

WACŁAW HRYNIEWICZ OMI

THE PAPAL PRIMACY IN RECENT ORTHODOX EVALUATION

The issue of primacy has not yet been dealt with in the official dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. The documents of the dialogue speak of it only sporadically, announcing it as one of the most crucial theological questions for debate in the future. How can the Roman doctrine become more consonant with the tradition of the undivided Church? In which way can the Orthodox, with their undestanding of the primacy in the universal Church, help the process of ecumenical reinterpretation of this thorny issue? Have they developed their own comprehension of the primacy in the way convincing to the Catholic side? Is there a due place in Orthodox ecclesiology for some kind of universal leadership? How do they interpret the relationship between the local and the universal Church?

In June, 1996 the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomaios I, gave a written response to questions concerning the pope's primacy, put to him by Krakow weekly "Tygodnik Powszechny"¹ His answer was very concise: the issue of papal primacy has become the most serious and scandalous stumbling block for the dialogue between Orthodox and Catholics. He pointed to the tradition of the first millennium showing the Pope as a "Patriarch of the Church among other ancient apostolic sees of the world" In his view any claim to a universal primacy of jurisdiction is unfounded and erroneous theologically. Such concept of the Petrine ministry developed in

Prof. Dr. Waclaw HRYNIEWICZ OMI – Head of the Ecumenical Institute of the Catholic University of Lublin; address for correspondence: ul. Pana Tadeusza 4 m. 60, PL 20-609 Lublin; e-mail: hryniewa@kul.lublin.pl

¹ *Bartłomiej I, Patriarcha Ekumeniczny Konstantynopola. Patriarcha Kościoła*. "Tygodnik Powszechny" 1996 no. 26 (June 30) p. 12. This interview was also mentioned by O. Clément: «*La vérité vous rendra libre*». *Entretiens avec le Patriarche œcuménique Bartholomée I^{er}* Paris–Bruges 1996 p. 255.

the West after the Great Schism. It claims unduly a direct episcopal jurisdiction over all the faithful and bishops of the whole world.

The Patriarch was speaking on the same topic several times. His views have a special significance in the ongoing debate on the primacy of the bishop of Rome. This debate entered a new stage after the Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, promulgated in 1995 by John Paul II. The subsequent statements of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople are a good starting point to reflect on other important Orthodox examinations of this thorny ecumenical issue. Opinions expressed by some other Orthodox hierarchs and theologians are to a large extent consonant with the Patriarch's views. In this way one can have a fuller image of Orthodox reactions to the Pope's invitation to seek together the forms in which the Petrine ministry may accomplish a real "ministry of mercy" and "a service of love" (*Ut unum sint*, 92-93, 95).

I. HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH: INTERPRETATION OF JESUS' WORDS

In an interview accorded to an Italian periodical "Il Regno" (June 1995) on the eve of his official visit to the Vatican, the Ecumenical Patriarch admitted that the encyclical *Ut unum sint* might open a new space for discussion on the papal primacy. He said nevertheless, that John Paul II sustained "exaggerated pretensions of the bishop of Rome to primacy and infallibility, although they were expressed indirectly and in a mitigated form"²

It is only when the Patriarch starts interpreting Jesus' words that one can see the acuteness of his formulations. This was the case when he met Swiss Roman-Catholic bishops in Zurich on December 14, 1995. In response to the Pope's invitation to an ecumenical discussion Bartholomaios I has opposed a traditional Catholic exegesis of the New Testament texts. In his opinion, there is no foundation which would justify the concept of the primacy as an authority exercised over other bishops. Here is the most significant passage of his address:

I say this because the idea that the Lord choosing the twelve apostles entrusted to one of them the task to govern them (*la tâche de les gouverner*), has no foundation in the Holy Scripture. The Lord's command addressed to Peter to be the shepherd of His sheep meant repeating to him that command which had been given to all the apostles, and which he transgressed by the fact that he had denied Him three times and thus interrupted the con-

² *Ibid.*

tact with the Lord. So it did not mean that he [Peter] was entrusted with a pastoral task higher than this of the other apostles³

According to the Patriarch, the only authority of divine foundation in the Church is the one of the bishops and their synodality. The mission entrusted by Christ to Peter is related to all the bishops together who are the successors of the Twelve, and not to the bishop of Rome alone. The pope is the “first” (πρῶτος), but there is no special sacrament of the papacy. Who would seriously affirm today that Christ ordered Peter to “govern” the other apostles? All bishops are collegially successors of all the apostles. Christ has called apostles “in equal measure and without any discrimination” all His disciples (cf. Lk 6:13). To all of them He gave “authority over unclean spirits with power to cast them out and to cure all kinds of diseases and sickness” (Mt 10:1)⁴ He said to all of them: “Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations” (Mt 28:19; cf. Mk 16:15). He who leads the Church is not the only hierarch responsible for its destinies. Consequently, “every one of us, bishops, is considered to be personally responsible for the way in which he favours or hinders the course of this boat which is the Church – responsible for its good or bad roadability (*responsable de la bonne ou de la mauvaise tenue de sa route*)”

A French Orthodox theologian, Olivier Clément, calls these affirmations “a bit reductive and polemical”⁵ In his book *Rome autrement* he offers a more elaborate exegesis of the texts related to the apostles-martyrs Peter and Paul⁶ A special attention is devoted to three texts which determine the role of Peter: 1) “You are Peter [Greek πέτρος, from πέτρα – rock; Aramaic *kepha*] and on this rock I will build my Church” (Mt 16:18)⁷; 2) “And you,

³ *Garder inalterable le système conciliaire. Rencontre avec les évêques catholiques suisses* (Zurich, 14 décembre 1995). “Service Orthodoxe de Presse” 1996 no. 205 (février) pp. 18-20, here p. 19. See also his equally critical remarks in an interview published under the title: *Gli ostacoli al dialogo e le speranze...* “Il Foglio Quotidiano” 8: 2003 No. 125 p. 2.

⁴ Here and further on the New Testament is quoted from *The Jerusalem Bible*.

⁵ O. Clément. *Rome autrement. Un orthodoxe face à la papauté*. Paris-Bruges 1997 p. 99: “ces affirmations semblent quelque peu réductrices et polémiques”

⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 18-32.

⁷ For many Eastern Fathers πέτρα – rock is the faith proclaimed by Peter. In this sense, all the faithful are “successors” of Peter, because the Church is founded on Christ, “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (Jn 14:6). According to St. Cyprian of Carthage every bishop is a “successor” of Peter by his apostolic mission, and all the bishops together, *in solidum*, sit on the *cathedra Petri*. See *ibid.* pp. 25, 27. Slowly, esp. in the West, the emphasis will be put not on Peter’s faith but on his person itself: πέτρα becomes the person of Peter confessing the apostolic faith. *Ibid.* p. 28.

once converted, strengthen your brethren” (Lk 22:23); 3) “Simon..., do you love me more than these others do? Feed my sheep” (Jn 21:15-17).

All these words of Christ are placed in the resurrectional and eucharistic context. Two texts are followed by very harsh warnings, first when Peter refuses to accept the idea of a Suffering Servant: “Get behind me, Satan!” (Mt 16:23), and second, when he impetuously announces his readiness to follow his Master: “by the time the cock crows today you will have denied three times that you know me” (Lk 22:34). The third text, from the Fourth Gospel, shows that Peter, if he wants to be faithful to his vocation has to become an example of a sinner to whom sins have been forgiven. Christ has put him back into the first position formerly held among the apostles, but He warns him once more and announces his martyrdom. The conclusion is obvious: the presence of Peter in the Church is far from earthly glory and domination⁸ He is not alone. The other apostles are with him, but the “foundation” and “main cornerstone” (Eph 2:20) of the Church building is Christ Jesus himself. They also receive the power to “bind” and to “loose” (Mt 18:18), i.e. according to the meaning of these words in judaism of that time, to re-integrate or not, into the community.

