

The Cardinal, in summary

translating, abbreviating and writing-up by

Elsa Iglich

Fergus Kerr OP

John Orme Mills OP

Robert Ombres OP

As we have already explained, what is printed here is based substantially on the German abridged version of Vittorio Massori's interview. This first appeared in the Catholic newspaper *Deutsche Tagespost* on 7/8 and 14/15 December 1984.

At the beginning of June appeared the long-awaited book (in Italian): *Rapporto sulla fede*, published by Edizioni Paoline, Turin (pp. 216, 14,000 lire). A German edition is appearing, and a French edition has already appeared (*Entretien sur la foi*, published by Fayard).

Below, the headings of subdivisions and paragraphs, and all editorial content, are our own. We have numbered paragraphs to simplify citing in the contributions that follow.

Backwards or stationary?

1. Twenty years ago Joseph Ratzinger was reputed to be one of the most prominent of the younger, forward-looking theologians at the Council. He was a *peritus* for the German bishops. Has he moved backwards? After all, in 1964 he was one of the founders of the international journal *Concilium*, along with theologians like Rahner, Congar, Schillebeeckx and Küng. In fact, he says he does not feel embarrassed today about his early association with *Concilium*. "I have not changed; it is the others who have", he says. "Right from our first meetings in 1964, I made two points to my colleagues. First, that our group should never fall into any sectarianism and arrogance, as if we alone were doing the correct theology and could, as a kind of progressive magisterium, decide what in time to come progressive theology was to teach. Secondly, that we had to confront ourselves with the letter and the spirit of Vatican II—then still in progress—without any idiosyncratic flights ahead".

2. Asked for his comments on a statement made in *Concilium* on its twentieth anniversary, to the effect that the documents of Vatican II belong to an ecclesiastical clerical phase and so have been overtaken, he says: "Such statements are important, in so far as they show that in fact the documents of Vatican II stand entirely in the living tradition of the Church, without any break—as is always being asserted, either in order to attack the Council or (by appealing to it) in order to create a different church. Both the 'right' and the 'left', at least in their extreme wings, thus stand in contradiction to Vatican II. Whether it's those who are nostalgic for Trent and Vatican I, or those who want to treat the principles of them both as outmoded, they forget that all these councils have the same authority—the authority of the episcopal college in unity with the Pope. One can't simply pick out of the traditions of the Church what best suits one!"

3. This brings us to Ratzinger's overall assessment of what has been happening since Vatican II. "Certainly the development since the Council seems to be cruelly in contradiction with the expectations, beginning with those of John XXIII and then of Paul VI and the majority of the Council Fathers," he says. "A new Catholic unity had been hoped for. Instead a dissent has divided us which, in the words of Pope Montini, has gone from self-criticism to self-destruction. A new enthusiasm had been expected. For all that, discouragement and vexation has overcome many people. A leap forward had been expected. Instead we are confronted with a process of manifold collapse, which has developed to a great extent under the aegis of appealing to the Council, and thus has discredited it in many people's eyes. So the balance seems negative, and I repeat here what I said ten years after the end of the Council: it is impossible to contest that this period, in large parts of the world, has been remarkably unfavourable for the Catholic Church. Any other claim would be self-deception. But is this bitter assessment to be attributed, at least partly, to Vatican II?"

