believes that each local church is given its identity by receiving the eucharistic imprint of the eschatological reality, (21) and then that all of the local churches are profoundly united by that same imprint into a '*unity in identity*', (22) which absolutely requires them to be open to one another and in communion. A universal primacy would have its place within that eschatological framework. In other words, for Zizioulas, the mutual interiority of the local and the worldwide Church is based on the mutual interiority of the local and the eschatological Church, as a result of which all local churches

'coincide with one another'. (23) The primacy would be a sign of that profound coincidence.

B. 'Church Unity Rooted in the Eucharist' (1993)

On the first anniversary of the Letter, this anonymous and authoritative article appeared in *L'Osservatore Romano*. Cardinal Ratzinger might, perhaps, reasonably be presumed to be its author. The article is essentially a defence of the doctrine contained in n. 9 of the Letter. It refers to 'the *mutual interiority* between the universal Church and the particular Churches' as the 'hermeneutical key' of the Letter, and complains that 'all too frequently the universal Church is considered as an abstract reality' in contrast with 'the concrete reality of the particular churches'. Consequently, it says, 'in [the] sentence about priority, the Letter considers the universal Church in the most concrete and at one and the same time the most mysterious way'.

The universal Church it speaks of is the Church of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. There is nothing more concrete and localized than the 120 gathered there. However, the unique originality and the mystery of the 120 consists in the fact that the *ecclesial structure* constituting the Church is *the structure of the universal Church herself*. Here there are the Twelve, with Peter at their head, and in communion with them the whole Church which grows – the 5000 – and speaks all languages, in a moment of unity and universality which is at the same time extremely local without being – in that it is the Church of Pentecost – an 'individual particular Church' in the sense given to that Church today. At Pentecost there is no 'mutual interiority' between universal and particular Church, because these two dimensions are not yet distinct. (p. 4)

The article thus closely assimilates the Church-mystery to the concrete reality of the Jerusalem Church, effectively as two ways of looking at the same thing. Moreover, the 'universal Church' which the Letter defined as the 'worldwide community' is now expressly identified as the same 'Church of Jerusalem on Pentecost day'. The worldwide Church is thereby itself even more firmly assimilated to the Church-mystery, and the blurring to which I referred above duly intensifies.

Because of criticisms already expressed, the article significantly specifies: 'At no time does the Letter intend to give a "new" interpretation of the Roman Pontiff's universal and immediate jurisdiction, but offers instead an adequate schema for understanding the relationship between the College of Bishops and the Pope, as well as between the universal Church and the particular Churches' (p. 10). Kasper's own critique was taking shape, and was given very clear expression in 1999.

C. Kasper's Article (1999)

Kasper quotes the conciliar formula, '*in quibus et ex quibus*' (LG 23), and specifies that the one catholic Church is not a federation of particular churches, nor is it a

'Super-Church' with the particular churches merely as 'provinces of the universal Church'. Local church and universal Church realise themselves in one another 'perichoretically' (p. 43). The conciliar formula was inverted by the CDF in the Letter, he says, so as also to affirm the formula: 'Ecclesiae in et ex Ecclesia', lest anyone erroneously maintain that the universal Church is only the unity of particular churches. He agrees with this complementary formula (cf. also later, F, p. 18), subject to the notable condition, very welcome for our discussion here, 'that it is explained what is concretely meant by Church or Universal Church'. If the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church 'with all the magnificent images with which the Church Fathers described it' is intended, then 'of course it applies'. However, 'the formula becomes thoroughly problematic when the one universal Church is surreptitiously [*unter der Hand*] identified with the Roman Church, *de facto* with the pope and the curia'. 'If that is the case,' he says, 'then the Letter of the CDF cannot be understood as a help towards clarification of communion ecclesiology but must be understood as its dismissal and as an attempt at a theological restoration of Roman centralism' (p. 44).

D. Ratzinger's Response (2000)

Not surprisingly, Ratzinger was stung by such comments into a sharp reply. He starts by defending n. 9 of the Letter once again, and it is clear that he fundamentally wants to defend a unitary concept of the Church, in accordance with scriptural imagery. 'This ontological precedence of the universal Church, of the one Church and one Body, one Spouse, with regard to the concrete empirical realisations in individual particular Churches seems so clear to me that I find it difficult to understand objections to it.' He fears that 'the Church as a theological topic' is being 'cancelled out' (p. 72).

Ratzinger implies that his critics are pure empiricists who have lost a sense of the transcendence of the Church. Notably, he also manifests his understanding of eschatology simply as *orientation* when he stresses that, 'in Galatians, the Apostle speaks to us of the heavenly Jerusalem, and of it not as a great eschatological reality, but as a reality that precedes us: "This Jerusalem is our mother" (Gal. 4:26)' (p. 72). Evidently, he does not think that the Church, if eschatologically understood, can really be 'mother', already operative and formative of the Church on earth.

