ECUMENISM AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: VATICAN II AND BEFORE VATICAN II

It often seems that ecumenism and the Catholic Church is something that begins in the 1960s with the Second Vatican Council. Certainly there was a change of direction then and a different emphasis in the magisterial documents of the Church. But there had been significant historical developments leading up to what happened at the Council. What Pope Benedict XVI has called “the principle of continuity” was operating. The purpose of this talk is to trace something of that history. In that history I think we can see a coming together of personalities and events – what one might call “divine coincidence”.

Can I begin by saying that one bit of ecumenism you may not be aware of is that one of the few texts in the new Missal that have not changed is the Our Father. That text is the translation by Thomas Cramner, the first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury. We cannot avoid ecumenism!

When we think of ecumenism, there are two things involved. One is ecumenism, strictly speaking, which concerns relationships between the various Christian churches and communities. There is also another kind of ecumenism – that within the Church itself – within dioceses – within parishes - where people of different opinions are committed to coming together in unity. The other thing that we associate with ecumenism – though of course it is not ecumenism as such - is interfaith dialogue, which concerns relationships between Christians and non-Christian religions. In our own time, interfaith dialogue is taking on a higher profile.

The Second Vatican Council took a very positive view of ecumenism and ecumenical activity, and also paved the way for engagement in dialogue with non-Christians. The Council’s Decree on Ecumenism, Unitatis redintegratio, dates from 21 November 1964. In this document the Church recognised the elements of truth and grace in non-Catholic churches and the importance of dialogue. It was recognised that the non-Catholic churches had been used by God as a means of salvation for Christians.

But a more important document than that was the Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium. In that document, the Fathers
declared that the sole Church of Christ “constituted and organised as a society in the present world, **subsists** in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him.” The Council was careful not to say that the true Church of Christ simply is the Catholic Church – though Pius XII came very close to saying that in his encyclical letter, *Mystici Corporis* of 1944. The implication is that the true Church of Christ is bigger than we think. *Lumen Gentium* goes on to say immediately that “many elements of sanctification and truth are found outside the visible confines” of the Catholic Church. “Since these are gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards Catholic unity (No 8).”

This was at the least a change in emphasis. The Rite for the Reception of Converts before The Council emphasised that there is no salvation outside of Catholic Faith. What happened at the Council was recognition that the mainstream Protestant churches also had Catholic faith. Thus Catholic faith is bigger than the Roman Catholic Church.

*Lumen Gentium* also says:

The Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptized who are honoured by the name of Christian, but who do not however profess the Catholic faith in its entirety nor have not preserved unity or communion under the successor of Peter. For there are many who hold sacred scripture in honour as a rule of faith and of life, who have a sincere religious zeal, who lovingly believe in God the Father Almighty and in Christ, the Son of God and the Saviour, who are sealed by baptism which unites them to Christ and who indeed recognise and receive other sacraments in their own Churches or ecclesastical communities. Many of them possess the episcopate, celebrate the Holy Eucharist and cultivate devotion to the Virgin Mother of God. There is furthermore a sharing in prayer and spiritual benefits; these Christians are in some real way joined to us by the Holy Spirit for, by gifts and graces, his sanctifying power is also active in them even to the shedding of their blood.¹

So there is some unity already there between Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox. There is a suggestion here of what is in effect two kinds of

ecumenism. There is the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Churches of the Reformation (Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican, Methodist and so forth). The churches of the Reformation consciously separated themselves from the Roman Church. But there is also the relationship with the Orthodox churches of the East, which preserve a valid episcopate, priesthood and sacraments and which separated from the Latin Church more through accident than design.