4. "To my mind", he continues, "the Council cannot really be made responsible for developments which stand in opposition both to the spirit and the letter of its documents. What is true is that, during the Council and in contradiction to its intentions, the so-called 'Spirit of the Council' was born, which was and is really an anti-spirit, an incubus. For this 'spirit' only the 'novel' (behind which often hid fairly ancient heresies) counted as the better and good. Also to be counted among the inventions of this 'spirit' is that the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council is now placed as a radical caesura in the history of the Church, so that now 'pre-conciliar' and 'post-conciliar' seems a marked division in the history of salvation. If the word 'pre-conciliar' becomes a verdict against which there is no appeal, then the bridges to the Church of all ages are broken. Any schematization needs to be opposed. Talk of the 'pre-conciliar' and the 'post-conciliar' Church is to be avoided: there is only one Church, which is always on the way to the Lord who comes. It is on the way when it is ever deeply penetrating and comprehending the deposit of faith which He has bestowed on it. In all its ups and downs this history is nevertheless only one single and indivisible history. Like any authentic council, Vatican II rests on Scripture, but it reads it in and with the tradition. Thus Trent, Vatican I, papal teachings, particularly of recent times, particularly of Pius XII, belong to the sources cited again and again by Vatican II. In all its declarations it is characterised by the will to continuity. I have the impression that the misfortunes that the Church has encountered in the last twenty years are to be ascribed less to the 'true' Council than (internally) to the fact that latently present polemical and centrifugal forces have thrust to the forefront, and (externally) to confrontation with a cultural crisis in the West, where the affluent middle class, the new tertiary-educated bourgeoisie (*die obere Mittelschicht, das neue Tertiärbürgertum*), with its liberal-radical ideology of individualistic rationalistic hedonistic character, is placing Christian values fundamentally in question".

Christianity and non-Christian religions

5. This leads to a consideration of the Church's role in the wider world. Says the Cardinal: "It is a traditional doctrine of long standing that every man is called to salvation and (if honestly following the commandments dictated by his own conscience) can really obtain salvation, even if he is not a member of the visible Church. This doctrine—which, as I say, was taken for granted without any fuss, and was deepened by the Council—has been one-sidedly and improperly radicalized, helped by catchphrases such as 'anonymous Christianity'. It has been said that Christianity is just self-acceptance—that the only thing that is additional in Christianity is that what is present and is lived in any human life becomes explicit. Parallel with this, religions are said to be

equal. In a transformation of perspectives, they to some extent have come to be seen no longer as 'extraordinary' ways to salvation but the 'ordinary' way. These theories have, of course, brought a decline in missionary impetus: 'Why disturb non-Christians and spur them on to baptism and faith in Christ'—some now ask—"if in their culture, in their part of the world, their own religion offers them the ordinary way of salvation already?" In Ratzinger's opinion, people are overlooking the connection that the New Testament makes between salvation and truth (cf. Jn. 8:32; 1 Tim. 2:4—7).

6. The missionaries admittedly preached a "Western" Christianity (surely inevitably, at least initially?), but the links between the missions and colonialism have often been judged unjustly, he thinks. "The missionaries modified the abuses of colonialism; many missionaries, with their helpers, have, through their work in regions characterised by poverty and oppression, created oases of humanity".

7. "In any case", he goes on, "one should refrain from romanticising the animistic religions, which of course contain 'seeds of truth' but nevertheless created a world of fear for which God was remote and the earth delivered to unruly spirits. As happened in the time of the Apostles in the Mediterranean, the preaching of Christ, who has conquered the 'spiritual powers' (Eph. 6:12), is being experienced in Africa also as liberation from fear. The peace and innocence of paganism are one of the many myths of our day".

8. Ratzinger has quite a lot to say about the reality of evil: "Whatever some less perspicacious theologians may say, the Devil is, for Christian faith, a puzzling but real presence, actual and not symbolic. He is a powerful reality ('the prince of this world', as the New Testament calls him wherever his existence is mentioned), a force for damnation, superhuman and in opposition to God, as a realistic view of history shows, with its abyss of ever-fresh atrocities that are not explicable just in terms of mankind. On his own, man cannot be freed from these dominating powers. But the Devil is not some kind of counter-god. Before God he is powerless. Thus communion with Jesus the Son means overcoming fear, it means human liberation. Christ is the 'close-by God' ('*nahe Gott*'), who is powerful and wanting to save us. And thus the gospel is really 'good news'. So we have to proclaim it in those regions of fear and bondage such as the non-Christian religions often represent. I would go further. The atheistic culture of the modern Western world survives at all thanks to the freedom from fear of the demons that Christianity effected. Were this redeeming light of Christianity to go out, then the world, with all its knowledge and its technology, would fall back again into hopeless fear of the alienness and impenetrability of Being. There are already signs of the return of such dark forces, and in the secularised world occult practices, even Satanism, are spreading".

