CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS 'OTHER'

Edited by

GERARD MANNION

T&T CLARK THEOLOGY

t&t clark

Ecclesiological Investigations

Series Editor

Gerard Mannion

Volume 4

Church and Religious 'Other'

Other titles in the series

Receiving 'The Nature and Mission of the Church'
Christian Community Now
Comparative Ecclesiology

Church and Religious 'Other'

Edited by

Gerard Mannion

For Michael Mannion

In profound admiration of his dignity, faith,
humour and resilience in the face of adversity.

And for teaching me by his example that in concern for the Other
lies not simply our responsibility but equally our fulfilment.

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

WELCOME TO ECCLESIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS: A NEW
INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK

Conversations about the nature, role and purpose of the church today are increasingly preoccupying not just theologians, but the faithful, pastors and church leaders alike. A new international research network, 'Ecclesiological Investigations', has been established to provide encouragement, resources and facilitation for such dialogue. Here we briefly provides some background to the emergence and mission of this Network and warmly extend an invitation to others to join and sponsor its work.

Some Background

The Network has emerged from small beginnings. In 2002, questions concerning the nature, role and contemporary life of the church led four scholars to begin a series of meetings to present and discuss a series of papers on a wide variety of ecclesiological themes. Hence there emerged a three-year research initiative and series of conversations involving Paul Collins, Gerard Mannion, Gareth Powell, and Kenneth Wilson. They initially met under the auspices of Chichester University and hence the group took as their name 'The Chichester Group', which brought together an Anglican, a Roman Catholic and two Methodists. A volume emergent from these discussions (*Christian Community Now: Ecclesiological Investigations*) has been published as the second volume in this series.

In Summer 2005 invitations were sent out to numerous UK persons to form a small steering group to help establish a broader network of people and institutions involved in the field of ecclesiology. The group's chief aims included the intention to focus upon ecclesiology from the standpoint of different Christian denominations and from differing international and cultural perspectives (**ecumenical and comparative intentions**). The group was to share an openness to and celebration of the pluralistic reality in the midst of which the Churches today find themselves living (**pluralistic intentions**). The work of the group would deal with the challenges facing churches today (**praxis-oriented intentions**). A major new publication series formed a key part of the new group's intentions, along with the establishment of study days and teaching initiatives pertaining to the church

(**educational intentions**). A limited amount of funding was raised for the initial meetings of this group. Members from a wide variety of church and organisational backgrounds agreed to join the steering group.

The outcome was the establishment of a partnership involving five institutions in which the Centre for the Study of the Contemporary Ecclesiology played a co-ordinating role. Links were established with numerous other centres and institutions pursuing similar aims across the international community. In addition to this research centre, the four initial UK partners were thus the Department of Theology,;DurhamUniversity'sResearchCentrefor

Contemporary Catholic Studies; Heythrop College, London and Ripon College, Cuddesdon, Oxford**.** Further international partner institutions have since been added to their number, including from Canada (St Michael's College, Toronto), the USA (Boston College), Belgium (Catholic University of Leuven), and three from India (Old St Joseph's Orthodox Seminary, Kottayam, The University of Calicut, and the Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, Madurai). Most recently the Queen's Ecumenical Foundation, Birmingham and the Milltown Institute, Dublin also joined this expanding group. From this there has emerged The Ecclesiological Investigations Research Network.

In November 2005, at Old Saint Joseph's Parish Hall, Philadelphia, a reception was held to launch the proposed New Ecclesiology Program Group of the American Academy of Religion. Sponsored by Liverpool Hope University and organised by Paul Collins, Michael Fahey and Gerard Mannion and with much support from elsewhere. In December that year the Academy approved the proposals. The new group also took the title Ecclesiological Investigations and has been established to provide a ready platform and further series of opportunities for dialogue for all those involved in the field of the study of the church in its numerous forms.

From such beginnings, the AAR Group has progressed from strength to strength. It staged its first sessions in Washington DC at the end of November 2006. This saw one hundred and fifty people attend the first session on 'The Nature and Mission of the Church: Ecclesial Reality and Ecumenical Horizons for the 21st Century', with much discussion being generated in relation to the recently issued document of the World Council of Churches. And one hundred and thirty attended the second session on 'Comparative Ecclesiology: Critical Investigations', exploring the nature, scope and promise of this new method in general and the pioneering work of Roger Haight SJ, in particular. In 2007 its sessions explored 'Communion and Otherness: Contemporary Challenges of "Impaired Communion"' and 'The Church and its Many Asian Faces/Perspectives on Transnational Communion'. In 2008, the themes for discussion are 'Consensus Statements on the Church: What Remains Divisive?' and '21st Century Church' – the latter session exploring contemporary reality and future prospects for the church in general and ecclesiology in particular.

