

the name of the Emperor, to overthrow corrupt politicians and the Constitution and to create a genuine army.' The western world might quite rightly see a fearful threat in this exhortation, in the combination of an intellectual's world-weariness and the appeal to a tradition of violence. But to look on this side only would be to ignore the impact Mishima had on his audience. His hoarse harangue, Professor Lebra said, was nearly drowned out by the shouts and jeers of the incredulous soldiers who were listening to him.

The Emperor's importance in Japanese life, and his political role as defined by the Constitution, are not really one and the same thing. It is perfectly possible, as I have shown, to think of him as a *kami*, as a numinous being, without endorsing any nostalgia in the manner of Mishima for a past in which that *kami* was exclusively defined as a god of war. There may, of course, be a risk of a revived militarism in Japan, but the scepticism of those soldiers at Ichigaya is perhaps the best guarantee we have that the Japanese will not again allow their Emperor to be used as its figurehead.

¹This paper was broadcast by the BBC on *Personal View* (Radio 3), April 28, 1973.

²In a way that the last reigning Bourbon, Charles X, was not, even though he had himself crowned at Rheims with all the panoply of the royal past, in a vain effort to assume what he had not got.

The Pope's New Clothes

by Edward Quinn

I suppose that was the reason why a plenary indulgence was granted to people who gathered together before the basilicas on the great feast days while the Pope gave his blessing *Urbi et Orbi*. Fair enough. For, although such attendance was not precisely earth-shattering, it had important consequences: the large numbers made a great contribution to the honour of the Apostolic See and to the public profession of faith in the rock on which the firmness of the whole Church is built. This in fact was the object of granting the indulgence. The same reasoning could be applied to the indulgences proclaimed in Luther's time by the people who collected alms for the building of St. Peter's.¹

So now we know. Hans Küng's massive criticism of the critics of his views on infallibility² reached me with the newspapers announcing that the Pope was to proclaim a Holy Year. It was the same week in which sensational headlines about the Lambton case gave way to the reassuring news that the heart of the establishment was sound: fox-hunting, hard-riding Anne would really marry her stalwart and even more hard-riding Mark.

The juxtaposition is hardly fair. The announcement of Anne's engagement may well have been timed without regard for less edifying events in high places. And Küng's worst enemies only find fault

with him for his purely intellectual activities. Nor would the most narrow-minded curialist conceive the Holy Year as a counterblast to one theologian's suspect views on infallibility. But institutions under attack have a way of seeking the support of the simple masses by providing them with an occasion for junketings: a marriage in England, a jubilee and indulgences in Rome.

To be fair to Pope Paul, he appears to have resisted pressure for the Holy Year for some time, thinking of the shocking contrast between Roman poverty and the lavish expenditure even of package-tour pilgrims and the too easy assimilation of the pious visitors' relaxations between church visits to the more dubious behaviour of a wealthier international set intent upon other forms of indulgence. But Paul has to keep in line with his predecessors: to be consistent with Pius XI in his teaching on birth control, to announce another Holy Year after a twenty-five year interval in accordance with the custom inaugurated by that redoubtable defender of the papal claims, Boniface VIII, in 1300.

He has made the most of the occasion, to insist on *metanoia*, on internal renewal, on reconciliation, as the essential work of the Holy Year; and the good works are to begin in the local Churches, ending in pilgrimages—presumably bringing evidence of the achievements of the Churches—to Rome and the final indulgences in 1975. We can't complain if the exact way in which we were meant to celebrate the Holy Year from last Whitsuntide at home is not yet quite clear. Like Pope John's council, it took us by surprise.

But this is hardly an opening of the Church on to the world. It is quite clearly planned as a recall to Rome. The pilgrimages are certain and the air-lines are already getting ready to cope with the enormous demand on their resources. The pilgrims—says an announcement from the Vatican³—will come to renew their contact with the vestiges of the infant Church in Rome, to acknowledge the Pope as the rock of the Church, the bond of unity between the local Churches, inspiring the Church's universal charity and sustaining all their 'pastoral experiences'. And, for their loyalty more than for their penitential activities, they will be rewarded with indulgences.

Even Boniface VIII thought that the efficacy of indulgences was measured by the devotion with which the pilgrims visited the basilicas. But he hadn't read St Thomas who had explained a generation earlier that their efficacy was derived from the abundance of the merits of the Church and limited only by the terms of their preaching.⁴ This is all to the good. It really would be absurd to expect a measure of relief from temporal punishment determined by the intensity of our renewal in mind and heart, still more by the extent to which we have shared in the world's agony. But is the grant of an indulgence or a pilgrimage to Rome relevant anyway?