The Orthodox, Armenians, Copts and others simply lost contact with the West and developed separately. There is a remarkable instance in the year 1278 when the Nestorian Archbishop, Rabban Sauma, visited the West. Nestorianism - named after the fifth-century Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius - emphasised the disjunction between the divine and human natures. The Nestorians split off from the mainstream of the Church in the fifth century and developed in the East. However, the Nestorian Assyrian Church of the East, as it became, seems subsequently not to have followed strictly Nestorian doctrine. Rabban Sauma was also elected Catholicos or Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East at Bagdad with the title of Yarballah III (1281-1317). Rabban Sauma arrived at Rome in 1278 just after the death of Pope Honorius IV. He was well received by the Cardinals. He had no problem in recognising Papal primacy and no-one was aware that any separation between the two churches had even taken place.²

The trouble began when more regular contact between the Orthodox churches of the East and the Latin Church developed especially during the time of the Crusades. Latin Catholics treated the Orientals very badly. This culminated in the year when 1204 when Constantinople was sacked by Latin Catholic Crusaders and the Great Church of Haghia Sophia was desecrated. What shocked the Greeks so much was the sacrilege committed by Latin Catholics. The Latins also plundered many relics which are to be found in the various cathedral cities of the West. The Treasury of St Mark’s in Venice, for example, is full of loot plundered in 1204. The relic of the Precious Blood in Bruges was also stolen from Constantinople. The event of 1204 is engraved in the Orthodox memory. Archbishop Timothy Kallistos Ware has observed:

Christians in the west still do not realise how deep the disgust is and how lasting the horror with which Orthodox regard actions such as the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders.”

Subsequent contacts between the Orthodox East and Latin West were scarcely happier when the Latins showed an almost imperialist attitude to the churches of the East.

The task of ecumenism now is somehow to heal the deep wounds that have taken place. And it has to be said that the conduct of the Popes, especially Blessed John XXIII, Paul VI and Blessed Pope John Paul II have done much to heal these wounds. Pope Benedict XVI is also highly regarded by the Orthodox. If it is a source of division among Christians, the Papacy has also become a source of healing. Blessed Pope John Paul II tried to extend his ministry of reconciliation beyond the Christian churches in his relations with non-Christians. Famously he gathered together all kind of religious leaders at Assisi and prayed with them. His personal attitude transformed Catholic-Jewish relations and he went to the Mosque in Damascus and prayed there.

The subsequent section in *Lumen Gentium* paved the way for interfaith dialogue, emphasising that even non-Christians are related to the People of God. Indeed Blessed Pope John Paul II referred to the Jewish people as our elder brothers – as noted above, he has done more for Catholic Jewish relations than other Catholic leader in recent history:

> Finally, those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways. There is, first, that people [the Jews] to which the covenants and promises were made, and from which Christ was born...in view of the divine choice, they are a people most dear... But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place amongst whom are the Moslems: these profess to hold the faith Abraham, and, together with us, they adore the one merciful God, mankind’s judge on the last day. Nor is God remote from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God...Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try

---

3 Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Penguin, 1963), p. 69.
in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve salvation. Nor shall divine providence deny the assistance necessary for salvation to those who, without any fault of theirs, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God…

*Unitatis Redintegratio* says that “some, even very many, of the most significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church, the written Word of God, the life of grace”. Non-Catholic liturgies are a means of grace. Non-Catholics can get into heaven!

Now all this seemed to be quite a change in the mid 1960s. It led to very practical changes. For one thing it was emphasised that we recognised the baptism of other Christian communities. Before the Council, when people became Catholics, they had to abjure their heresies. After the Council, a more positive view was taken of a person’s previous church. Instead of emphasising the errors of Protestantism, its contribution to religious growth and development was recognised. There was a change in attitude. Previously the Catholic position on ecumenism, popularly understood, was that non-Catholics should see the error of their ways and become Catholic; joint prayer with non-Catholics was not encouraged and indeed often forbidden. Catholics had to seek permission to attend a funeral or marriage in a Protestant church. Christians of the Reformation churches were called “heretics”. Orthodox Christians were called “schismatics”. After the Council, we stopped referring to heretics and schismatics; we were encouraged to pray together, hold joint services and so forth.

Yes there was change; but the change was in continuity with what went before. What went before was a coming together of various events and personalities.