Catholicity in Action

Theologians and activists from four different continents and from many different churches gathered at the St. Deiniol's Library in Wales between January 12–15 2007 to discuss the issues and themes of greatest importance to the church of today and of the future, including explorations concerning the nature and role of the church. The event marked the First International Conference of the Ecclesiological Investigations International Research Network. This conference was a landmark event for the new Network and helped to identify key priorities and hence to consolidate its promise further.

The Mission of the Ecclesiological Investigations Research Network

The mission statement of this new Network states that it seeks to serve as a hub for national and international collaboration in ecclesiology, drawing together other groups and networks, initiating research ventures and providing administrative support as well as acting as a funding magnet to support conversations, research and education in this field. The abiding ethos of the Network will be that the church must be inclusive if it is to be relevant and if it is truly to fulfil its mission. Finally, the task of this international Network is to foster and facilitate open and pluralistic conversation and collaboration.

The Network's Five Fundamental Aims

1. The establishment of partnerships between scholars, research projects and research centres across the world.
2. The development of virtual, textual and actual conversation between the many persons and groups involved in research and debate about ecclesiology.
3. Organising and sharing in colloquia, symposia and conferences.
4. Encouraging joint teaching, exchanges of postgraduate students and faculty.
5. Publishing this new and ongoing series of volumes on Ecclesiological Investigations, itself.

Further Network Initiatives to Date

The Network has already made significant progress which has brought new attention to the importance of the study of ecclesiology for our times. In addition to the popular new program unit of the American Academy of Religion, a new seminar of the UK Society for the Study of Theology, also focusing upon Ecclesiology, was established at the 2007 annual conference at Girton College, Cambridge University and a twice-yearly series of 'Study Days in Ecclesiology' for research students and other interested parties in the field have been taking take

place since 2006 with the first three being staged in the UK and the fourth being staged at the Milltown Institute, Ireland in 2008, to be followed by further planned events throughout Europe with analogous events anticipated across other continents. Negotiations with T&T Clark International led to the launch of this new series of publications for the Network, with the first four volumes published in the first half of 2008.[1]

Obviously, the series seeks to help fulfil the broader aims and objectives of the Network itself and involves collaboration amongst a wide range of international scholars and research centres and projects across the field of ecclesiological enquiry. This includes work in historical, collaborative, denominational, methodological, ecumenical, inter-faith, conceptual, thematic and inter-disciplinary forms of ecclesiological enquiry, as well as studies of particular traditions, developments and debates pertinent to the broad field.

Not only does the series seek to publish the very best of research presented to the Network's various meetings, conferences and colloquia, it also seeks to be a visibly identifiable publication outlet for quality research in ecclesiology worldwide, tapping into a truly global network of research groups, projects, church organisations and practitioners, experts and scholars in the field. The series also aims to encourage and indeed commission collaborative volumes and 'cutting edge' monographs in the field, as well as textbooks that will further enhance knowledge, understanding and dialogue in the field. The series also seeks to offer a home to thematic collections of essays and conferences proceedings from numerous additional groups and research centres in the field. Thus, in particular, the series seeks to incorporate the best of the scholarly papers presented at the AAR Program Group papers, the regular international Ecclesiological Investigations conferences, and from similar gatherings of theological and ecclesial scholars from around the globe. It will also seek to reflect the wider debates generated in relation to such papers and meetings.

The Network and Series alike are in partnership with the journal *Ecclesiology*, edited by Paul Avis, which the Network endorses as a further worthy and most fruitful outlet for ongoing ecclesiological enquiry. The first issue of 2008 (vol. 4 no. 2) was especially devoted to the new Network, featuring, in particular, several papers presented at the First International conference in 2007.

Developing the International Network

Thus the Ecclesiological Investigations Network has been established to gather people together regularly to discuss issues and themes of interest and concern in contemporary ecclesiology. The plan is to spread the work of this group wider to embrace other partners in the international scene further afield. We are hence hoping to dovetail the work of the network with the efforts of the AAR program group to continue to establish broader and inclusive conversations and networks in ecclesiology and to raise the profile of the sub-discipline.

The rapid progress made in this initial work in building the foundations for this Network demonstrates that it is very much needed, can serve the requisite

communities and scholars alike in a wide variety of ways, and will not simply enhance the standing of the discipline in the academic community across the globe, but will also, through bringing people and communities together in ongoing conversation and partnership, have a major positive impact on the lives of those communities that form the subject-matter which ecclesiology is engaged in studying.