How much openness?

9. The next area to be considered by the Cardinal is church-world relations. Speaking particularly of the late sixties (the period of what his interviewer calls "the bourgeois revolution of 1968"), he says: "Certainly in those years many Catholics moved from a narrow inward-fixed Christianity to an uncritical openness to the world. Vatican II had rightly inaugurated a revision of church-world relations. But you know neither church nor world if you think that they could meet without conflict or that they could even coincide. On the contrary: the Christian today more than ever has to be clear that he belongs to a minority and that he is in opposition to what appears good, obvious and logical to the 'spirit of the world', as the New Testament calls it. One of the most urgent tasks of the Christian is to recover the capacity for non-conformism; that is, the capacity to oppose so many cultural developments of the world we are in. In other words, we have to rethink that euphoric vision of the early post-conciliar period".

10. While in *The Imitation of Christ* there is a one-sided emphasis on a Christian's relation with God, "all too much of the theological output today reveals, on the

contrary, an inadequate understanding of the interior life," states Ratzinger. "The *fuga saeculi*, which has a central place in classical spirituality, has been condemned globally and irrevocably, but people do not realise that this *fuga* also has a social dimension. People did not flee the world to leave it to itself, but rather to find new possibilities of Christian life, and thus of human life, in places of recollection."

11. He is asked whether this means that those who state that a kind of "restoration" is taking place in the Church are maybe right. He replies: "If by 'restoration' you mean going back, then it is impossible: the Church moves forward to the fulfilment of history; it looks ahead, to meet the Lord. If, on the other hand, by 'restoration' we mean seeking a new balance, after all the exaggerations of an indiscriminate turning to the 'world' in which the deep inner crisis of the modern world was ignored, then such a restoration—in other words, new balance of orientations and values—is worth striving for, and, in any case, is already happening".

12. Being asked whether, then, the Church could declare the post-Vatican II stage closed, he says: "It is not the custom of the Church to declare such an epoch in its historical development 'over'. At most it takes note, if a changed situation becomes evident, and acts accordingly".

13. This answer prompts a further question: has the situation really changed? "Yes", Ratzinger answers. "The problem in the sixties was to take on the best values that two hundred years of 'liberal' culture had produced. For there are values that, though they appeared outside the Church, yet, suitably purified and corrected, have their place in its world-view. And that has taken place. But now the climate has changed—it is essentially more tense, in comparison with that time, when a certain possibly scandalous optimism was justified. Thus the pressure now is all for a new order".

Losing belief in God

14. Not only what is said in this interview but statements made elsewhere too suggest that Cardinal Ratzinger perceives crises of belief in four fundamental areas. Underlying all is decline in belief in God as Creator. He says; "In the theological movement of our century there was at first a tendency towards radical christocentrism, to counteract the danger of a lapse into purely natural or philosophical theology. But at once something of the metaphysical depth and breadth of the concept of God began to be lost. Then the 'death of God' was proclaimed, and Jesus explained as God's 'representative', who now takes God's place. Only, this 'representative' was no God, but just 'representative'. The tendency to dilute the divinity of Jesus corresponds to the whole line of today's thinking. To that extent renewed 'Arianism' in various forms has become the temptation of Christians. In a society which, since Freud, views the father and paternity with suspicion, and wants, in radical forms of feminism, to feminize God—in such a society that crisis regarding the Father as the first person of the Trinity has a deep psychological foundation. Furthermore, the father is rejected because the thought of a God to whom it is appropriate to look up has become difficult. In a way of thinking generally directed towards equality people prefer to speak of partnership, friendship and brotherhood as among one's own kind; of relating as man to man—with the man Jesus".