**Events**

In 1894, in his encyclical Letter, *Praeclara Gratulationis*, Pope Leo XIII expressed and sincere and ardent desire for Christian Unity. This was a prophetic sign pointing to the future. The first milestone in the twentieth-century history of ecumenism was the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of

---

4 Flannery, pp. 367-8.
1910. This was the ancestor of the World Council of Churches and it met in 1910. It expressed a desire among Protestants for greater unity among their respective churches. Protestant theology had been heavily influenced by the Enlightenment and rational principles; Christian unity was rational and therefore a worthy object to be achieved.

The next great event was the First World War of 1914-1918. The experience of war, especially on the German side where Catholic and Lutheran chaplains worked together, prompted interest in ecumenism. It also brought to an end the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*. This was the settlement of the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, which brought to an end the religious wars between German Protestant and Catholic princes. The religion would be determined by the religious choice of the respective princes in their own territories. This principle made it seem that differences between the churches were just political and made no sense when the princes were swept away. Further, though Germany had been united under the leadership of Otto, Count von Bismark, in the 1860s, several hundred German dukes and princlings still governed their own localities. The abolition of the jurisdiction of the German aristocracy that accompanied the fall of the Kaisar in 1918 led to social collapse in which churches had to stick together. Indeed, the Churches no longer had the support of the local prince or duke.

More generally, the effect of war prompted Christians to seek peace amongst themselves. The Anglican Lambeth Conference of 1920 appealed to all Christians to improve relations after the experience of war. This appeal was supported by Pope Pius XI. Also in 1920 the Orthodox Synod of Constantinople suggested a “fellowship of churches” similar to the League of Nations. Leaders representing more than 100 churches voted in 1937-8 to found a World Council of Churches, but its inauguration was delayed following the outbreak of the First World War.

Between 1921 and 1925, conversations took place between leading Anglicans headed by the Earl of Halifax, and Catholics, headed by Cardinal Mercier, the Belgian primate, at Malines or Mechelen about the possibility of unity between the Anglican and Catholic Churches. These talks are known as the Malines Conversations. The talks ended in failure in 1925. At the time there was still strong anti-Catholic feeling among English Anglicans; and the English Catholic
bishops were also very suspicious of Anglicanism. Nor were any English Catholic bishops included in the talks and their noses may have been put out of joint by the intrusion of Cardinal Mercier in their affairs. There also was the memory of the English martyrs of the Reformation, which was a proud part of English Catholic history. Also many priests working in England were Irish and could be very anti-Anglican and indeed anti-English. At its simplest, the Malines Conversations most likely failed because of little support among mainstream Anglicans or Catholics. What eventually broke the ice in Catholic-Anglican relations was the attitude of John XXIII and especially of Pope Paul VI, who developed a close personal friendship with Archbishop Michael Ramsay of Canterbury. That has continued under the present Pope. From all accounts Pope Benedict and Archbishop Rowan Williams have a good relationship with each other.

The Second World War threw people together in opposition to Naziism, especially in Germany. There was a section of the Lutheran Church, and indeed a number of Catholics, who supported Hitler. But there were also those who opposed him. It is small wonder that in such circumstances Catholics and Protestants began to look more serious at what united them, especially since it was clear that the enemy was the rise of totalitarian atheistical systems. Sometimes in the concentration camps an ecumenism was learned from suffering together. However, between the wars the Catholic Church seemed to draw back from encouraging contacts with non-Catholic churches.

Though there had been encouraging noises in favour of ecumenism coming from Rome in 1920, in 1928, in his encyclical. *Mortalium Animos*, Pius XI seemed to condemn the whole ecumenical enterprise. Actually what he was condemning was the liberal Protestant ethos that characterised early Protestant ecumenism. They were influenced by the rationalist theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher, inspired by the 18th century Enlightenment that played down any differences between the churches. Thus all churches were much the same and the differences between them were not important. The effect of this encyclical was felt right up to the Second Vatican Council. Pius XI wanted to emphasise that the differences were important and that truth was important. Henceforth, the Church would steer a course between two poles: one of which was truth, and the other was what we had in common with non-Catholic Christians. We have been steering that course down to the present day
After the War there was a mellowing of official Catholic attitudes. In 1949 there was the famous case of Fr Leonard Feeney of Boston. Fr Feeney was a radio priest and had misunderstood the teaching of the Church on the necessity of the Church for salvation. Fr Feeney said that only members of the Catholic Church would be saved. In fact the Church’s teaching, which was made clear in a letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston, dated 8 August 1949, is that all people must in some way be related to the Church but actual membership is not actually required. Fr Feeney would not accept this and was consequently excommunicated. As we have seen above, non-Catholics, non-Christians and even unbelievers can be related to the Church. In 1949 the Holy Office also encouraged dialogue between Catholics and non-Catholics. Then in 1950 Pius XII expressly welcomed the ecumenical movement and attributed it to the influence of the Holy Spirit. This was the turning point in the official approach of the Catholic Church to the ecumenical movement.