The Network will be also be groundbreaking in that in all its activities it seeks to build partnerships, collaboration and understanding, in contrast to the competitive ethos that prevails in much of the contemporary academic world. Collaboration over and against competition will be its guiding principle.

Intended and Enduring Collaborative Legacy

The ethos behind the initial mission statement of the Network entails a firm commitment to exploring issues pertaining to pluralism, both religious and otherwise, as well as towards ethical debates of national, international and inter-continental relevance from the outset. Such endeavours offer further scope for the Network's lasting legacy to be positive in numerous ways. The Network seeks to cut across a variety of disciplinary, cultural, religious and geographical boundaries and has already demonstrated that such enormous potential can bear much fruit. Finally, it should be emphasized that it is also a key aim of the network to involve particular partners from those regions of the world which have extremely limited access to funding to facilitate their participation in the broader international network.

The Key to the Future: Major Funding and Support

The next major task for the Network's steering group is to secure the substantial funding necessary in order that all the initial faith, hope and charity come to long-lasting fruition. This will require a coalition of funding organisations, institutions and individuals to help ensure the open, pluralistic and collaborative vision can bear much ongoing fruit in future.

We invite all institutions, charities, organisations and individuals who are passionate about and committed to the life and mission of the church today and tomorrow, who believe in a church of churches that is called into being to bear witness to the gospel and to serve the wider human family through tireless work towards the kingdom ends of justice, peace and righteousness, to join and sponsor the collegial and collaborative work of this new Network.

Pluralism is not an ideology; rather it is first of all a descriptive term for the way things are, for reality. At the same time it is also the name for the healthiest and most appropriate response to the way things are, as opposed to turning away from and attempting to deny that reality in various modes of self-delusion and community delusion. Pluralism is all around us and inescapable. But why would anyone seek to escape the riches of the diverse gifts God gives humanity to share?

You are warmly invited to join this ecumenical inter-continental conversation and we look forward to your participation and contribution.

Note

1. These are: *Christian Community Now: Ecclesiological Investigations and the Quest for a Theological Ecclesiology,* Paul Collins, Gerard Mannion, Gareth Powell and Kenneth Wilson; *Receiving 'The Nature and Mission of the Church'*: *Ecclesial Reality and Ecumenical Horizons for the 21st Century*, eds. Paul Collins and Michael Fahey; *Comparative Ecclesiology: Critical Investigations*, ed. Gerard Mannion and the volume you presently hold in your hands.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTRIBUTORS

Mark Chapman is vice-principal of Ripon College, Cuddesdon, Oxfordshire, an Anglican seminary, and a member of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oxford. He is a Church of England priest and serves as honorary assistant curate at All Saints' Church, Cuddesdon. He has published widely in the fields of church history and many other aspects of theology. His most recent books are *Blair's Britain: A Christian Critique* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005), *Anglicanism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2006) and *Bishops, Saints and Politics* (T&T Clark, 2007). He is editor of *The Anglican Covenant: Unity and Diversity in the Anglican Communion* (Continuum, 2007). He is co-editor of the *Journal for the History of Modern Theology* and publications officer for Affirming Catholicism.

Paul M. Collins is Reader in Theology at the. A priest of the Church of England, he has worked in theological education for 20 years, including Chichester Theological College and the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham. His research interests include the doctrines of the Trinity, *theosis*, and the church and inculturation, especially in South India. His major publications include *Trinitarian Theology West and East* (Oxford University Press, 2001), *Context, Culture and Worship: The Quest for 'Indian-ness'*, (ISPCK, 2006) and *Christian Inculturation in India* (Ashgate, 2007). The outcome of his research project in India is also available in a database recently made available on the Internet at http://inculturation.chi.ac.uk/index.cfm. He is currently a member of the Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England.

Ernst Conradie teaches Systematic Theology and Ethics in the Department of Religion and Theology at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. His research interests are mainly in the field of ecological theology.

Jenny Daggers is Senior Lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies at Liverpool Hope University. She holds a PhD and MA in Theology from the University of Manchester, and a B.Soc.Sc. in Political Science from the University of Birmingham. Jenny is co-editor with Diana Neal of *Sex, Gender and Religion: Josephine Butler Revisited* (Peter Lang, 2006), and author of *The British Christian Women's Movement: A Rehabilitation of Eve* (Ashgate, 2002) and of a number of articles on feminist theology and women and religion.