The *πρῶτος* does not absorb the others. At the “council” of Jerusalem his opinion has its weight, but is not decisive. [...] Peter is therefore the “first”, but if he is called to “strengthen” his brothers, it is not him who founds and justifies their apostolate: this one comes directly from Christ, as the vocation of Paul will show, recognized but not determined by Peter. Likewise the destiny of John escapes him: “If I want him to stay behind till I come, what does it matter to you? (J 21:22)⁹

Clément rightly adds that there is something in the role of Peter – more than in the charismatic vocation of Paul – which cannot be transmitted¹⁰ He belongs to the group of the Twelve who cannot have successors in the unique character of their apostolic witness. They lived with Jesus, they saw him after his resurrection. In this they are unique witnesses.

Ecumenism demands a critical attitude towards historical and present modalities of exercising the Roman primacy. The Patriarch’s words might have been difficult to accept for many Roman Catholics. Some would consider them to be yet another example of multiseular biases against the papacy, reducing it to the minimum. However, the Ecumenical Patriarch addressed Swiss bishops in a very positive spiritual attitude. The encounter was sup-

⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 19-21.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 19.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 23.

posed to be an hour of truth and sincerity. That is why he renounced at the very beginning of his address any "insincere communication" He also stressed at the same time that the love of truth requires talking "straightforward and in all sincerity (*sans détours et en toute sincérité*)" This attitude allows to avoid insinuation and misunderstandings. It is inspired by the Lord's command: "All you need say is 'Yes' if you mean yes, 'No' if you mean no" (Mt 5:37; cf. 2 Co 1:17-20). The Patriarch wanted that his reflections taken out of a long experience of the Orthodox Church might serve a process of better knowing each other. He tried to convey them "in the spirit of brotherhood and humility" and expressed his hope of reaching once the unity in faith. This desired unity will be easier to achieve "if we abandon every innovatory element (*tout élément novateur*)"¹¹ which caused the lasting division of our Churches.

II. AN APPEAL FOR DECENTRALIZATION AND SYNODALITY

The very mention of the "innovatory element" in relation to the issue of primacy sharpens the meaning of the Patriarch's words. One can understand it only on a broader background of the Orthodox tradition, in the light of its attachment to the synodal system in which important church decisions are taken in a conciliar way, with the participation of many bishops. None of them has a preponderant vote nor the right to veto a decision of major importance. If the opinion of one of them prevails, this happens only in the case when he can, through his personality, inspire confidence in others that this is a right solution of the deliberated problem.

The synodal system is an expression of common responsibility and solidarity. By its nature it requires decentralization. It also prevents more effectively any tendency to impose one's own opinion or to introduce innovations in matters of doctrine and church practice. It is not easy to obtain agreement of all the bishops or of many of them. Only one who has introduced an innovation on his own territory can be wrong. This innovation does not usually survive the innovator and slowly disappears. This is not the case in a heavily centralized system. The one who has a preponderant vote and authority accepts innovation and the others after him. The doctrine and church practice may be changed under his jurisdiction. The innovator as an individual can make mistakes easier than many. The Patriarch recalled here

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 20.

the words of Jesus: "For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them" (Mt 18:20). He himself has first solemnly promised: "if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven" (Mt 18:19). It will certainly be granted, assures Bartholomaios, when they will be asking for preserving them in the truth. And he significantly added: "There is no similar promise of the Lord, that He will be present and will collaborate with the only one who separates himself from the others and places himself above the others"¹²

These are, of course, quite strong words. I read them as an urgent and dramatic appeal for more collegiality, synodality and subsidiarity in the Church, because only they may prevent an overgrowth of centralism and of the role of primacy. The Ecumenical Patriarch has drawn attention to the fact, that the very structure of the Western Church favoured the development of a determined way of exercising the papal primacy.

During his stay in Switzerland, Bartholomaios I had also a meeting with the representatives of the Protestant Federation. In his address delivered in Bern (December 13, 1995) he dwelled on the narrative of the Apostles' council in Jerusalem, and especially on the words: "It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves..." (Acts 15:28). Stressing the role of this event in the Early Church he said:

No apostle, even the first of them, assumed the power to give alone the solution to the problem [...]. Peter had intervened, the assembly had listened to Paul and Barnabas, James had spoken and the decision was taken by all, in agreement with the whole Church. So also in Jerusalem all have very humbly submitted their opinion to the judgement of others, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit¹³

In conclusion the Patriarch emphasized also the role of reception by whole community of the Church. All are obliged to follow the conciliar (synodal) system handed down by tradition and witnessed to by the Holy Scripture. "Within the Orthodox Church – he added – nobody has the monopoly of expressing this truth"

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Préserver l'unité d'enseignement et d'Esprit. Rencontre avec la Fédération Protestante de Suisse (Berne, 13 décembre 1995). "Service Orthodoxe de Presse" 1996 no. 205 (février) pp. 20-22, here p. 21.*

III. TO DEEPEN THE DIALOGUE AND LISTEN TO ONE ANOTHER

All these statements may seem to be too radical only to those who do not take into account a long opposition of the Orthodox Church to the Roman conception of the primacy of jurisdiction. The Patriarch laid emphasis that Peter did not receive from Jesus the function of “governing” the other apostles. Peter was only the first of the Twelve (“first, Simon who is called Peter”; Mt 10:2), their coryphaeus (the first in a choir), the conductor of their choir.

Some Roman Catholic critics were inclined to treat the Patriarch’s words quite unjustly as a “theological absurd” They did not try to understand his position. May be he wanted also to appease in this way some conservative circles within the Orthodox Church, hostile to his ecumenical initiatives.

Bartholomaïos did not deny that the New Testament shows Peter as “the first” He forcefully denied instead the tendency to ascribe to him authority over the other apostles. Critics pointed out that speaking about Christ’s promise to be amidst two or three gathered together, the Patriarch had forgotten some other words: “I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail, and once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Lk 22:32)¹⁴ The same Jesus, they argued, entrusted Peter with the task of strengthening the faith of other disciples, although the Apostle did not at all wish to rise “above others”

All these critical reactions indicate an urgent necessity to analyze honestly and truly ecumenically the New Testament texts dealing with the person of Peter¹⁵ It must be a common and solid effort, otherwise we will never get out of the frame of purely denominational and apologetic re-lecture of those texts. Peter was not only “the first” among the apostles. He was also a weak man who needed conversion and repented. Ideological or apologetical reasons should not overshadow the darker side of Peter’s image. From this

¹⁴ See for example G. B a v a u d. *Primauté du pape et Révélation*. “Chrétiens en marche” 33:1996 no. 50 p. 5.