When the bishops gathered for the Council in the early 1960s, Roman Catholic bishops were made sharply aware that there were other Catholic churches in communion with Rome that were not Roman and that to be Catholic one does not have to be “Roman”. These were the Eastern rite churches in communion with Rome, not the same as the Orthodox Churches though they had similar liturgies (Maronites, Melchites, Copts, Armenians, Syriacs, Chaldeans, Syro-Malabar, and Ukrainians). The presence of these oriental Catholic bishops sharpened ecumenical awareness. The Eastern rite bishops were very active in the Council – possibly because they were used to meeting in synods and local councils and they helped to broaden the horizons of the other bishops.

One of the most influential figures in this group was Maximos IV, the 84 year old Melchite Patriarch of Antioch, and an Arab from Syria. The Council’s proceedings were conducted in Latin. Though he was fluent in Latin - as well as Greek, French, Arabic and Italian), the patriarch insisted on speaking in French as a kind of protest against what could be seen as Latin imperialism. He once said: “We must fight to ensure that Latinism and Catholicism are not synonymous, that Catholicism remains open to every culture, every spirit and

---

every form of organisation compatible with the unity of faith and love. On the office of Pope, Patriarch Maximos said this:

The First Vatican Council defined the dogma of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff. In some quarters this definition gave rise to false interpretations which distorted its meaning, turning the primacy, which is a charism given by Christ to his Church, into an obstacle to Christian unity. Now we are convinced that what is an obstacle to unity is not the teaching itself on the primacy, which has quite adequate support in Holy Scripture and the tradition of the Church, but exaggerated interpretations, and even more, the concrete exercise of the primacy where, where, to authentically divine elements and a legitimate ecclesial development, unfortunate borrowings have been more or less consciously added which are patterned on forms exercising a purely human authority.

…The “You are Peter” of St Matthew 16:18 should not be separated from the “lend strength to your brothers” of St Luke 22.32. Furthermore, this power is pastoral in character and strictly personal. It is pastoral by nature in this sense, that it is not a prerogative of command merely for the sake of command. It is a ministry, a service, a diakonia, a pastoral charge, as his holiness Pope Paul VI has well emphasised. This power is of a personal character and since it remains such, cannot be delegated in any way.6

In other words, the various departments of the Roman Curia do not share in Papal infallibility! This was an issue in the 1960s and perhaps it still is. Sixty years after the event, the Patriarch’s words remain remarkably fresh and insightful.

**Personalities**

As well as events, there were some notable individuals who made possible the development of Catholic thinking on ecumenism.

1. **Karl Barth and the development of Protestant Theology.** Barth (1886-1968) was a Swiss Calvinist theologian and in the 1920s and 1930s led a

---

reaction to what he say as the rather wishy-woshy liberal theology that had preceded him based on the icdeas of Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schliermacher (1768-1834), who had emphasised subjective experience rather than objective truth in religion. Barth was much more concerned with objective truth and laying proper intellectual foundations for theology. He was publicly opposed to Hitler and Nazism and as a result had to withdraw from his teaching job in Bonn to his native Switzerland. In particular Barth made good use of patristic and medieval sources for theology. The result was that he began to change the face of Protestant theology, which now began to look more Catholic. This theology strongly influenced the development of the World Council of Churches by the 1940s. Pius XII described Barth as the most important theologian since Thomas Aquinas.