Mary McClintock Fulkerson is Associate Professor of Theology at Duke University Divinity School, USA. Her primary teaching interests are feminist theologies, theology and culture theories, and the theological interpretation of scripture. Her book *Changing the Subject: Women's Discourses and Feminist Theology* (Fortress Press, 1994), examines the liberating practices of feminist academics and non-feminist churchwomen. She has written articles challenging theologies that make heterosexuality normative for Christianity and exploring the usefulness of literary criticism and cultural theory for understanding different interpretive communities within churches. Her book *Traces of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (Oxford University Press, 2007) interprets ecclesiological issues in light of racial diversity and the differently abled. An ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA), she has been involved in national ecclesiastical bodies and has chaired a North Carolina Presbytery's Task Force on human sexuality. She also teaches in the Duke Women's Studies Program.

Bernard Hoose was educated at the Gregorian University in Rome, where he obtained degrees in philosophy and theology and a doctorate in moral theology. He lectures in moral theology at Heythrop College in the University of London. He has written widely on various aspects of moral theology and authority within the church. He edited and contributed to *Authority in the Roman Catholic Church* (Ashgate, 2002). Recent articles include: 'Intuition and Moral Theology' in *Theological Studies* (2006); 'Capital Punishment and Moral Theology' in *Law and Justice* (2006); and 'Marriage, Sex and Ceremony' in *The Pastoral Review* (2005). His most recent book is *Moral Theology for the 21st Century: Essays in Celebration of Kevin Kelly* (edited with Julie Clague and Gerard Mannion, T&T Clark, 2008).

Jayne Hoose was formerly a senior lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University, and currently works as a freelance writer and lecturer. She has published a range of articles, book chapters and books in the two disciplines of leisure and moral theology. She is the editor of *Conscience in World Religions* (Gracewing, 1999). With Chris Bull and Mike Weed, she co-authored *An Introduction to Leisure Studies* (Pearson Education, 2003).

Gerard Mannion serves as Chair of the Ecclesiological Investigations Research Network and is presently a Senior Research Fellow of the Katholieke Universiteit LeuvenandaVisitingProfessorofthe.Hestudiedat
Cambridge and Oxford Universities, has been a lecturer at church university colleges in Oxford and Leeds and was previously Associate Professor of Ecclesiology and Ethics at Liverpool Hope University, where he was the founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Ecclesiology and co-director of the Applied Ethics Initiative. His publications include several volumes in the fields of both ecclesiology and ethics, as well as various other writings on differing aspects of systematic theology and philosophy. Most recently, he has published *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church* and *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time*. He is series editor of the T&T Clark series of volumes, *Ecclesiological Investigations*.

David McLoughlin is Programme Leader for Post-Graduate Theology at Newman University College, Birmingham. He studied at Oscott College, Birmingham, the Gregorian University, Rome, and Cambridge. He is an Honorary Lecturer at Birmingham University, a former President of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain, and a former Vice-President of the European Association of Catholic Theology. His present research, with John Vincent at the Urban Theology Unit in Sheffield, is on the changing use of the scriptures in radical Christian movements. His most recent pieces of writing are 'The Church: A Community of Disciples', in Anne Hession and Patricia Kieran (eds), *Exploring Theology: Making Sense of the Catholic Tradition* (Veritas, 2007); 'Women and Children First? Jesus' Teaching on the Family' in *The Pastoral Review* (2006); and 'Fear, Hate and the Stranger' in *Just So: Stories and Comment on Themes,* Occasional Essays published by the Social Responsibility Office of Worcester Diocese (January 2006).

John O'Brien was born in Ireland and studied science, education and theology. He has worked as a teacher in Sierra Leone and as a community activist in inner-city Dublin, and has spent 20 years in Pakistan living and working among the Christian and Hindu minorities while maintaining a dialogue with Islam. His doctoral thesis at the Gregorian University, Rome was entitled: 'The Hermeneutical Privilege of the Poor' (1988). Among his published works are *Theology and the Option for the Poor* (Liturgical Press, 1992), *Seeds of a New Church* (Columba Press, 1994) and *The Construction of Pakistani Christian Identity* (Research Society of Pakistan, 2006). He is the director of the Naia Mashra Naia Insan (New Society, New Person) project in Sindh and is a professed member of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.

George Pattison is Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford and a canon of Christ Church Cathedral. After 13 years as a parish priest he worked in the Universities of Cambridge and Aarhus (Denmark) before coming to Oxford. His main scholarly work has been in the area of philosophy of religion and modern theology in the continental European tradition, with special emphasis on German idealism and its critics. He has written extensively on Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Heidegger, theology and visual art, modern doctrine, and the philosophy of religion. More recently he has worked on issues of theology and technology, as in his most recent book, *Thinking about God in an Age of Technology* (Oxford University Press, 2005). He is a vice-president of the Modern Churchpeople's Union, and a former editor of its journal, *Modern Believing.*

Steven Shakespeare is the Anglican Chaplain of Liverpool Hope University and Associate Director of the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Ecclesiology. Born in Walsall, UK, he studied theology at Cambridge University and has worked in parishes in Cambridge and Sheffield. His publications include *Kierkegaard, Language and the Reality of God* (Ashgate, 2001); *The Inclusive God: Reclaiming Theology for an Inclusive Church* (with Hugh Rayment-Pickard, Canterbury Press, 2006); and *Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Introduction* (SPCK, 2007).