¹⁵ See J. G n i l k a. *Der Petrusdienst – Grundlegung im Neuen Testament und Ausprägung in der frühen Kirche*, in: *Papstamt und Ökumene. Zum Petrusdienst an der Einheit aller Getauften*. Hg. von P. Hünemann. Regensburg 1997 pp. 9-24; J.-M. V a n C a n g h. *Le rôle de Pierre dans le Nouveau Testament*, In: *Changer la papauté?* Dir. Paul Tihon. Paris 2000 pp. 41-62; F.G. U n t e r g a ß m a i r. *Petrus im Neuen Testament*. In: H. S c h ü t t e (Hg.). *Im Dienst der einen Kirche. Ökumenische Überlegungen zur Reform des Papstamts*. Paderborn-Frankfurt/M. 2000 pp. 29-49; R. P e s c h. *Die biblischen Grundlagen des Primats*. Freiburg-Basel-Wien 2001; W K l a u s n i t z e r. *Der Primat des Bischofs von Rom. Entwicklung – Dogma – Ökumenische Zukunft*. Freiburg 2004.

fact the encyclical *Ut unum sint* (No. 4) has drawn a clear conclusion about the need of “the conversion of Peter and that of his successors”, i.e. “that conversion which is indispensable for ‘Peter’ to be able to serve his brethren” One has to take these words seriously. They are a long awaited answer to the expectations of the East as expressed in the encyclical letter of Eastern Patriarchs in 1848:

We know with certainty, through the Lord’s words, that the time must come when this prayer [cf. Lk 22:32] – made in forecast of Peter’s perjury, so that his faith would not fail to the end – will act on **one of his successors** who, like him, **will bitterly weep** and, having turned again to himself, will strengthen us with much more authority – us, his brothers in the Orthodox confession which we hold from our predecessors¹⁶

Reflecting quietly on the issue of papal primacy Bartholomaios attempted to respond to the invitation of pope John Paul II to engage with him “in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another” (*Ut unum sint* 96). One should appreciate modesty and sincerity of the Patriarch. He said to the Catholic bishops at the end of his address:

Brothers, [...] I submit to your charity these some reflections taken from our experience, considering this contact to be an occasion to know better our way of thinking and existence. I submit them in the spirit of fraternity and humility, in hope that the fact of a deeper reflection [...] will permit a better mutual understanding [...].

What the Patriarch said about the primacy of the bishop of Rome was in fact nothing new. He expressed a traditional standpoint of Orthodoxy throughout centuries. A quiet tone of his reflections, permeated by humility, is a hopeful sign of the dialogue becoming more mature among hierarchs, who are the most responsible people for the future of the Christian faith. The progress of ecumenism depends in a decisive manner on the solution of the issue of papal primacy.

Two years later, in Italian newspaper “Avvenire”, Bartholomaios emphasized a particular role of the Roman Church because of the apostles Peter and Paul. This role consists, however, not in governing the other Churches, but in “presiding in love”¹⁷ The last expression alludes to St. Ignatius of An-

¹⁶ Mansi 40, 407-408. French translation: *Encyclique de 1848 des Patriarches de Constantinople, d’Alexandrie, d’Antioche et de Jérusalem (Réponse à l’encyclique de Pie IX du 6 janvier 1848)*. “Contacts” 17:1965 no. 49 pp. 25-46, here pp. 36-37.

¹⁷ Cf. Bartholomaios I. *Dialog mit Rom kommt voran*. “Katholische Nachrichten-Agentur. Ökumenische Information” 1997 Nr 4 (28. Januar) p. 7. In an interview published recently in Italy (*La ridice dello scisma: un pensiero mondano nella Chiesa*. “30 Giorni nella Chiesa e nel mondo” 2004 No. 1) Bartholomaios said: “Secondo la percezione ortodossa è sba-

tioch, who described the Roman Church as προκαθήμενη τῆς ἀγάπης¹⁸ In fact, during the first centuries the priority or primacy of Rome was not linked with the person of its bishop, but with the prestige of this local Church in the vast communion of Churches. Rome did not claim any jurisdiction over other Churches, but nevertheless enjoyed a special “authority” (not “power”), commonly “received” and acknowledged by them. This authority allowed the Roman see to exercise a large sollicitude for the communion of local Churches, i.e. a charitable and eager care, preventing their isolation or disunity. It was indeed a sort of prophetic function, the Pauline dimension of the apostolic witness in harmony with the Petrine vocation¹⁹

IV. TO CHANGE STRUCTURES AND RESTORE BROTHERHOOD

The search for new forms of exercising primacy is a difficult and responsible task. It requires courage in face of an honest and serious criticism of the past and present. An effective reform of the papacy must also embrace the church structures. It is not enough to say that Peter received from Christ the order to “strengthen the brethren” One has to acknowledge that the brothers, in their turn, also support Peter. According to the Fourth Gospel, Peter having come back to Galilee said to his companions: “I am going fishing” The others replied: “We’ll come with you” (J 21,3). It is quite probable that Peter, despondent over the discovery of the empty tomb and not yet having met the Risen Christ, was simply returning to his former occupation. The others went with him and supported him in a difficult time.²⁰

This simple Gospel story reveals a deeper meaning, if we read it in the light of brotherhood and collegiality of those who are the leaders in the Church. Both the Orthodox and the other Christians do not believe that collegiality and subsidiarity are being practiced in the Roman Catholic Church in a sufficiently meaningful and effective way. One has to take seriously into account their reservations and expectations. In the encyclical *Ut unum sint* (No. 87) John Paul II quotes his earlier words: “We must take

gliata la teoria della potestà di Pietro sugli apostoli, perché Pietro da una parte era corifeo, ma dall'altra era uno degli apostoli, ugualmente apostolo, come tutti gli altri. La superiorità di Pietro nei confronti degli altri apostoli viene messa in evidenza per giustificare un primato di potere”

¹⁸ *Epist. ad Romanos*. SCh 10 p. 106: “qui préside à la charité”

¹⁹ See Clément. *Rome autrement* pp. 29-30.

²⁰ Cf. R. E. Brown. *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*. London 1972 p. 1091.

every care to meet the legitimate desires and expectations of our Christian brethren, coming to know their way of thinking and their sensibilities”

The Orthodox Church does not deny the need of primacy as a charismatic centre, as an instance of coordination, initiative and service of unity which does not encroach upon regional autonomy of the Churches²¹ According to metropolitan Ioannis (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, the necessity of the primacy of the bishop of Rome cannot derive only from historical circumstances. It has its theological justification and, as we shall see later on, should be evaluated positively. The primacy exists in every local Church, on a regional level, and among the patriarchates as well²²

Metropolitan George (Khodr) from the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch emphasizes the need of “conversion” of the papacy to the brotherhood of the Churches. This conversion cannot be limited only to the sphere of concepts, but must become a real “experience of the hearts”²³ It is not enough to speak about the dignity of the Christian East. This dignity finds, for all the Christians, its expression in the right to autonomy of their Churches and in preserving specific features of their life. It demands from Rome to acknowledge the gifts of the Holy Spirit accorded to each one of those Churches. Consequently, it excludes the practice of the direct appointment of the bishops of the whole world by the Pope.

According to Olivier Clément, it is by no means essential to the exercise of the primacy in the spirit of the 34th “apostolic” canon, that the bishop of Rome should appoint bishops all over the world, that he should have his see on a sovereign territory and be the head of the state with diplomatic representation. It has nothing in common with “the mystery of the primacy”, with “mystery” of the presence of Peter and Paul, with the “presidency to love (*présidence à l’amour*)” of the Roman see²⁴ The true presence of Peter in the Church is indeed far away from any terrestrial glory.

In one of his interviews metropolitan George expressed his criticism of the way the issue of the papal primacy had recently been dealt with in

²¹ Cf. Metr. Damaskinos (Papandreou). *Bleibendes und Veränderliches im Petrusamt. Überlegungen aus orthodoxer Sicht*. In: *Dienst an der Einheit. Zum Wesen und Auftrag des Petrusdienstes*. Hg. J. Ratzinger. Düsseldorf 1978, pp. 146-164.

²² Giovanni di Pergamo. *Il primato nella chiesa*. “Il Regno-attualità” 1998 no. 2 pp. 5-9.