15. He continues: "The tendency to bypass the question of the creator God points in the same direction. One would, understandably, like to get round the problems arising from the relation between creation, faith and the natural sciences—from the questions opened up by classical physics right through to the latest perspectives of evolution theory. The widespread tendency to begin school bibles and catechism not with the Creation but with saving history (Abraham, Moses) thus becomes intelligible. The emphasis is all on history. One preserves oneself from a confrontation with Being. Reduced to such an isolated christology—perhaps even to the man Jesus—God is no

longer God, and the God of the Bible and Creed is no longer visible. Many theologians seem no longer to believe in a God who has the power to penetrate right into matter, one who can 'rule' the world. Hence the doubts about the 'material' aspects of revelation, such as Mary's virginity, Jesus's real and concrete resurrection, and the resurrection of the body promised for all at the last day of history. It is certainly no accident that the creed begins with the declaration 'I believe in God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen'. This basic faith in the creator God is like a nail on which all the other truths of revelation hang. If this nail loosens, everything falls''.

Losing belief in the Church as mystery.

16. Speaking of the Church itself, Ratzinger says: "In the Catholic consciousness to a greater or less degree a certain concept has widely spread—one resembling the model of certain North American sects and 'free churches' rather than the classical protestant model. It is the concept of the Church as a merely human organisation, whom its members are free to restructure according to the needs of the moment. For many, faith in the divine establishment of the Church has been lost—faith in a Church which, though entrusted to man, is willed by God in its fundamentals and which one cannot constantly reshape according to the pull of any currents of thought or apparent needs of a particular moment. From a Catholic point of view the mystery of a superhuman reality is hidden in the human form of the Church. As far as this core is concerned, we are not free to adulterate it in accordance with sociological or other arguments. If one is blind to this mysterious sacramental vision of the Church one will find the arbitrariness of its essentially hierarchical order incomprehensible. Then, in fact, the necessity of obedience is no longer seen as a virtue; then one can only justify commitment on functional grounds and must, for reasons of expedience, use the practical vehicle of majority decision. Without this vision of the Church, one not merely sociological but also supernatural, christology will be directly undermined. If the Church is a human structure, then there is no binding expression of the Gospel, but in its place we have something like a Jesus-project.

17. "Such an ecclesiology, flattened out horizontally, tends also to lead to a distorting of ecumenical problems", states the Cardinal. "Many Catholics feel that the Catholic Church's refusal of intercommunion (in other words, of the possibility of reciprocal admission to the Eucharist by the divided churches and communities) before the unification in its essentials of the divided confessions is simply an expression of intolerance and immobility. Consideration is not given to the fact that, for the Catholic, the Church—not on the ground of self-conceived expediencies but because of the will of the Lord Himself—bases itself on apostolic succession. So there can be no common eucharist—which requires hierarchical priesthood—if this succession is broken".

Losing belief in doctrine as a given

18. Ratzinger now speaks of theology itself. "Some theologians", he says, "seem to forget in their work that the *subject* doing theology is, in the last resort, not the individual academic but the whole Catholic believing community—the Church. He does not think up something personal, but his thinking is a 'thinking with', about the whole and with the whole, although obviously responsibility for intellectual honesty is his own. He does not invent the content of theology, but must understand it anew and defend it. Where this is overlooked the result is an arbitrariness of speculation, which basically is subjectivity and individualism, the ground of which is weak. In this way the Faith splinters into a range of schools and tendencies. Dogma then no longer appears as the content of that thought and as a challenge to it—guaranteed by the authority of the whole—but as an unbearable cage and as an attack on freedom. For the theologian who

believes in the centuries-old *faith* and seeks *understanding*, dogma is something already given to his thinking, through the authority of the Church. Thinking declines into 'empty gravity' (to quote Jaspers) when it tries to speak of ultimate realities without this 'given'".