The Pope is right to urge us to do penance, to work for the vast needs of a world largely estranged—and largely through our long neglect—from God. *C'est son métier*. And it is a joy to see any encouragement to reconciliation and love proceeding from the Church which should preside over the works of love. But why does Rome always expect our response to be marked by repeated asseverations of love and loyalty and eagerness to pick up the now somewhat dubious spiritual titbits called indulgences? If some have described Pope Paul as a kind of Hamlet, his officials seem determined to turn him into King Lear.

The theology of indulgences is in a shocking state. To make matters worse, its development was arrested when the discussion of indulgences by the bishops was forbidden at Vatican II. It is hard to see why. A debate would hardly have hit the headlines in a way that discussion of the other forbidden topics—celibacy and birth control—might have done. Was there a fear that the attempt might be made to wrest control of the treasury of merits from the hands of the Pope? But developments on related themes have left him with little enough power anyway.

Even before Trent an indulgence was a remission of a penalty that had never been imposed, but only imagined. Now we know that what we called 'temporal punishment' is neither temporal nor a punishment. What follows after forgiven sin is a painful, deliberate adjustment to God's reality, reparation to an injured world, under the influence of grace (which again is another word for God's self-giving and re-formation of a twisted human nature), not to be measured in time and hardly to be conditioned by that form of duration proper to pure spirits which we called *aevum* (a distinction with a difference that was lost on us even then, but quite impossible today when lonely souls awaiting the restoration of their bodies are simply incredible). Certainly we are not alone in this painful endurance: it is mitigated, its effectiveness hastened by the loving endurance of others, by the prayers of the whole Church. But this is not precisely what indulgences are about. Sharing in the joys, sorrows, prayer and work of the Church, continues all the time and brings endless benefits by God's grace to those who know nothing of the Church or of Christ. My deed of kindness may rightly be credited to someone long dead who willed something like it and failed. But the Pope does not and cannot link my good deed with another's failure or decide what another's unmerited pain may do to mitigate the suffering I have well deserved. All he can do is to give a special assurance to an unknown number of unknown people, under certain conditions, that the Church is praying (as it does all the time) to ease their painful conversion from forgiven sin or to aid the endurance of those whose death still hurts because not completed in Christ. This prayer of the Church, this communion in the sufferings and joys of saints and sinners, is a

glorious and wonderful thing. But it is hard to see how the Pope's assurance of it to those who hop in and out of Rome's churches is at all important.⁵

Now that Küng and his opponents have finished with it, the doctrine of infallibility—at any rate of papal infallibility—doesn't seem very important either. What really infuriated his critics was not so much his views on infallibility as his boyish eagerness to tell the world that the emperor's new clothes didn't exist.

Father Rahner told him, not—as he has recently explained—that he was now a liberal Protestant, but that if he persisted in this kind of behaviour he could only be treated as if he were a liberal Protestant.⁶ Others, like Bishop Butler, hinted that he must grow up and not get excited about a few minor theologians who still thought that the Pope was committed to statements which might be foggy⁷ but were relieved by the aura of a guaranteed infallibility. Even where the Pope really did seem to be speaking infallibly, Hans would soon learn to apply a sensitive exegesis to apparently inaccurate statements. Others insisted on the rarity and (in the case of the Marian dogmas) the relative unimportance of certainly infallible pronouncements. With all the inconsistency which comes of mixing in an adult world, they added that the Church's infallibility must be maintained if she were to survive threats to her very existence. Finally time would reveal where true infallibility had been at work.

Küng's reproach was still child-like: 'That's what I said all the time. But I spoke about "truth", not about *a priori* guaranteed propositions, prevailing in the end. And most of you are not happy about the word "infallibility". I simply plumped for "indefectibility" as a more suitable expression for the reality we all accept.'