Steve Summers is currently an Anglican parish priest in the diocese of Portsmouth. He has worked in the electronics industry and as a director of a Christian centre for the US Navy whilst based in the UK. After obtaining an undergraduate degree at St Andrew's University he moved south to work as a youth and community worker, mainly with the homeless and marginalized in inner-city Portsmouth. At present he is working on a part-time Ph.D. at Chichester University on the implications of friendship for the Church community in postmodernity.

Ola Tjørhom has been a Professor of Systematic Theology and Dogmatics since 1993. Previously he was a research professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, and held the Chair of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger, Norway, and was Director of the Nordic Ecumenical Institute in Uppsala, Sweden. After his reception into the full fellowship of the Roman Catholic Church in 2003, he has inter alia been teaching cultural studies at the University of Stavanger and systematic theology at the University of Wales. Among his numerous publications is *Visible Church – Visible Unity: Ecumenical Ecclesiology and 'The Great Tradition of the Church'* (Liturgical Press, 2004).

Keith Ward taught philosophy at the Universities of Glasgow, St Andrews, London, and Cambridge, where he was Dean and Director of Studies in Philosophy and Theology at Trinity Hall. He subsequently held the Chair of Moral Theology at King's College, London, then the Chair of the History and Philosophy of Religion, also at King's College, followed by the Regius Chair of Divinity at Oxford. He is currently the Chair of Divinity at Gresham College. A Fellow of the British Academy, and a priest of the Church of England since 1972, he has published widely, his most recent volumes including *Re-Thinking Christianity* (Oneworld Publications, 2007) and *Christianity: A Guide for the Perplexed* (SPCK, 2007).

Kenneth Wilson was educated at the University of Cambridge and Bristol and is a Methodist Minister. After chaplaincies to London University and Kingswood School, Bath, he held the Rowbotham Chair in Philosophical Theology and Ethics at Wesley College, Bristol and taught at Bristol University. He has also been the Principal of Westminster College, Oxford and the Director of Research at the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham. He is currently Visiting Research Fellow at Canterbury Christ Church University and Chichester University. His current research interests are ecclesiology and the role of theological enquiry in public debate. He is a member of Ecclesiological Investigations and Deputy Chair of a research project, Learning for Life, which is focused upon character education, and Chair of the Ammerdown Trust. His publications include *Making Sense of It* (Epworth Press, 1973); *Focus on God* (with Frances Young, Epworth Press, 1986); *Freedom and Grace* (edited with Ivor Jones, Epworth Press, 1988); *Readings in Church Authority* (edited with Gerard Mannion, Richard Gaillardetz and Jan Kerkhofs, Ashgate, 2003); and *Learning to Hope* (Epworth Press, 2006).

Phyllis Zagano has taught at Fordham, Boston, and Yale Universities in the United States, and currently holds a research appointment at Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York.

Church: The Distinctive and Definitive Idea of Christianity

Keith Ward

The idea of the church is distinctive to and definitive of Christianity. The church is 'the body of Christ' (1 Cor. 12.27). One could say the notion of church is constitutive of the 'otherness' of Christianity itself. If a body is the means of expressing a personal reality in history, the vehicle of that person's actions in the world, and the local and identifiable presence of that person, then the church expresses what Christ is, mediates the acts of Christ, and is the means by which Christ is present in the world, in a particular recognisable form.

Yet it is immediately clear that this is an ideal that is not fully realized in history. Whereas Jesus was fully united to the divine Logos from the first, and was without sin, the members of the church are never wholly free of sin – of hatred, greed, ignorance and pride. So might it be true to say that the church only wholly exists insofar as the Spirit of Christ truly lives and acts in the lives of its members, enabling them to express Christ appropriately, to mediate the selflessly loving acts of Christ unconditionally, and to bear the presence and image of Christ transparently in their minds (so that they know Christ inwardly), their hearts (so that they love Christ intensely), and their lives (so that they share Christ's passion and Christ's joy to the full)?

This would only be possible if, and it will be possible when, we are liberated from sin. Now we live in a time of paradox, when we are still bound to sin, yet God calls us nonetheless to be Christ's body, to die to our sinful selves and share Christ's risen life. In other words, the church now exists partially and imperfectly, but God promises that our life in Christ will reach completion, as the Spirit gradually yet inexorably liberates us and makes us whole. That is what salvation is, something that lies ahead in its fullness, yet has now begun as an active and irreversible power making for human fulfilment in God.