²³ Metr. Georges (Khodr). *L’Orient et l’Occident chrétiens*. “Service Orthodoxe de Presse” no. 205 1996 (février) pp. 23-26, here p. 25.

²⁴ Clément. *Rome autrement* p. 105. The title of the Chapter 12: “Le mystère de la primauté” (pp. 103-109). See also pp. 96 and 99.

Rome²⁵ John Paul II has invited to discuss this question, but shortly afterwards the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith has declared that the dogma proclaimed by the Ist Vatican Council concerning the papal jurisdiction and infallibility must remain untouched and cannot be revised²⁶ Such terms as “universal bishop” used by the pope himself are incomprehensible to the Orthodox, says the metropolitan, and not acceptable. Otherwise even an ecumenical council becomes only a consultative instrument for the pope, not to mention local synods or episcopal conferences.

It is clear that the Primacy of the bishop of Rome requires a thorough reinterpretation in the light of the tradition of the first millennium. This is one of the points which constantly come back in the debate with the Orthodox²⁷ They notice a clear discrepancy between the will of the Pope to be a servant of unity, and the very structure of the Roman Catholic Church which embodies the idea of the “universal bishop” To restore brotherhood and unity of the Churches means also to change first structures which hinder this process. As long as the Pope is considered to be the only guarantor of unity and its visible sign, and so long as the communion with him is seen as an indispensable condition of unity – this will constitute an insurmountable difficulty for most other Christians.

V. CHRISTIAN UNITY REQUIRES SELF-LIMITATION

Many Orthodox theologians ask now, to what extent the Bishop of Rome will be ready to a real dialogue on his authority and power, if he considers them to be an essential part of his ministry. So long as the papal primacy constitutes for the Catholics the truth of the faith not allowing any revision, the possibility of an agreement seems minimal or none at all. Some have already called the debate on the reform of the papacy a vain and futile labour,

²⁵ “Le concept d’*infaillibilité papale n’a pas de sens pour nous*” *Un entretien avec le métropolitain Georges du Mont-Liban*. “Service Orthodoxe de Presse” 2000 no. 247 (avril) pp. 19-23, esp. p. 20.

²⁶ Cf. *La primauté du successeur de Pierre dans le mystère de l’Eglise. Réflexions de la Congrégation pour la Doctrine de la foi*. “La documentation catholique” 95:1998 no. 21 pp. 1016-1020.

²⁷ Cf. G. Larentzakis. *Das Papstamt aus orthodoxer Sicht*. In: *Papstamt: Hoffnung, Chance, Ärgernis. Ökumenische Diskussion in einer globalisierten Welt*. Hg. S. Hell, L. Lies. Innsbruck–Wien 2000 pp. 115-146.

and the encyclical *Ut unum sint*, in this respect, as a “non given gift (*ein ungeschenktes Geschenk*)”²⁸

Not all critical voices are, of course, so pessimistic. A common denominator of Orthodox commentaries seems rather to be a conviction of the necessity of the dialogue on the common tradition of the first millennium. This is considered by metropolitan Damaskinos (Papandreou) and Vlassios Pheidias (church historian and canonist in Athens) to be the only realistic criterion in restoring the communion of Sister Churches²⁹

The dialogue on the doctrine and praxis of the first millennium on one side, and on the rank of the councils held in the West on the other, could help to determine the limits of the primacy, and to urge the process of resigning from the historic overgrowths of papal authority. The road was paved already in 1974 when Paul VI made a clear distinction between the true ecumenical councils held together by the East and the West during the first millennium, and the “general councils” or “general synods” of the West after the separation, which do not apply to the Orthodox³⁰ It requires a common study of the value of decisions taken during the centuries of separation, and would eventually lead to a revision of the teaching of Vatican I (1870).

During his official visit to the Vatican, Bartholomaios I delivered a homily in the basilica of St. Peter (June 29, 1995). The Eucharist was presided by John Paul II. In his presence the Patriarch was speaking also about the primacy. He stressed the need for humility and repentance which can make us wiser and to save our fidelity to Christ, who “emptied Himself” for the salvation of the world. And the Patriarch ended his homily with these thought provoking words:

[...] it is only when the priority of the kenotic ethos prevails convincingly in the historical Church, that we will then not only re-establish easily the so much desired unity in the faith, but at the same time we will become worthy to experience what the divine revelation has promised to those who love the Lord, i.e. “a new heaven and a new earth”³¹

²⁸ This formulation came from Georgios Tsetsis, a representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the WCC. See A. B a s d e k i s. *Orthodoxe Stellungnahmen zur Enzyklika “Ut unum sint”* “Katholische Nachrichten-Agentur: Ökumenische Information” 1995 Nr 52/53 (19. Dezember) pp. 5-11.

²⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 5-6, 10.

³⁰ See the letter addressed by Paul VI to cardinal Johannes Willebrands as his personal legate to the celebrations of the anniversary of the II. Council of Lyons (1274), called in this letter “secundum concilium generale” AAS 66:1974 pp. 620-625.

³¹ *Visite officielle du Patriarche Œcuménique à l’Eglise de Rome...*, “Episkepsis” 1995 no. 520 (31 juillet) p. 15: “...c’est seulement quand le primat de l’ethos kénotique prevaudra d’une

In his address to the Roman curia Bartholomaios I also evoked the same idea in connection with the ancient Church of the Apostles. This Church, he said, knew very well that “through the mystery of *kenosis* of the cross, Christ, our Lord, had submitted the human nature to God His Father, becoming thus ‘the best model for all of us’ ”³²

One must read very attentively such texts, to see the importance of the kenotic ethos in the ecclesiological thinking of the Patriarch. They show the necessity of this ethos for the re-establishment of Christian unity. God in Christ “emptied Himself to assume the condition of a slave” (Ph 2:7). This is an unusual intuition which – as Olivier Clément explains in his recent study *Rome autrement* – evokes God not in a language of perfection and fullness, but preferring the category of emptiness³³ The fullness implies richness, abundance and power. Emptiness and void express the mystery of love. God transcends Himself towards humanity in an inversed movement. He becomes, so to speak, the humble and self-effacing God. This is not God in all His fullness and might who would crush and overwhelm a human being, but God who “emptied Himself” and thus is able to expect our free answer. The work of redemption was carried out by Jesus in humility, weakness, love and dedication. The salvific *kenosis* of Jesus implies a negation of self-centredness and self-interestedness. Christ’s *kenosis* has a permanent significance for the whole Christian existence. *Kenosis* understood as disinterestedness and self-limitation constantly judges our Churches, our ecclesiastical egotisms and our self-centredness.

Metropolitan Stylianos (Harkianakis) of Australia spoke some time ago about an inclination of the Roman Catholic Church to the pride of power (*Hochmut der Macht*) and of the Orthodox Church to the pride of the truth (*Hochmut der Wahrheit*)³⁴ The distinction between these two temptations

manière convaincante dans l’Eglise historique, que non seulement nous rétabliront alors facilement l’unité tant désirée dans la foi, mais que nous nous rendrons dans le même temps dignes d’éprouver ce que la révélation de Dieu a promis à ceux qui aiment le Seigneur, à savoir, «une terre nouvelle et un ciel nouveau»”

³² *Ibid.* p. 10. In the quotation reference is made to PG 94, 1076B. Already in 1990 Metropolitan of Philadelphia, Meliton (Karas), spoke of “a primacy of sacrifice” in relation to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. See Mélon de Philadelphie. *Le service du Trône œcuménique, une primauté de sacrifice*. “Episkepsis” 1990 no. 450 (1 décembre) pp. 10-13.