19. He continues: "As, so it seems, theology is no longer succeeding in mediating an acceptable model of the received faith, catechesis also is exposed to the danger of fragmentation, in accordance with changing experiments. Thus we cannot blame the catechists if they no longer visualise the Catholic faith as a living whole where everything belongs together and one truth depends on and explains another, but instead (and here perhaps I exaggerate a little) try to make some elements of the Christian ethos humanly 'interesting' according to cultural tendencies of the moment. The goal and internal reference point is not, then, an all-embracing education in the faith, but the end and goal becomes an anthropological experience of greater or lesser depth". Current Catholic catechesis has—in the Cardinal's opinion—not given enough thought to what has been the simple basis of catechesis from the very beginning of Christianity: "what the Christian believes (the *Credo*), what he hopes (the *Our Father*), what he must do (the Decalogue) and the space in which all this takes place (the sacraments)".

20. Contemporary theology concentrates on the problem of *liberation*, Ratzinger considers. He says: "Liberation is sought in South America, understood mainly in socio-economic terms, with the risk of sliding into an exclusively political interpretation of the faith. But there is also a search for liberation in the rich world, in Europe and North America. Here it is understood as liberation from Christian ethics, especially from the traditional vision of sexuality, with the often aberrant results of a moral permissiveness that is only an aspect of the 'liberalism' prevalent in those areas of the world. Then liberation is sought in Africa and Asia as well, where it is understood predominantly as liberation from the legacy of European colonialism. But frequently it is not easy to establish what is truly 'indigenous', given the complex character of those cultures; nor is it clear what, in the Christianity that we know, is imported from Western culture and what is always a valid element, whatever the latitude. Let us not forget that we have all, in Europe too, received the Gospel from 'outside'.

21. "If you want to list the dangers, then this is what you should say: in Latin America the deeply biblical notion of liberation is open to the danger of Marxist influence; in the First World, it is in danger of being misused and absorbed by the liberal-radical libertarian culture; in Africa and Asia there is the problem of distinguishing between the original indigenous culture and what actually presents itself as such but is in fact a disguised European import".

Losing belief in the bond between Bible and Church

22. Turning to the fourth area of crisis of belief, the Cardinal says: "The bond which ties together Bible and Church has been visibly broken since the Enlightenment. The historic-critical interpretation of Scripture (useful in itself) was then raised to ultimate authority and has allowed the Bible to become something distinct from the Church—a totally artificial view, in reality. According to it, only that can lay claim to validity which appears, in each case and according to changing modes and methods, to be 'scientifically proven'. This separation of the Bible from the Church has, for some, already developed into opposition. Dogma now appears—from the standpoint of a restricted notion of critical exegesis—only as an obstruction to the true understanding of the original meaning of Christianity.

23. "This separation threatens to undermine internally both the Church and Scripture. A Church without biblical grounding becomes a chance historical product, a purely organisational structure. On the other hand, a Bible without the Church is no longer the powerful Word of God but a collection of manifold historical sources, out of which one tries to draw what appears to be useful in the context of the events of the

time. If scholars have the last word in interpretation, then this last word is only hypothesis. After the necessary appropriation of scientific exegesis in the Church, which must not be undone, a new step forward is now due: we must learn to see the limits of interpretation, which now stands under the almost magical label of the scientific. We must learn to see that it, too, is not the pure image of the past, but that it is stamped, in its own way, by many philosophical presuppositions.

24. "Every Catholic", he adds, "must certainly be satisfied that his religious understanding of the Bible (based on the teaching tradition of the whole Church) cannot, in its essential points, be lifted from its hinges by any teaching of scholars and intellectuals. The hypotheses worked out by these can contribute a great deal to a better understanding of its texts. But the contention that one can only gain access to its content and present testimony through a study of the formation and development history of the Bible is a prejudice which is not shared by great exegetes. Today as yesterday, the rule of faith is not undermined by discoveries regarding biblical sources and layers. The Bible is decisive as it stands; its understanding grows with time. But because we not only interpret in it the past words of men but seek God's own word, the fundamental comprehension of God's word endures; this was given to the Church in the course of time through the guidance of the Holy Spirit".

Regional review

25. Ratzinger, being asked where the crises are worst, sketches the overall situation, continent by continent. He begins: "The general factors of crisis take concrete shape differently according to the culture concerned, but it is difficult to say which situation is the most threatening. If we look at Europe we get the impression—in the theological field too—of a disenchanting world grown old, afflicted with academic snobbishness and blasé indifference.