There is no doubt about his precociousness. In a book of some five-hundred closely printed pages he has assembled a number of contributions to the theme by experts, largely but not wholly of his own way of thinking, and added his own lively account of the debate, summarizing, quoting, and answering his critics. He complains bitterly of the failure even of exegetes like Schnackenburg to show how the petrine texts can be made to support the definition of Vatican I as it has universally been understood up till now. More playfully he quotes Rahner's admission (with of course his characteristic qualifications) in an interview with *Der Spiegel*: 'Assuming as a hypothesis—an unreal hypothesis—that I had presented Jesus in his lifetime with the definition of Vatican I of 1870, then in his empirical human consciousness he would probably merely have been amazed and wouldn't have understood any of it.'⁸

He had been hurt and offended by Rahner's attack in *Stimmen der Zeit*, once again mainly as the student who owes most of what is typical in his approach to the guidance of the older master. He reproduces here also a commentary on Rahner's defence of his own

orthodoxy against Cardinal Höffner's objections at the opening of the German synod. He is wholly in sympathy with Rahner, but cannot resist giving it the title 'Is Karl Rahner still Catholic?' Recently the two have been reconciled, characteristically as a result of Küng's seizing the initiative. They remain of the same opinion on infallibility but have settled on a working agreement, so as to enable free discussion of more important themes. What is more surprising is that Küng does not seem to have exploded at Rahner's quite sincere hope—but based on the kind of procedure that Küng most hates—that in the course of time Rahner's interpretation of Vatican I and Küng's opinion, 'better expressed and given a more Catholic stamp, can be made to coincide'.⁹

In fact, Küng's *Bilanz* is a serious and mature work. He enters into all the complexities of the problem with the skill of the professional and experienced theologian. But he has the blessed virtue of youth that he sticks to his point—that for Rome infallibility is a question of divinely guaranteed propositions which not only are true, but could not fail to be true—and his Roman inquisitors (what's in a name?) take him up precisely on this. But with the innocence—real or assumed—of youth Küng asked why they have not attempted to prove their thesis from Scripture. He had already explained that the letter from Rome reached him only a few hours before he was leaving for Moscow and a number of other interesting cities where he was to lecture.

On June 24, 1973, Rome answered Küng's criticisms at some length, without naming him, insisting that the clothes really do exist even if they are not as new as some have claimed. Here, it seems, lies a real difficulty more for Küng's critics than for Küng himself who characteristically cocked a snook at the compilers of the document. It admits the possibility of interpreting dogmas in the light of the conditions in which they were defined and of bringing home their meaning in ways adapted to modern minds. But otherwise the mixture is as before. The explanation of infallibility is still that of the pre-conciliar Latin textbooks and—to confound the critics of 'creeping infallibility'—it is asserted that the scope of infallibility also includes 'those matters without which the deposit of faith cannot be rightly preserved and expounded'. Of course nothing is 'proved'. The authors admit that they had no intention of doing so and claim that this is outside the scope of the declaration. The task is left to the court theologians and we must look for a Palmieri *de nos jours*. He will not be easy to find.

Rahner has pointed out the danger of these statements of faith which make no attempt to substantiate dogma 'from those basic convictions which are still shared by the people addressed', but merely appeal to the formal teaching authority and thus remain ineffective, 'since in fact in the minds of those to whom they are addressed the

binding authority of the magisterium is by no means so unassailably certain, but is just as much under threat as the particular dogma that has to be defended'.¹⁰ But the particular dogma here is precisely the binding authority of the magisterium. Is it not going to be more threatened than ever, particularly when Küng's critics have finished defending it?

It was the same with *Humanae Vitae*. It was rightly claimed that a papal pronouncement could not be based on a majority vote, but no attempt was made in the encyclical to answer the majority of the commission who claimed that it was not clear from natural law that contraception was wrong. It was left for defenders of the encyclical to interpret its forthright condemnation of contraception as a qualified approval. Until this declaration, some attempt was made to interpret Vatican I in the light of a more up-to-date theology. But it will be harder to make the new statement convincing in terms understood even by the 'simple faithful' at the present time.

At least we may hope to be spared the simplicity—holy or otherwise—of the syllogism:

Christ by His certainly efficacious prayer (Luke 22. 31-32) asks for Peter as *primate* unflinching firmness in faith or—which is the same thing—infalibility.

But Peter's prerogatives as *primate* pass to his successors.

Therefore . . .¹¹

Küng's big book with its abundant documentation is unlikely now to be translated into English. The debate will be continued. The Church stands and will stand: the gates of hell will not prevail. But papal infalibility will never be the same again.