Resistance to the idea of the 'precedence of the universal Church' is understandable, Ratzinger says, only if it derives from the suspicion that Kasper states, namely that those who advocate it are tacitly trying to restore Roman centralism. But then he wonders why people should have such a suspicion and interprets it as a symptom of 'a growing inability to give a concrete meaning to the universal Church, to the Church one, holy, catholic and apostolic'. He asserts that the CDF does not identify the universal Church with the Roman Church and says that that would only be possible 'if the local Church of Jerusalem had already previously been identified with the universal Church, that is, if the concept of Church is reduced to the communities which empirically belong [to it] and its theological depth is lost from

view' (p. 74). He reiterates that *Lumen Gentium* itself, in line with the Fathers of the Church, spoke of the Church theologically, as being fundamentally dependent on the mystery of Christ and thereby on the Trinity (cf. LG 1–4). 'Precisely because the Church is to be understood theologically [*sic*], it always transcends itself' (p. 75).

Though Ratzinger's own priorities are plain, we have nevertheless seen that the original Letter from the CDF and the article which followed effectively identified the universal Church with the Jerusalem community on the day of Pentecost. That was what triggered Kasper's original protest.

E. Kasper's Reply (2000)

Ratzinger is adamant that he is simply trying to interpret Vatican II and retain a sense of the mystery and unity of the Church against a reduction to empirical diversity. Kasper is equally adamant in his reply that 'for 10 long years as a bishop' he tirelessly fought 'the sociological reduction of the Church to individual congregations' (p. 927), but nevertheless that, on the basis of his pastoral experience, he is concerned about the centralising tendencies that have reasserted themselves since Vatican II.

Kasper stresses that he holds firmly to the pre-existence of the Church: 'it is theologically indispensable for understanding the Church'. But he maintains that this pre-existence 'does not in fact offer any proof of the primacy of the universal Church'. 'It could just as well be used to support the idea that I and many others hold that the universal Church and the particular Churches occur simultaneously' (p. 930). There is, then, a true primacy of the *pre-existent* Church, so to speak, but Kasper will not allow that to be interpreted as a primacy of the *universal* Church, which means the worldwide Church in common usage. The latter concretely exists in the differentiated form of many local churches, and he suggests that the Church, even in its pre-existence, might be a communion of local churches, existing 'in and from' them (p. 930).

This way of envisaging the Church-mystery may well seem rather strange and somewhat at odds with scriptural images of the Church-mystery as one single community (e.g. Heb. 12:22–25; Rev. 7:9; 21:2), but how can that oneness be embraced without legitimating the priority of the worldwide Church, as a single community, over the local churches? That is the conundrum at the heart of this debate. Ratzinger translates the oneness into priority as a matter of course. Kasper wants to avoid priority, but seems then to need a rather difficult hypothesis. So we must ask: Is there another way? The answer will require a shift from the strongly historical framework within which both Ratzinger and Kasper work into a more eschatological one.

Conclusion

In the debate with Ratzinger, Kasper argues not just as a theologian but also as a pastor, with concern too about the ecumenical harm caused by 'a one-sided emphasis

on the universal Church' (E, p. 930). In his final contribution, Ratzinger implies that the real theological issues have been clouded by 'false associations with Church politics' (G, p. 11). We have seen, however, that the original Letter from the CDF itself invoked the teaching of Vatican I on the papacy and so could hardly fail to have implications for Church politics. More specifically, by blurring the distinction between the transcendent 'Church-mystery' and the 'worldwide community', it opened the way for the undoubted priority of the former, which has strong but subtle implications for papal primacy, as Zizioulas himself would maintain, to be translated into the priority of the latter, which has strong and not so subtle implications for papal primacy, with regard to local churches.

Ratzinger's final contribution was an article in *America*, which drew a final reply from Kasper in the same journal. Kasper declares that he is not inclined to pursue the 'speculative question' of whether the Church even in its pre-existence might itself be a communion of local churches (i.e. the difficult hypothesis above) now that Ratzinger has just clearly affirmed that 'local churches and the universal church ... interpenetrate one another' and are 'simultaneous' (H, p. 28; cf. G, p. 10). (The word 'simultaneous' would seem to be particularly important here, since the interpenetration, or mutual interiority, was already stated in the original Letter, as we have seen.) However, having made that affirmation, Ratzinger himself declared that that was not 'the actual point at issue' (G, p. 10). As far as he was concerned, something else had been at stake all along. He explained as follows:

The basic idea of sacred history is that of gathering together, of uniting – uniting human beings in the one body of Christ, the union of human beings and through human beings, of all creation with God. There is only one bride, only one body of Christ, not many brides, not many bodies. The bride is of course, as the fathers of the Church said, drawing on Psalm 44, dressed 'in many-colored robes'; the body has many organs. But the superordinate principle is ultimately unity. That is the point here. (G, p. 10)

Kasper fully agrees with this point, but indicates in his final reply that it was the way Ratzinger was previously making it that caused him concern.