26. "Looking at North America, we see a world where money and consumption appear to be the measure of everything, so that the values represented by Catholicism appear more than ever 'scandalous'. The Church's moral teaching is perceived (as in Europe) as an ancient alien body, clashing not only with the concrete way of life habitually led but also with the basic mode of thought. It is a difficult if not impossible undertaking to present the authentic Catholic ethic as reasonable; it is too remote from everything that is regarded as normal and self-evident. Thus ethical problems stand in the foreground of theological work in North America, which has taken a lead also over Europe in this area, while European theology still claims a certain lead in exegesis and dogmatics. In this situation moral theology sees itself facing the difficult dilemma of having to choose between confronting society and confronting the Magisterium. Many of the better-known moral theologians opt for the latter, submitting themselves to compromises with a new bourgeois ethic (*einer nachbürgerlichen Ethik*) which not seldom brings men and women into conflict with themselves and the deepest demands of their beings and subjects them to new forms of slavery, while claiming to free them".

27. In Africa and Asia is the already-mentioned problem of "inculturation" (cf. par. 20; also par. 5—7). With reference to the Ecumenical Association of African Theologians, Ratzinger says: "The interconfessionality can make the outline of Christianity become unclear. Also there is need to guard against hasty (and perhaps Europe-conditioned) definitions of what is authentically 'African'."

28. In the Eastern bloc countries there are (it seems) few doctrinal problems, and dialoguing with marxism can hardly become a temptation to convert. Says Ratzinger: "The failure of human messianism is something that can be felt. Human beings are paying in person for the reality of a system which has tried Liberation through liberation from God. Only where marxism is not in power are there people who remain convinced of its pretended scientific nature". Cardinal Bengsch of Berlin once told Cardinal Ratzinger that he saw Western consumerism as a greater danger to faith than

the marxist state-ideology.

29. Nevertheless, Ratzinger says: "Because of its philosophical elaboration and moral objectives marxism is a greater temptation than the superficial agnosticism or atheism of the West. Unlike the latter, marxism is sustained by a high moral feeling which feeds on a religious desire. It has taken over the Judeo-Christian legacy and turned it into prophecy without God. The messianic hope for the Kingdom of Freedom and Life has become a political aim. On this basis Ernst Bloch propounded a new reading of the Bible, which was intended to bring out its real meaning. The serpent in paradise, which drives the human being to revolt, stands at the beginning of Liberation history and symbolises its direction. The expulsion from paradise thus becomes the beginning of man's self-determination. In this total reversal, however, wish and goal appear to be identical".

Theology of Liberation

30. Because of the issue of *Libertatis nuntius* ("Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'") by the S.C.D.F. in September 1984, and the big debate which has followed it, this section can be kept extra brief.

31. "In Europe", says the Cardinal, liberation theology "is generally identified simply with commitment to the poor, and every criticism is interpreted as an attack on action on behalf of the poor. The aggressive passion, which also surfaces in people who do not themselves scorn the comforts of European affluence, is a problem of its own kind. The radical representatives of liberation theology regard criticism as an expression of class interest: he who voices it ranges himself on the side of the oppressors and wants to cement the current power structure. Where the scheme of class warfare becomes the only key for understanding reality and thought patterns, criticism and fruitful dialogue are made impossible. Furthermore, any social reform and non-revolutionary action on behalf of the poor comes under suspicion as a means of maintaining the power which stabilises the system. Revolution becomes repudiation of reform and of direct action as performed, for instance, by Mother Teresa". He also complains that some of those people "do not seem to see the real and practical problems of how a society is to be organised after the Revolution".

32. "One is painfully moved", he says a little later, "by this hardly Christian dream of creating the new man not by requiring conversion of the individual but as it were from the outside, simply by changing the conditions of production. ... This means that men set up their kingdom as the Kingdom of God and pose as God. Such a Kingdom of God can only be a frightful caricature and a freedom-hating dictatorship. ... Attempting to bring about the Kingdom of God through structures changes theology into a physics of man". And then man "is treated as a thing, which means he is enslaved".