³³ *Rome autrement* p. 119.

³⁴ Metr. Stylianos (Harkianakis). *Der offizielle Dialog zwischen der römisch-katholischen und der orthodoxen Kirche*. In: *Am Beginn des theologischen Dialogs. Dokumentation des römischen, des Wiener und des Salzburger Ökumenismus. 10 Pro-Oriente-Symposien*,

has been made not without reason. It helps to understand that this dangerous inclination has to be constantly overcome in the Church. If Christ emptied and humbled himself to save human beings, this fact has to determine the kenotic foundations of ecclesiology and the whole style of the life of the Church. The kenotic soteriology opposes to the haughtiness of power and truth – humility of service and common searching for truth. Any kind of domination is alien to the spirit of the Gospel.

The reconciliation of the Churches with one another includes therefore the readiness to correct one's own self-understanding, to give up everything which diminishes the willingness to be reconciled. Christ's *kenosis* is the model, criterion and example of such an attitude. The biblical concept of *kenosis* should have concrete ecclesiological implications.

Kenosis is required on all sides for true unity to come about. Theological dialogue should continue, in order to clarify the issues of primacy, synodality, authority and relations between local Churches. The question of prestige, jurisdiction and authority constantly undermines the communion of the Churches. In the light of the Gospel it is indeed a scandalous question: "A dispute also arose among them, which of them was to be regarded the greatest. And he said to them: 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves [...]. But I am among you as one who serves'" (Lk 22:24-27).

The evil spirit of this early dispute among the disciples of Christ, presented by the Evangelist in the context of the Last Supper, has not disappeared in the Church. The drama of authority continues. Reconciliation and communion will never happen without the evangelical event of return to *kenosis*, to the true conversion of the Churches to each other.

VI. KENOTIC ETHOS AND THE ISSUE OF UNIVERSAL PRIMACY

In his reflection on how to "unblock" ecumenism, to come out of the unending discussions and to accelerate the process of restoring the Christian unity, metropolitan George (Khodr) of Mount-Lebanon has briefly outlined not long ago a kenotic way of dealing with this painful issue. He writes:

There exists a doctrinal hypertrophy to which the West has set out in a solitary or unilateral way. I see no other way to reduce it, than to draw the line between the seven

ecumenical councils and the councils which succeeded them here and there. During the second millennium the Church has not been reunited. Let it be reunited now on the basis of the ancient unique foundation. The unity resides in the encounter and the communion of the Churches among them, and not in the fusion which annihilates a part...³⁵

This issue of ecumenical councils in the life of the Church awaits a thorough examination. The Church does not have all the answers ready-made. She must continuously search for truth, as the primitive Church struggled during the first Jerusalem council (Acts 15) over the burning doctrinal and disciplinary issue of the Mosaic Law. Ecumenism requires new forms of exercising the papal primacy, more credible and more acceptable. Those new forms in which the Petrine ministry can be exercised have the chance to be found only, when the past and current forms are evaluated in a real dialogue as inadequate and in need of a thorough reform. This requires vision, courage and, above all, self-limitation. When the Early Church was able to abandon the requirements of the Mosaic Law in relation to the gentiles, this demanded surely an admirable amount of courage. Trusting in the Holy Spirit, the Apostles ventured that historical decision, in spite of the intense opposition to it.

Our situation today, as regards the primacy, seems to be comparable to the situation in the primitive Church. Will the Roman Catholic Church find enough courage and vision to face a major change? I personally hope that this will be the case, but nobody knows when. Such a decision must demand much care, effort, attention and, let me repeat it, self-determination and self-sacrifice. Such is the cost of Christian unity. This means precisely what biblical language calls *kenosis*, self-limitation and self-renouncement.

Kenosis would mean concretely also the structural reform of the papacy. The lesson of history should not be forgotten. A purely moral reform would not be sufficient to bring about a real change. Since the Middle Ages the situation of the Latin Church cried out for this sort of change. Yet a general wish for reform turned out to be ineffective. Many reform-minded people were not able to change the structures themselves. In a way they were prisoners of the doctrine, of the system and of their own inadequate vision. The moments of good will passed, the historical *kairos* was squandered, the drama of division became even more acute and disastrous.

A really strange legacy of the historical period since 1054 is the fact that the Latin Church has become, as Yves Congar put it, "a Roman patriarchate

³⁵ Metropolitte Georges (Khodr). *Vers Rome ou avec Rome?* "Service Orthodoxe de Presse" 1994 no. 193 (décembre) pp. 30-32, here p. 32.

extended throughout the world (*un patriarcat de Rome étendu dans l'ensemble du monde*)³⁶ Many papal actions and decisions, apparently primordial, belong in fact to the power of the pope as Latin patriarch, and concern only those within his patriarchal jurisdiction. Theoretically speaking, the West could surely have developed more patriarchates. In that case the ecclesiastical picture would be more balanced in relation to the East which has its own patriarchs. I am fully aware of the difficulties of other Christians, when the pope is presented as a supreme head and immediate pastor. The West developed through the centuries according to the logic of ecclesiastical centralism and has remained only one huge Western patriarchate.

It is true that the limitation of the Roman primacy to the West could be a solution acceptable to the Orthodox: the bishop of Rome is *πρῶτος* only of the West, and as its Patriarch he could not exercise any form of his primacy over the rest of the world. As metropolitan Ioannis (Zizioulas) explains, this approach, although consonant with the traditional Byzantine pentarchy, has nevertheless its serious weaknesses. It would lead to a division of the world into two parts (West and East) and two spheres of influence: the Old Rome would exercise primacy over the West (the Catholic, Protestant and Anglican world), the New Rome over the East (the Orthodox world). But the situation of the world today has changed (some parts of the Christian world were unknown at the time of the Byzantine pentarchy). How to justify this twofold division of primacies from theological point of view?

To consider the pope as the patriarch of the West seems until today "a too much neglected reality"³⁷ One could, however, imagine a new structure of the reconciled Church in the form of a concrete collegiality of patriarchates both already existing (Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Moscow, Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia), and those which should still be established, e.g. Canterbury, in Africa, North and Latin America, Australia, Asia or some more. Is this only a utopian vision? It is surely not when one thinks in the light of ecclesiology of the ancient Church.

Metropolitan George Khodr, quoted already above, easily imagines continental patriarchates, such as for example a French or German one. In this

³⁶ Y Congar. *Diversités et communion. Dossier historique et conclusion théologique*. Paris 1982 p. 9.

³⁷ Y Congar. *Le pape, patriarche d'Occident. Approche d'une réalité trop négligée*. In: *Idem. Eglise et papauté*. Paris 1994 pp. 11-30 (reprinted from: "Istina", 28:1983 pp. 374-390). See also A. Garuti. *Il Papa Patriarca d'Occidente? Studio storico dottrinale*. Bologna 1990; F.R. Gahbauer. *Die Pentarchie theorie. Ein Modell der Kirchenleitung von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. Frankfurt 1993.

case local or regional Churches could acknowledge some privileges of the Bishop of Rome.