In his argument in support of the pre-existence of the universal church, Cardinal Ratzinger quite rightly says that there is 'only one bride' and 'only one body'. He does this by way of making over [i.e. recasting] the thesis of the priority of the church universal into the thesis of the priority of inner unity. On both philosophical and scriptural grounds I can fully concur with this latter thesis, which avoids the confusing language about the precedence of the universal church. (H, p. 29)

Kasper thus accepts the idea of a pre-existing Church, one bride, one body. As such, the Church undoubtedly has an 'inner unity' which is ontologically and even *temporally* prior to any local church. He simply objects to this being taught in terms of the priority of the 'universal Church', which generally means the *worldwide* Church. If the worldwide Church has priority, then Rome and the curia naturally

have a higher profile than they do if the worldwide Church and the local church are interpenetrating and simultaneous.

I have been suggesting here that 'language about the precedence of the universal Church' is 'confusing' because the very term 'universal Church' is ambiguous; it can mean the transcendent and pre-existent Church-mystery or the worldwide Church, and the distinction between these two meanings can be crucial, as in this debate. The Letter of the CDF effectively blurred the distinction by explaining the temporal precedence of the 'essential mystery' of the universal Church very historically, in terms of the temporal manifestation of the Church on the day of Pentecost, when, in speaking all languages, the Church of Jerusalem prefigured the worldwide Church of today.

Perhaps the term 'pre-existence' rather invites such a potentially controversial *historical* line of interpretation (from the pre-existent Church to the Jerusalem Church to the worldwide Church of today and then to the local churches), and should itself come under scrutiny. Zizioulas would urge that the Church is pre-existent only in the sense that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, its reality, which is truly *eschatological*, because history must run its course to the end and be respected, was already mysteriously operative from the beginning of time. In other words, his perspective prevents the blurring of meanings that has fuelled the Ratzinger-Kasper debate. There is no danger of confusing the transcendent Church-mystery and the current worldwide Church if the transcendent Church-mystery is a reality *still to come*, as Zizioulas believes.

Paradoxically, and crucially, he maintains that the transcendent Church-mystery is powerfully operative from the future. In the power of the Spirit, he says, the Church does indeed live by *anamnesis*, but not in the everyday 'psychological and experiential' sense. In the liturgy, we encounter 'the eucharistic paradox which no historical consciousness can ever comprehend, i.e. the *memory of the future*'. (24)

NOTES

1. This paper will appear in D. Knight (ed.), *Personhood and the Church* (Festschrift for John Zizioulas, forthcoming).
2. 'Established in this last age of the world, and made manifest in the outpouring of the Spirit, [the Church] will be brought to glorious completion at the end of time. At that moment, as the Fathers put it, all the just from the time of Adam, "from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect" will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church' (LG 2). Quotations from Vatican II are taken from A. Flannery (ed.), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and PostConciliar Documents* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1996).
3. LG 25 refers to bishops assembled in an ecumenical council as teachers of the universal Church, and of the pope as 'the supreme teacher of the universal Church', both of which references clearly look to the worldwide Church at a particular time in history.
4. Cf. Paul McPartlan, 'The Eucharist as the Basis for Ecclesiology', *Antiphon* 6.2 (2001), pp. 16–17.
5. Cf. Paul McPartlan, *Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995; repr. London: Continuum, 2003), ch. 1.

6. John Meyendorff, *Orthodoxy and Catholicity* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1966), pp. 163–64.
7. John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985), p. 174, n. 11 (italics in original).
8. Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), pp. 256–64. The quotation from Meyendorff appears on p. 107.
9. John Zizioulas, 'The Ecclesiological Presuppositions of the Holy Eucharist', *Nicolaus* 10 (1982), p. 333–49, at 342.
10. Cf. McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church*, pp. 65–67, 88–89, 108–120, 166–86.
11. Unless otherwise indicated, references by numbers and pages are to the main text being considered in each particular section, translations are mine and italics in quotations are from the original.
12. Ratzinger later stressed that the Letter was written by the CDF, not by him personally (G, p. 8).
13. W. Kasper, 'Church as communio', *Communio* 13 (1986), pp. 100–17, at 109–110.
14. First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution 'Pastor Aeternus' on the Church of Christ (1870), ch. 3. Cf. H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer (eds), *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum* (Freiburg: Herder, 1965; hereafter DS), nn. 3060, 3064.
15. John Zizioulas, 'The Mystery of the Church in Orthodox Tradition', *One in Christ* 24 (1988), pp. 294–303, at 301; cf. McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church*, p. 187.
16. Cf. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 156–57.
17. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 24–25; also, Paul McPartlan, 'Eucharistic Ecclesiology', *One in Christ* 22 (1986), pp. 314–31, at 329.
18. Cf. McPartlan, *Sacrament of Salvation*, pp. 68–71.
19. John Zizioulas, 'The Church as Communion', in T. F. Best and G. Gassmann (eds), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), p. 108; cf. McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church*, pp. 203–211.
20. Cf. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 154–55.
21. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 154–55; also the quotation from Meyendorff, above.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 158, n. 66.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, p. 180.