¹⁰*Ita sane concedebatur plenaria indulgentia iis qui diebus solemnibus praeforibus basilicarum assistebant, dum Pontifex benediceret Urbi et Orbi, et rationabiliter quidem. Nam huiusmodi assistentia etsi in se levis, ordinabatur tamen ad finem magni momenti, eo quod frequentia populi maxime tunc conferebat ad honorem Sedis Apostolicae, at ad publicam professionem fidei de ipsa petra supra quam totius Ecclesiae construitur soliditas; et hic erat finis concessionis indulgentiae. Et simili modo ratiocinaberis de illis indulgentiis quae tempore Lutheri publicabantur a collectoribus elemosynarum pro aedificatione basilicae S. Petri.* L. Billot, S.J., *De Ecclesiae Sacramentis*, Vol. II, Rome 1922, p. 251.

²*Fehlbar? Eine Bilanz*, Benziger, Zürich-Einsiedeln-Cologne, 1973.

³*Documentation Catholique*, June 3, 1973.

⁴*Summa Theologica, Pars III, Supplement, Q.25 a.2: Indulgentiae simpliciter tantum valent, quantum praedicantur.* Cf. P. Galtier, S.J., *De Paenitentia*, Rome, 1950, p. 531.

⁵'Last August during my visit to Assisi I wished to enter the holy chapel at Portiuncula to pray, and to obtain the Plenary Indulgence, but was unable to do so by virtue of the fact that two nuns were standing stork-like across the threshold of the chapel, each with one foot in the chapel and the other foot inside the basilica, but in mid-air, i.e. not touching the basilica's marble floor. As these nuns finished the prayers necessary for obtaining the Plenary Indulgence they would lightly touch the floor of the basilica with their second foot, immediately resuming their former curious stance on their one foot in the holy chapel as they renewed their prayers.' Letter in *The Tablet*, January 20, 1962. Will such scenes be repeated in Rome?

⁶I did not describe you as a "liberal Protestant", but merely said that on *this* one question I could only argue as if I were dealing with a liberal Protestant.' Correspondence reproduced in *The Tablet*, June 23, 1973, and *America*, July 7, 1973.

⁷Of course Bishop Butler didn't put it quite in this way. In fact he said that we could accept the definition of the Immaculate Conception even if our notion of original sin was foggy, hoping to understand it better later (*The Tablet*, April 3, 1971). But all our notions of original sin are a little foggy today and Rahner's attempt to provide an up-to-date interpretation of the dogma provides a distinctly dusty answer to seekers after enlightenment. Incidentally Küng has an amusing footnote on the way in which theologians rush forward with 'reasons of convenience' when confronted with the definition of a dogma which they had formerly questioned: 'Supposing the Pope were to define the immaculate conception of St Joseph, . . ., I have no doubt that modern Catholic theologians would be able to put up a spirited defence of the definition, based on reasons of convenience drawn from the present-day understanding of man and society. The reasons might be theological ("chosen foster-father"), ecclesiological ("patron of the Church"), moral-pedagogical ("exemplary paterfamilias and husband"), social-critical ("worker", perhaps "proletarian", and certainly "refugee"), and finally basically anthropological ("true human being and man of his time"). (*Fehlbar?* p. 375.)

⁸*Fehlbar?* p. 405.

⁹*The Tablet*, l.c.

¹⁰Karl Rahner, *Strukturwandel der Kirche*, Freiburg, 1972, p. 103. A translation of this book is being published by SPCK, London.

¹¹'Christus oratione certe efficaci postulat pro Petro ut *primat*e indeficientem in fide firmitatem seu, quod idem est, infallibilitatem. Atqui praerogativae Petri, ut primatis, transeunt ad eius successores. Ergo. . . .' T. Zapelena, S.J., *De Ecclesia Christi, Pars Altera*, Rome, 1954, p. 204.

Tea with Mr Taha

by Dennis Hickley

Mr Taha is a model of Muslim piety and exercises a strict control over his household. A family joke has it that he once suffered severely from scruples on discovering that he had eaten some jam which had become fermented. As a member of a distinguished landowning family of Azerbaijan he has never had to work and has spent most of his life as a kind of gentleman scholar, leading an austere existence and devoted to prayer and such pursuits as collecting Old Korans. My impression is that, through leading this withdrawn life, he has allowed himself to become an isolated personality. A timid and nervous man, with a thin ascetic face, he betrays a tendency towards extreme excitability when discussing matters that involve his deepest convictions. On one such occasion I noticed that his features became distorted by his attempts to control his feelings and the veins on his forehead stood out. His family commented on this to me afterwards and said that he had not spoken at such length nor so vehemently for many years. It was evident that though they obeyed him externally he sensed that they were not with him in spirit. Consequently