2. *Yves Congar* (1904-1995: created a Cardinal in 1994) was born in Sedan in the north-east of France of a devout Catholic family, who had Jewish friends and Protestant neighbours. Sedan was in the war zone; and, when the Catholic Church was burned down in 1914, the Protestant pastor allowed his church to be used for Sunday Mass. Congar, who entered the Dominican order, was to be perhaps the most influential theologian at the Second Vatican Council. Significantly, his greatest interest was ecclesiology. Like Barth he went back to patristic sources (Augustine, Cyprian of Carthage) and so we can see a coming together of Catholic and Protestant theology to the extent that it is not possible now for a Catholic student of theology to ignore the contributions of Protestant theologians. Congar also wrote a book on lay people in the Church stressing their importance in the spiritual development of the Church. In 1939 he published a great book, *Les Chrétiens Desunis,* which lamented the divisions in Christendom. This was a thoroughly Catholic book, but Congar did suggest – and this did seem shocking at the time – that non-Roman Catholic churches have “in greater of lesser degree” true elements of what the Church is. Eventually that is what the Second Vatican Council said. But this was not accepted generally before the 1960s. For a long time, Congar was regarded as suspect by the Roman authorities and indeed forbidden to teach. In 1962, on the eve of the Council, he was still under a cloud of suspicion, and, though he offered his services as a theologian to the Bishop of Strasbourg and the
Dominican Order, neither wanted him. (The Master General of the Dominicans was the Irish Cardinal Michael Browne, one of the most reactionary figures at the Council.) But he was one of the 200 experts appointed by Pope John XXII – those who were to be involved in drafting texts. He worked with the young Joseph Ratzinger.

3. Angelo Roncalli, Blessed Pope John XXIII (1881-1963) who is also venerated as a saint in the Anglican Communion. He came of a peasant background – which he liked to emphasise himself – and seemed a bit more human than his predecessor, Pope Pius XII. John, for example, obviously enjoyed his food and wine and he smoked cigarettes. He also had a legendary sense of humour. John had begun his priesthood as a seminary teacher. His academic speciality was Church history. He edited the works of St Charles Borromeo, the sixteen-century Archbishop of Milan, who laboured long and hard to implement the decrees of the Council of Trent in his diocese. Possibly as a result of St Charles Borromeo, there was a strong reforming tradition in Northern Italian Catholicism. One strong influence on the young Angelo Roncalli was Geremia Bonomelli, Bishop of Cremona, who wrote to the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910 applauding their efforts to bring Christians together. Roncalli became secretary to Radini Tedeschi, Bishop of Bergamo, who was in the forefront of Catholic social action. Radini Tedeschi had previously been in the Papal Diplomatic Service.

It seems to have been through this connection that Roncalli himself became a papal diplomat and served on missions to Bulgaria, Turkey and France. Especially, in Bulgaria and Turkey, he was brought into contact with Eastern Orthodox Churches. In 1958 he was elected Pope at the age of 77. On his very first day as Pope he announced the two major themes that would mark his pontificate: unity in the Church and peace in the secular order. His good wishes embraced the Orthodox churches and “all those who are separated from the Apostolic See”. He quoted Jesus’s prayer (John 17:11) “that all may be one”. Ecumenism was going to be important. Subsequently five Catholic observers attended the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi and there were to be non-Catholic observers at the Second Vatican Council. On 2 December 1960 Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher of Canterbury became the
first archbishop of Canterbury since the Reformation to be received by the Pope at the Vatican. Though the visit was marked awkwardness and coolness – except on the part of Pope John – ice had been broken. In 1959 Pope John appointed the 80 year old Jesuit Biblical scholar, Augustin Bea, a Cardinal and in 1960 the first head of the Vatican’s Secretariat for Christian Unity.