The present church is the assurance that we shall be, clearly and consciously, members of the fellowship of the Spirit, united and fulfilled in Christ, and it is the means by which we begin to be in Christ at this present time. In fact, Christians would mostly agree that the church genuinely exists wherever people take Jesus as their Lord, the finite human manifestation of the divine Logos; wherever they seek

to let the Spirit that was in and sent by Jesus live and work in them; and wherever, responding to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, they understand God's nature as unlimited love and God's purpose as being to raise all things to participate in the divine nature.

Many historic Christian churches have, at times, adopted official positions that seem to indicate narrower viewpoints than this. If one might be permitted to generalize, some examples can be furnished. Thus, according to certain Roman Catholic claims, the church fully exists only where there are bishops in a continuous line of succession from the apostles, where baptism incorporates people into the body of Christ, where the Eucharist is celebrated as a making-present of Jesus' sacrifice and a means of conveying his risen life to devotees, and where the divinely appointed leadership of the Pope is accepted.

Many in the Orthodox churches regard papal supremacy as a post-apostolic innovation, but regard episcopacy and the reception of the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, described in the Gospels as instituted by Jesus himself, as essential for the church.

Protestant churches usually regard episcopacy as just one possible development of patterns of church leadership, and often say, as Calvin did, that the church exists wherever the gospel is preached, and the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist are celebrated by a community. The gospel is essential, for there must be reliable remembrance of Jesus if he is to be the pattern and source of faith. The dominical sacraments are the biblically attested means by which people can die with Christ, in baptism, and receive the life of Christ in the Eucharist. This is in principle a more inclusive view of the church, as the company of all who seek to know and love Christ, and let his risen life, through the Spirit whom he sends, transfigure them into the divine image.

The Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions may be taken as natural developments from the primitive Christian churches, contributing invaluable resources for spirituality, doctrinal reflection and the richness of life in Christ. But from a Protestant point of view, they are developments, and would benefit from being open to a still more inclusive view of the church, and from a stronger emphasis on the ubiquity of human sin and the corruptibility of all social institutions.

On this wider view, questions about what in detail the content of the gospel is, or about how and when the sacraments should be celebrated, will also allow of a plurality of interpretations. Freedom of dissent and of belief, and acceptance of informed critical enquiry, are important elements of a liberal approach to Christian faith. Such a liberal approach will not lay down specific doctrines, whether radical or conservative, as mandatory. It will ask only that all sincerely continue to seek fuller truth, and accept the fact of conscientious diversity among those who believe in common that the cosmos is created by a God who wills the salvation of all, who take Jesus as the definitive revelation of God's nature and promises, and who seek to live by the inward power of the Spirit and to grow towards fullness of being in Christ.

On such a view, the church will always be diverse in its forms and institutions. It will, ideally, hold together through bonds of friendship and common love of God

in Christ. It will be one, as Jesus and the Father are one, united by bonds of love and mutual relationship. It will seek to be in the world as Jesus was, a reconciling, healing, forgiving, serving presence and witness to the unlimited love of God. It will confess its frailty, obtuseness and liability to corruption. But it will maintain its distinctive claim that within its many forms of fellowship God acts to unite humanity, and through humanity the world, within the divine life.

That unity may often be obscured, or even sometimes almost lost. But God's promise is that it will not finally fail, and that on the rock of Peter's confession, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God' (Mt. 16.16), such a fellowship will be founded that even the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

CHURCH AND THE GRACE OF OTHERNESS: EXPLORING QUESTIONS OF TRUTH, UNITY AND DIVERSITY

Gerard Mannion

Journeys Through-Otherness

On Tuesday, 8 May 2007, an event took place which would have been unthinkable just a few years before. The staunch Ulster Loyalist Ian Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party and the equally staunch Republican, Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness, were jointly sworn in as Northern Ireland's First Minister and Deputy First Minister, respectively. It marked the return to devolved government for the communities of Northern Ireland and heralded a genuine new dawn in the relations between the divided peoples and traditions of the six counties that constitute Northern Ireland. In his own speech following this ceremony, McGuinness spoke the following words:

> Ireland's greatest living poet, a fellow Derry man, Seamus Heaney, once told a gathering that I attended at Magee University that for too long and too often we speak of the others or the other side and that what we need to do is to get to a place of through-otherness. The Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers is a good place to start. This will only work if we collectively accept the wisdom and importance of Seamus Heaney's words. Since 26 March, much work has been done which has confounded critics and astounded the sceptics. ... we must overcome the difficulties which we face in order to achieve our goals and seize the opportunities that exist. This and future generations expect and deserve no less from us.[1]