33. "When the Magisterium again and again stresses that liberation is in the first instance liberation from sin, this is not a flight into inwardness but emphasis on the moral dimension of all human problems. ... Furthermore, when the Magisterium insists upon the difference between political activity and the Kingdom of God, this is not 'dualism' but, on the one hand, respect for the domain of reason, and, on the other, defence of the higher hopes of man, which always transcend the domain of the politically possible—which must transcend it."

The activity of bishops

34. Asked about hierarchical structures, including the sometimes discordant episcopal conferences, Ratzinger replies frankly: "In the years immediately after the Council the need arose to reformulate the profile of a candidate for the episcopate. I believe that, at that time, 'openness to the world' was a basic criterion. In that situation

this made good sense. But after the crisis of 1968 it was realised that bishops had indeed to be 'open' to the world, but also to be capable of taking a stand against its negative developing tendencies, and of correcting them when possible. In these years, then, the 'realism' expected of the individual bishop has taken a more discriminating but no less conciliar form. For genuine realism must have regard for *all* the signs of the times, and it was exactly this that Vatican II was about.'

35. Herein also lies the problem of episcopal conferences—"Which it should not be forgotten", Ratzinger points out, "are not based on theological foundations, as is the office of the individual bishop, but on practical, functional considerations." It is undisputed that in some instances they have developed an excessively organised structure. The Cardinal sees in this another of those "paradoxical results" of Vatican II, "which had to strengthen the role and responsibility of the bishops, and thereby complete the work of Vatican I, which had been broken off by the capture of Rome, when only the question of the primacy had been dealt with. The inclusion of the bishops in increasingly tightly organised episcopal conferences threatens the bishop's responsibility for the diocese in which he, in communion with the Church, is shepherd and teacher of the faith. Paradoxically, therefore, his position after the Council became weaker rather than stronger. The direction of the local church entrusted to him is, above all, his responsibility and not that of the local episcopal conference.

36. "The Catholic Church in its constitution rests on an equilibrium between community and the individual person, between collegiality and personal responsibility. In this equilibrium the individual bishop is of indispensable significance. Bureaucratic structures, by their very nature, are anonymous; their decisions are based on documents submitted, which are produced within the organisation. What is thus produced is more 'balanced' than a personal statement, but inevitably also flatter and less powerful. Can you imagine an epistle by Paul containing views which had had to get agreed on by some organisation? Thus the scandal and the folly of the Cross are easily lost in well-intentioned human prudence. Today more than ever that 'salt' and the power of that 'leaven' are needed; yes, above all now, when the situation threatens to take a tragic turn. In Germany there has existed an episcopal conference for the past hundred years, but the really strong documents against the Nazis were the product of the courage of individual bishops. The documents from the conference, on the other hand, look rather weak, considering what the calamitous situation demanded.

37. "You must know", the Cardinal adds, "that the Catholic priests of my generation were trained in seminaries where it was recommended always to seek harmony amongst brothers, and never to stand out too much by adopting exaggerated views. The result is that it is difficult for bishops to fight with each other over a matter, and that for the sake of peace we—I do not exclude myself—sometimes allow ourselves too easily to be led astray into accepting superficial compromises".

38. Asked if he thought it might be better if the headquarters of the Church were in Germany rather than Rome, he replies, laughing: "What a misfortune! We would have a too-organised Church. ... Rome is perhaps a better choice; better the Italian spirit, which, by not over-organising, leaves room for that initiative, that personality, those ideas which, as I was saying, are indispensable to the Church. ... Talking of structures, do write that even if we wanted we, of the ex-Holy Office, as they call us, could certainly not bring about a dictatorship. We are about thirty all told, divided into four sections. In the doctrinal section, the one most under fire from criticisms, we are about ten in all. A little on the small side to contemplate some kind of theological take-over!"