Personally – he says in an interview – I support the idea that the Bishop of Rome should have more than a primacy of honour. [...]. One could imagine, however, a practical exercise of the ministry of unity coming not from the divine institution, but from the will of the Churches (*sans qu'il soit d'institution divine, mais issu de la volonté des Eglises*). One would need around the pope a kind of permanent synod (which would not be the curia), and from which all the Churches should receive advices. A jurisdictional primate is instead inconceivable from the biblical point of view, because the local bishop himself has, to use the Catholic vocabulary, the fulness of priesthood. With his local Church, he receives the entire Christ (*il reçoit le Christ tout entier*). The bishop is not a simple “sub-prefect” (*pas un simple «sous-préfet»*)³⁸

Metropolitan Ioannis Zizioulas speaks also about the universal primacy as an ecclesiological necessity in the reunited Church. He emphasizes too that this primacy should not be understood as a primacy of jurisdiction, i.e. of direct intervention in internal affairs of a local Church. The primacy is not a prerogative of an individual, but of a local Church. Thus the primacy of the pope is in fact the primacy of his see, namely of the Roman Church³⁹ According to an ecclesiology of communion, every bishop is an integral part of his own local Church, and is not placed above it. That is why the primacy should always be exercised in a synodal way, either on local and regional level or on universal one. The bishop of Rome as *πρῶτος* would exercise his universal primacy not as a primacy of jurisdiction, but in a truly synodal way, cooperating with the existing patriarchates and heads of autonomous Churches. So understood, the universal primacy would be carried out in communion with others, and not directly and in isolation. The bishop of Rome would be the first among all other heads of the Churches, the spokesman of the whole Church when the announced decisions are a result of a consensus.

It would be wrong to think that according to Orthodox theology the universal primacy of the bishop of Rome should be a pure primacy of honour, with no prerogatives attached to it. Both metropolitans, George Khodr and Ioannis Zizioulas belong to those who are ready to assign to the pope more concrete rights and competences than did previous representatives of the so-called eucharistic ecclesiology. One cannot limit papal functions to

³⁸ *Le concept d'infailibilité...* pp. 20-21.

³⁹ Giovanni di Pergamo. *Primato nella chiesa* p. 9: “Il primato non dovrebbe essere la prerogativa di un individuo, ma di una *chiesa locale*. Ciò significa che quando parliamo del primato del papa intendiamo il primato della sede, cioè la chiesa di Roma”

the primacy in love, honour and witness. In the Orthodox Church the patriarchs have the right to convene synods, determine their agenda and preside over them. Thus, according to Zizioulas, similar prerogatives would belong to the Bishop of Rome in the reunited Church⁴⁰ In this sense the ministry of primacy should be understood not only as a mere “pastoral service”, but also as authority able to contribute effectively to the unity of the Church.

It seems today to be a common conviction among Orthodox theologians that primacy is not a juridical reality, but rather a moral or pastoral *authority*. They are simply more sceptical about the importance of juridical or teaching structures within the Church. Even the synod or council is not understood as “power” in the juridical sense of the word, but rather as “witness” to the identity in faith. Clément points to the fact that during the first millennium the East recognized the Petrine charisma and a real primacy of Rome, and not only a simple primacy of honour. The popes used to send their letter (τόμος) to the ecumenical councils (it was read with respect, but freely discussed), to receive appeals from the East (as determined already by the synod of Sardica, 343). So in the reunited Church the pope would convoke ecumenical councils, preside over them and ratify their decisions⁴¹

VII. REFORMS NEED A SENSE OF URGENCY

Reformulation of the doctrine and change of structures can be retarded or thwarted indefinitely. A realistic hope for unity evokes a sense of urgency and responsibility. The former archbishop of San Francisco, John R. Quinn, wrote not long ago the following words which portray a sincere passion for truth, honesty and concern for Christian unity:

We cannot hold unity hostage until there is a perfect pope in a perfect Church. Christian unity will require sacrifice. But it cannot mean that all the sacrifices must be made by those who want full communion with the Catholic Church while the Catholic Church herself makes no significant sacrifices. Of the individual Christian the Scripture says, “You have been bought at a price” (1 Co 6:20). Similarly, we all have to face the fact that unity among Christians will be bought at a price. All will have to sacrifice. If we are serious about the goal of unity, we must be serious about the cost of unity⁴²

⁴⁰ J. Zizioulas. *The Institution of Episcopal Conferences: An Orthodox Reflection*. “The Jurist” 48:1988 pp. 376-383, esp. pp. 380-381.

⁴¹ Clément. *Rome autrement* pp. 60-61, 107.

⁴² J.R. Quinn. *The Exercise of the Primacy: Facing the Cost of Christian Unity*. “Commonweal” 123:1996 no. 13 pp. 11-20, here p. 19.

In these words the kenotic attitude or kenotic ethos of thinking has found a clear expression. Readiness for self-limitation and courage have to go together. *Kenosis* requires *παρρησία*. Without courageous vision, a kenotic ecclesiology will remain a purely declarative phraseology. Christ's *kenosis* becomes at present perhaps the greatest challenge to all of us. Metropolitan George (Khodr) says openly: "The Churches hold fast to their structures and remain prisoners of their confessionalism"⁴³

Perhaps in the future the Roman Catholic Church will find enough courage to begin a structural reform which requires a new logic of thinking. This logic demands respect for the autonomy of local and regional Churches. It urges to give up the claim for the immediate jurisdiction over those Churches and understand the primacy as a real *διακωνία* for the unity of the Sister Churches. For the time being it rather seems to be only a dream or a song of the future... Nothing indicates that it could be realized before long.

Such reflections are nevertheless justifiable. A kenotic type of ecclesiology requires courage and theological imagination. Have we enough of both of them? Be that as it may, we have already now the possibility to restore patiently theological balance to ecclesiology, through dialogue and sincere desire to learn from and with each other in the atmosphere of mutual respect and confidence. There must exist something like a principle of ecumenical subsidiarity (this word derives from the Latin *subsidium* which means support or help). A common exploration of the way in which the ancient Church managed to maintain her unity can bring some encouraging insights and new impulses.

On the other hand, however, this should not be considered as panacea able to solve all our problems. One has to be realistic. We live today in different circumstances. Ancient structures cannot simply and automatically be re-created as such. Faithfulness to the past must take into account the present situation. One can only hope that growing patiently in ecumenical *κοινωνία* the Churches will be able to discover the appropriate new structures of primacy, synodality and collegiality. As metropolitan Ioannis Zizioulas puts it: "The synodal system is a *conditio sine qua non* of the catholicity of the Church. [...]. Also the primacy is a *conditio sine qua non* of the catholicity of the Church"⁴⁴

⁴³ *Le concept d'infailibilité* p. 20: "Les Eglises se cramponnent à leurs structures et restent prisonnières de leur confessionalisme"

⁴⁴ *Il primato nella chiesa* p. 7

Orthodoxy is known for its system of “autocephaly” which in turn results from the Eastern tradition of conciliarity. It is intended to give to any culture a possibility to express the faith of the Church according to its own particularity. The autocephalous Churches have a national culture as one of their essential components. However, this fact exposes them to a certain risk of “localization”, inherent in the system of autocephalism. Metropolitan Zizioulas emphasizes that this system should be permanently protected against possible risks threatening the unity of the Church. A real danger arises when a local culture tends to impose its particular identity on the faith itself. This way autocephaly, when concentrated too much on preserving or propagating of its own national culture, may have negative influence on the relationship to other autocephalous Churches. It may become then an independent cultural entity which refuses to open itself to the problems of the other Churches or to those of the world at large⁴⁵

That is why today some Orthodox theologians point to the necessity of primacy and reform in the Orthodox Church as well. They seriously take into account the present tensions and conflicts between the Orthodox Churches, although they are theologically united in the same faith. A Greek theologian A. Kireopoulos looks critically at this ecclesiological reality which he calls “autocephalies in competition” The risks inherent in the autocephalous structure of Orthodoxy may be avoided, according to him, by the revaluation of the ministry of primacy, too much neglected in the past⁴⁶

So the sense of urgency of ecclesiastical reforms can be observed not only within the Roman Catholic Church but also in the Orthodox world. We have to look for a new ecclesiological synthesis in which two traditions would be able to overcome their one-sided historical development and to come out of the limits imposed by this development.