Heaney, in that previous talk, had most likely been drawing upon a talk he gave at Aberdeen University in 2001,[2] in which he cites the poem 'Armagh' by the late Presbyterian minister, BBC producer and poet W. R. Rodgers (1909–1969), known as the 'Catholic Presbyterian' because of his non-sectarian demeanour. The phrase 'through-otherness' comes from Rodgers' poem itself:

> There is a through-otherness about Armagh
> Of tower and steeple,
> Up on the hill are the arguing graves of the kings
> And below are the people. [3]

Heaney spoke of Rodgers' own personal background and how it embraced Irish, Scots and English heritage in much the same way as those three cultural identities have shaped Northern Ireland for so long of recent history. One might delve deep into literary and cultural theory, or perhaps psychological and psychoanalytic studies, to explore the notion of otherness and othering, or perhaps turn to postmodern philosophical discussions to explore 'alterity' or to modern philosophical discussions to consider the concept of alienation. Sociological, anthropological and ethnographic theorists and studies, along with discourse from gender theory, all have much to say on the notion as well. To engage with any or all such approaches would be relevant here. But for now, let us remain with the words of that man who for so long was engaged in an armed struggle to rid Ireland of everything that embodied the very state and cultural identity that his new partner in power held most dear and in defence of which he had so often uttered the cry of 'No surrender'.

Indeed, I think McGuinness's words and the long conflict that has plagued Ireland perhaps offer us the chance to reflect upon the destructive forces unleashed when we accentuate otherness in negative and pejorative ways. So, too, McGuinness's speech allows us to see that we can also choose to affirm, celebrate and embrace otherness and to move through it to a better place. Even by those from far beyond the island of Ireland, the momentousness of those events from May 2007 can hopefully be appreciated. But, in the not too distant future, this Introduction will no doubt lose its vivid force at this point. So let me assure those younger readers of the future who might stumble on this book that the sight of Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness side by side, sharing jokes with the media and discussing the shared positive future they both hope to facilitate for their respective communities, which together form one community, is something many would once have deemed to be literally impossible.

Of course, so many of the troubles that have blighted the north of Ireland, and the island in its entirety, became less about religion per se (if they ever truly were) than cultural identity and loyalties, about differing worldviews and about conceptions of history, about political ideologies and about raw and naked power and its abuse. Nonetheless, otherness, including religious otherness, has dictated so much of Ireland's sorry past. Now, with the cosmopolitan society that is the modern Republic of Ireland's Celtic Tiger swiftly being joined by the development of the six counties of Northern Ireland, all Irish people, north and south, realize that their otherness is perhaps less important after all than what they share in common.

Alterity and Postmodern Consciousness

The 'Other', then, has been part of our overt discourse for a very long time, just as it has manifested itself in human discourse in so many other implicit ways – in conversation, narratives, actions, play, war, politics, charity, morality and social activism, and the like. Perhaps Emmanuel Levinas[4] and, following his influence, Jacques Derrida[5] are two of the better-known figures who have written extensively

and explicitly about 'the other' in recent decades. Levinas, in particular, has helped to raise awareness of the fact that attention to the other and otherness is primarily a matter of ethical responsibility. But in a sense, the need to be open to and responsible for the other is something which is there in all of the great religious traditions of the world. It is there at the heart of the Christian gospel – love God and your neighbour as yourself. Thus the great commandment of compassion for the other. Christianity, then, is also a religion of openness to the other, to all others.[6]

Perhaps, more than any other development, the attention to otherness in a positive, ethical sense and the affirmation of the other *as* other is the greatest legacy and achievement of the postmodern era. It has not been the preserve solely of dusty academics but has actually changed social consciousness and practice across numerous societies.

Alterity, attention to the awareness and eventual celebration of the other and of otherness, has become commonplace. An increasing awareness that domination, control, manipulation and suppression of the other are morally wrong has also been a prominent feature of postmodern consciousness. Perhaps many chicken-and-egg debates could be had about whether events in history and the greater awareness of and tools and methods for reflection upon differing human experiences and modes of being have had the crucial formative effect on intellectual developments concerning otherness (e.g. giving rise to particular schools of phenomenology, existentialism and deconstructionism) or vice versa. I suspect the true relationship is not only two-way, but more a matrix of more complex developments.