4. Augustin, Cardinal Bea (1881-1968) He was a Jesuit and for many years had been Rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. Bea kept in touch with developments in his native Germany, especially the efforts of Cardinal Lorenz Jaeger of Paderborn to initiate some kind of Catholic ecumenism. There had been a coming together of Catholics and Protestants since the First World War. In 1930 a Jesuit theologian and pioneer of ecumenism, and one who would have known a fellow Jesuit like Bea, Max Pribilla (1874-1954) published *Um Kirchliche Einheit*. Bea was a Biblical scholar, he had been taught oriental languages by Protestant academics and it was becoming common for Biblical scholars of different Christian traditions to work together. He was a friend of Cardinal Jaeger, Archbishop of Paderborn from 1941 to 1973. Jaeger founded in the 1940s an ecumenical institute and convened meetings of Catholic and Protestant theologians. In 1942 Jaeger said: “To speak of the conversion of the Protestants makes no sense because we are referring to believing Christians who therefore cannot be aware of the need for conversion.”

Other German bishops were also interested in ecumenism, especially Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber of Munich (1869-1952), who spoke out against the persecution of the Jews – though his relationship with the Nazi regime was a little ambivalent. Also Blessed Clemens August, Cardinal and Count von Galen, Bishop of Munster (1878-1946), a friend of Pius XII and a fierce critic of Nazi euthanasia and racial policies, was interested in developing links with Protestants, though again it is said that von Galen did not speak out as strongly as he could have done against the deportations of the Jews.

Bea was confessor to Pius XII, who was a Germanophile, and influenced Pius XII’s encyclical of 1943, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, which set scholars
free to develop Catholic Biblical scholarship. He was also closely connected with the Melchite Patriarch of Antioch, Maximos IV, who was pushing Pope John into establishing an official Vatican body to promote Christian unity. Eventually this would be the Secretariat for Christian Unity presided over by Bea, who was created a Cardinal by Pope John. Bea laid down the Catholic principles of ecumenism, which puts an emphasis on Baptism as the fundamental sacrament which unites us.

Why did Pope John appoint Bea? According to Monsignor Carpovilla, John XXIII’s secretary, it was “because he was a German”. Catholic ecumenism had its roots in Germany – indeed Germany was the only place where it was happening. It is also one of the few countries where one Church was not able to dominate all the others and people had to work together. Bea had also been close to Pius XII, which might recommend him to the old guard in Rome.

Conclusion

This account so far by no means exhausts the history of ecumenism. Catholic theologians and thinkers, not only in Germany, had been working away before the Council to create a new intellectual climate and to forge contacts with thinkers in other churches. One example was Johannes Willibrands, who had been working at ecumenism in his native Holland from 1949 – he was later created a Cardinal, finally becoming Archbishop of Utrecht. However, notice how the story is almost entirely about Europeans. This is perhaps why this particular period of ecumenism is over. The Church has changed a great deal in the last fifty years. It is no longer a predominantly European Church but much more of an African, Latin American and Asian Church. Ecumenism in the future will have much more to do with the concerns of the southern hemisphere.

Notice too that all the churches were in a process of ecumenical development, not just the Catholic Church. The Orthodox Synod of Constantinople had appealed for unity in 1920; and the World Council of Churches arose out of

---

intiatives taken by Protestant churchmen. Perhaps this is a sign that the Holy Spirit was at work in all the churches.

Changes in Eastern Europe and the emergence of Oriental churches in communion with Rome since the collapse of Communism have created fresh problems in Catholic-Orthodox relations, which have yet to be addressed. Often the Catholic Oriental Churches have been seen to compete for members with the Orthodox and this has really not helped our relations with the Orthodox Churches.

Society has also changed. Secularism has had the effect of eroding religious values. The Churches no longer speak with a common voice on issues like sexuality, contraception, in vitro fertilization and euthanasia or indeed on the role of women in the Church. Actually, divisions within churches are perhaps now more apparent on these issues than divisions between churches.

Even so, though ecumenism as traditionally understood seems to be in the doldrums in today’s Europe, there have been huge advances that we maybe take for granted. Christians of all denominations now regularly pray together and indeed work together where they can. Members of various churches respect the leadership in other churches. While the Pope is not always accepted as the leader of Christendom, many non-Catholics respect his leadership. One only has to recall the funeral of Blessed John Paul II to notice how the Papacy has come to occupy a more central place in modern religious thinking.