VIII. A WORD ABOUT “INFALLIBILITY”

Orthodox Christians do not see communion with the bishop of Rome as constitutive of the full ecclesial reality of a local Church and as an essential condition for the communion of local Churches with each other. An addi-

⁴⁵ J.D. Zizioulas. *La conciliarité et le chemin qui mène à l'unité. Un point de vue orthodoxe*. In: *Conférence des Églises européennes* (Cahier N. 10, *Vers une communauté conciliaire des Églises?*). Genève 1978 p. 29.

⁴⁶ A. Kireopoulos. *Papal Authority and the Ministry of Primacy*. “The Greek Orthodox Theological Review” 42:1997 no. 1-2 p. 62.

tional difficulty lies in the issue of infallibility of papal definitions. Roman Catholics consider the primatial role of the Bishop of Rome as essentially doctrinal, and not as a human administrative arrangement. They believe that he may, in certain limited circumstances and in communion with other bishops, enunciate authoritatively the infallible faith of the Church without subsequent ratification.

In Orthodox view the “infallibility” or rather “indefectibility” as a gift of the Holy Spirit concerns the whole Church, and above all its conciliar proclamations. The truth of papal or patriarchal statements depends on their subsequent reception by the Churches. In the continuing life of the Church it becomes evident whether or not a particular papal or episcopal statement conveys the truth, whether or not the Spirit of God has spoken through a particular conciliar gathering. That is why Orthodox theologians would rather speak of the “invincibility of the truth” within the whole Church which cannot entirely defect from the Gospel (hence its indefectibility) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit⁴⁷ One has to admit a certain “**logic of tensions** without juridically predetermined solutions”⁴⁸ Sometimes this logic could even lead to clash of opinions as it was the case in Antioch between Peter and Paul (cf. Ga 2:11-14). The last word would nevertheless belong to the Holy Spirit urging those responsible to reach an agreement. This is in fact one of Christ’s promises.

The main difficulty for Orthodox theology in the doctrine of papal infallibility lies in the notion that the promise of truth is connected to the teaching of the pope in virtue of his office. The Orthodox emphasize that his role within the universal Church must be seen in a much more limited way, and subjected to greater accountability to all other bishops, than has been taught in Catholic ecclesiology for the past centuries. The fundamental point is to know whether the Bishop of Rome, installed on the apostolic see of Peter, has his authority by divine right, *de iure divino*, or this derives simply from a universal consensus of the Churches.

Metropolitan George of Mount-Lebanon has expressed his readiness to go far enough in recognizing a specific role of the pope. He sees, however, a clear lack of coherence between the insistence of the Vatican II on the local Church led by the bishop (manifestation of the fullness of the Church of

⁴⁷ See Bp Kallistos (Ware). *Response to the Presentation by His Grace, Bishop Basil (Losten): “The Roman Primacy and the Church of Kiev”* “Logos” 34:1993 No. 1-2 pp. 107-116, esp. p. 110.

⁴⁸ C l é m e n t. *Rome autrement* p. 107.

Christ) and the claim of the pope for the direct and universal jurisdiction over all the bishops of the whole Church. "One can canonically extend the authority of the pope – says the metropolitan – without involving in it the papal infallibility. The very concept of papal infallibility is unthinkable, it has no sense"⁴⁹

So, for the time being, in spite of many theological studies, this problem does not seem to be easily solved in the Catholic/Orthodox dialogue.

IX. WE ALL BELONG TO CHRIST

O. Clément rightly points out that the foundation of every primacy in the Church is Christ Himself, and only He, crucified and risen Lord, conqueror of death by His own death. Very early, in the community of Corinth, there appeared the first divisions: "I am for Paul", "I am for Apollos", "I am for Cephas", "I am for Christ" (1 Co 1:12). The apostle Paul categorically refuses any human reference. He proclaims that the only foundation in the Church is Christ himself: "Has Christ been parcelled out? Was it Paul that was crucified for you?" (v. 13). And later he explains his reaction: "There is nothing to boast about in anything human: Paul, Apollos, Cephas [...] are all your servants; but you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God" (1 Co 3:21-23)⁵⁰ What does this centrality of Christ mean for us today?

Every primacy within the redeemed humanity – fundamentally of the bishop in the local Church, but also of the metropolitan among his bishops, of the patriarch among his metropolitans, finally of the first bishop, the one of Rome, in the Pentarchy of the time of the individed Church – is only a precarious image, always to be purified, of the primacy of the One whom Fr. Lev Gillet, "a monk of the Eastern Church", used to call the "Lord-Love" (*le "Seigneur-Amour"*). Primacy of service, till witness, if need be, of blood and death⁵¹

In the eyes of many Orthodox (and not only), the proud St. Peter's basilica in Rome stands in sharp contrast to the humble crypt of the Apostle. The Christians of the first centuries venerated the Church of Rome as the Church

⁴⁹ *Le concept d'infailibilité papale* p. 21: "On peut étendre canoniquement l'autorité du pape sans qu'elle comporte l'infailibilité papale. Le concept lui-même d'infailibilité papale n'est pas pensable, il n'a pas de sens" According to Bartholomaios I. (*La ridice dello scisma...* see above note 3) "gli ortodossi diffidano giustamente anche di tutte le altre pretese papali, come l'infailibilità e i nuovi dogmi papali, perché, in queste pretese, vedono una deviazione dalla fede primitiva, dall' ecclesiologia della Chiesa primitiva"

⁵⁰ *Rome autrement* p. 22.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 103.

of the apostles and martyrs Peter and Paul together, later also as the Church of the martyrs. Its true role consists in a *μαρτυρία* understood in the double and, at the same time, unique sense of this word, as witness and martyrdom. Looking into the future Clément writes:

In this way one can imagine a reorganized Church composed of vigorous eucharistic communities, each one of them around its bishop, regrouping themselves according to a whole ensemble of the centres of agreement, the centres of communion: metropolies, patriarchates (through national unities in many places, but more and more through unities of culture and destiny), finally universal primacy which belongs to the bishop of Rome as “vicarial” presence of Peter, but also as charismatic inspiration of Paul (*comme présence «vicariale» de Pierre mais aussi inspiration charismatique de Paul*)⁵²

In this perspective, a primatial authority of the bishop of Rome should respect full internal liberty of the Eastern Churches, as it existed during the first millennium. French theologian recalls that pope John Paul II said once himself: “What I wish with the Orthodox is communion, and not jurisdiction”⁵³ Clément has expressed his hope for the future in following words:

Rome, through its own process of grace, when God wants it, will come back to the authentic conception of the primacy as service of communion, in a real interdependence of its bishop with all the others, in a real dialogue also with the whole People of God. This will require the integration of her own Reformation which reminds her that she should be the Church of Peter *and of Paul*, and the reconciliation, from Sister Church to Sister Church, without jurisdictional pretention, with the Orthodox Church⁵⁴

In fact, the practice of papal primacy in the first millennium was different from the relationship that developed later between Pope and bishops in the Western Church. When the full communion in the faith is once restored, the Pope’s relationship to Orthodox Christians must certainly change. The Churches of the East are not subjects but “Sister Churches” This term, so often used in the *Tomos agapis*⁵⁵ and in the official dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches⁵⁶, has now fallen into disgrace. On the Catholic side it is due mostly to the *Note* issued on the use of this expression by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (June 30, 2000). The

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 106.

⁵³ *Ibid.*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 85-86.

⁵⁵ *Tomos agapis. Vatican-Phanar (1958-1970). Rome-Istanbul 1971; Tomos agapis. Dokumentation zum Dialog der Liebe zwischen dem Hl. Stuhl und dem Ökumenischen Patriarchat 1958-1976.* Hg. Pro Oriente. Innsbruck–Wien–München 1978.

⁵⁶ See the *Document of Balamand* (1993) on “uniatism“, esp. nos. 12 and 14.

difficulties concerning its use are also present on the Orthodox side⁵⁷ The term continues, however, to be further used in some official documents by both sides. It appears in the common statement issued at the end of the visit of the Rumanian Patriarch Teoctist to the Vatican (October 7-14, 2002)⁵⁸ Sooner or later we will come back to this concept and treat it with more confidence.

According to Clément, the Orthodox Church, preserving the teaching of the Fathers on the freedom of Sister Churches within the universal Church will have to overcome the temptation of autocephalism and religious nationalism, and in this way to rediscover the proper relationship between synodality and primacy. One should not forget what the East fully recognized during the first millennium: primacy in the reconciled Church will be inseparably based on Peter's person and faith, on Petrine ministry balanced by the ministry of Paul, the charismatic, and by that of John, the visionary⁵⁹

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In the dialogue on the issue of the primacy, the Orthodox should overcome fear, mistrust and isolation. I realize that the representatives of the Patriarchate of Constantinople may significantly differ in their response to the question of universal primacy from the theologians of other Orthodox Churches⁶⁰ They certainly are not unanimous. The question is not yet solved and needs further clarifications on Orthodox side itself. When the appropriate time of the dialogue comes in the future, they will have to develop more in detail their interpretation of the primacy in the universal Church. The work done by theologians of previous generations should then be taken also into account⁶¹

A serious difficulty lies in the fact that we cannot disregard our long separate history. It still lives in us and we live with it. How to find ways not to be bound by these separate historical developments? Looking at the divine

⁵⁷ See W Hryniewicz. *Vertrauen oder Mißtrauen? Die Krise des Begriffs Schwesterkirchen*. "Ostkirchliche Studien" 52:2003 H. 1 pp. 21-36.

⁵⁸ *Begegnung der Schwesterkirchen. Besuch des rumänischen Patriarchen Teoctist im Vatican*. "Katholische Nachrichten-Agentur. Ökumenische Information" 2002 Nr. 43 (22. Oktober) pp. 12-13.

⁵⁹ *Rome autrement* p. 86.

⁶⁰ See *ibid.* pp. 93-101.

⁶¹ Cf. J. Meyendorff, A. Schmemmann, N. Afanassieff, N. Koulomzine. *The Primacy of Peter*. London 1963, 1973²

economy of salvation we believe that once God has entered into history of humanity with the purpose to heal it. Human history has become His own history. That is why we can dare to hope that His presence and His action will transform slowly, from within, also the history of our divisions. For this, however, God needs our willingness to cooperate with Him. Shall we find enough imagination, courage and wisdom to move beyond our traditional positions? Everyone has to answer this question on his or her own account.

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PRYMAT PAPIESKI W OCENIE WSPÓŁCZESNYCH TEOLOGÓW PRAWOSŁAWNYCH

Streszczenie

W encyklice *Ut unum sint* (nr 95-96) Jan Paweł II zwrócił się z apelem do kościelnych zwierzchników i ich teologów, aby nawiązali z nim „braterski i cierpliwy dialog” w poszukiwaniu takiej formy sprawowania prymatu, która byłaby otwarta na nową sytuację chrześcijaństwa w świecie. Zaproszenie to podjął niezwłocznie Ekumeniczny Patriarcha Konstantynopola, Bartłomiej I. Jego refleksje krytyczne miały przede wszystkim charakter hermeneutyczny. Interpretując słowa Jezusa, wykazywał bezpodstawność poglądu, że wybierając dwunastu apostołów powierzył On jednemu z nich, czyli Piotrowi, zadanie rządzenia nimi. Inni hierarchowie i teologowie prawosławni (zwłaszcza O. Clément) podjęli bardziej gruntowną analizę tekstów biblijnych odnoszących się do kwestii prymatu. Ich opinie w sprawach zasadniczych są w dużej mierze zgodne z krytycznym stanowiskiem Patriarchy.

Autor podkreśla, że ekumenizm wymaga krytycznej postawy wobec historycznych i obecnych form sprawowania prymatu papieskiego. Jedność chrześcijan jest niemożliwa do urzeczywistnienia bez postawy samoograniczenia oraz umiejętności rezygnacji z tego, co stoi na przeszkodzie dziełu pojednania. Do realizacji tego trudnego zadania potrzeba decentralizacji władzy w Kościele, autentycznej synodalności, zmiany struktur i braterstwa we wzajemnych relacjach Kościołów, a nade wszystko „etosu kenotycznego” w duchu nauki apostoła Pawła (por. Flp 2, 7). Ważnym zadaniem jest odgraniczenie normatywnej wartości siedmiu soborów powszechnych od innych soborów drugiego tysiąclecia, które na takie miano nie zasługują. Pierwszy krok w tym kierunku uczynił już papież Paweł VI, nazywając Sobór Lionski (1274) „drugim soborem generalnym (*secundum concilium generale*)” Kościoła zachodniego.

Teologowie prawosławni nie odrzucają idei prymatu jako takiej, lecz prymat powszechnej jurysdykcji. Prymat powinien być rozumiany w świetle synodalności Kościoła jako służba na rzecz jedności, jako autorytet moralno-duszpasterski, wyposażony w pewne rzeczywiste prerogatywy, takie jak np. zwoływanie soborów powszechnych i przewodniczenie ich obradom. Dzięki podobnym prerogatywom papież w zjednoczonym Kościele mógłby skutecznie troszczyć się o jego jedność. Do tego jednak potrzebne są nowe struktury kościelne, choćby w for-

mie nowych patriarchatów. Nie chodzi zatem jedynie o sam prymat czci, miłości i świadectwa, pozbawiony rzeczywistych uprawnień.

Pojęcie nieomyślności papieskiej nastrocza prawosławnym szczególnych trudności. Wolą oni mówić raczej o „niezwyciężalności prawdy” w całym Kościele, który nie może całkowicie odpaść od Ewangelii. Fundamentem prymatu w Kościele jest sam Chrystus. Wszelki prymat ludzki jest zaledwie słabym odzwierciedleniem prymatu Tego, który jest „Panem-Miłością” (*le Seigneur-Amour* – wedle określenia Lva Gillet).

W przekonaniu teologów prawosławnych prymat papieża jest przede wszystkim prymatem jego rzymskiej stolicy – prymatem lokalnego Kościoła rzymskiego, uznawanym w ciągu pierwszego tysiąclecia. Wizja Kościoła pojednanego wymaga innej relacji papieża do Kościołów wschodnich. Prymat biskupa Rzymu powinien respektować ich pełną wewnętrzną wolność, gdyż nie są one wspólnotami poddanych, lecz Kościołami siostrzanymi. Tak pojęty prymat opierać się będzie na osobie i wierze Piotra, na jego posługiwaniu, równoważonym przez charyzmatyczne posługiwanie apostoła Pawła oraz Jana, wizjonera i mistyka.

Streścił Waław Hryniewicz

Słowa kluczowe: prymat, nieomyślność, dialog, prawosławie, eklezjologia, biskup Rzymu, synodalność, jedność, ekumenizm.

Key words: primacy, infallibility, orthodoxy, dialogue, ecclesiology, bishop of Rome, synodality, unity, ecumenism.