Whatever the case may be, in terms of more specifically philosophical and also theological discourse, the critique of metanarratives has offered positive epistemological, social and, above all, ethical insights and resources to the human family. Schools of thought vary as to whether all metaphysics, for example, or ontotheology *in toto*, or, indeed, the Enlightenment itself, should now be rejected and shunned, or rather, simply the darker sides of such, which perhaps often unconsciously, perhaps at other times more consciously, have led to a shoring up of injustice and oppression, of control and domination.

The Vietnamese-American theologian Peter Phan, one of the foremost Catholic thinkers of his era, equally perceives the attention to otherness as perhaps the key achievement of postmodernity and offers an admirable summary of this perspective:

> Basic to the postmodern epistemology is respect for and celebration of particularity and 'otherness' in all dimensions of human life, from race and ethnicity to gender to religion to culture. Diversity and plurality, which otherness implies, are not seen as curses to human flourishing to be exorcised or as threats to human unity to be suppressed. Rather they are to be vigorously promoted and joyously celebrated as natural endowments necessary for genuine peace and justice. Plurality and diversity are perceived to be the essential safeguards preventing life-affirming unity from degenerating into deadening uniformity or, worse, into an instrument for the powerful to homogenize those who are different and to deny them their basic rights to be who and what they are.[7]

And, yet, despite all this, despite the fact that at no other time has awareness of the other been so prominent, our world seems to have slid back towards a fear and resentment of – and thus, in turn, a desire to control and oppress – the other. The age of totalitarianism was supposed to be long past. And yet today we see the need for absolute control affirmed anew and the violation of the truth, as well as of the human rights and dignity that stand in the way of such control and domination, has never been more terrifying. Why might this be so? Partly because of the advent of a new 'grand narrative', that of dehumanizing globalization, as Phan observes:

> Ironically, however, concomitant with this centrifugal celebration of plurality and otherness, there is also in postmodernity a centripetal movement toward universal unity, toward the construction of the 'global village', under the pressure of ever-widening globalization.[8]

And this is partly, perhaps, because the allure of domination has reared its ugly head in new and more subtle or pseudo-subtle fashions in our times. The domination and control of the other – denying, suppressing and indeed humiliating the other – has become a default *modus operandi* of those in positions of power. Indeed the ways and means of dehumanizing or de-ontologizing (in the case of non-human beings and the natural environment itself) the 'inconvenient other' have been elevated, if not to the form of an art, at least to that of a veritable industry. As Denys Turner illustrated so well in his brilliant essay 'How to Kill People', originally delivered to a group of high-powered American businessmen,[9] in order to justify and facilitate such oppression, you dehumanize the 'other' (or if the 'other' is an animal you de-ontologize it, refusing to allow it to be honoured as a being worthy of respect and dignity at all). You label the other negatively (e.g. *Untermensch*, enemy, terrorist, foetus, 'human vegetable' or, to cite a more recent example, we might say, post-Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, 'non-combatant militant') and make the distance between the other and you or your group seem very great indeed. Thus, Turner notes,

> we will allow ourselves to kill only those whom we have set at a maximum distance from ourselves by means of that most powerful of human tools, the power of misdescription. We deny our victims any community we share, we attempt to affirm our own humanity in the act of denying our victim his.[10]

Religious Others and Otherness

Thus Martin McGuinness's appropriation of Seamus Heaney and W. R. Rodgers helps communicate how, in our times, there is far too much talk of the otherness of the 'other'. Applying this to inter-faith and inter-church relations, we see that talk of the 'religious other', be that in terms of members of other faiths, members of other Christian churches or even other members of one's own ecclesial tradition or community, has returned with a particularly harsh edge in recent years. In many quarters today, commonality and shared humanity are less to the fore in ecclesial

and theological discourse. Divisions, deficiencies and disagreements occupy far too much of our energy and time. These might well be symptoms of our increasingly divided world, but they are also causal factors that further contribute to the divisions that ravage the human family today.

Thus, in general, religious otherness in the twenty-first century has become not less but rather *more* accentuated. Entire faiths and cultures are perceived to be pitted against one another. Conflicts rage, defining the opposition *through* their very cultural and religious otherness. Human rights are breached and the accords of international law ignored because certain states believe that 'the other' deserves fewer rights and less dignity than those who share more 'sameness' with ourselves.

Indeed, even churches in recent times have returned to discourse and practices which are destined to accentuate otherness more than human commonality. After a century which, though admittedly blighted by conflict and divisions, also witnessed unprecedented ecumenical, inter-faith and inter-cultural understanding and dialogue, the twenty-first century begins with otherness being perceived all too often in negative and pejorative terms anew. This collection of essays seeks to address that situation vis-à-vis the Christian churches in a variety of ways.

There have been so many significant contributions to theology in recent times that have sought to enable Christians better to understand and embrace the other as other, from the varieties of liberation theologies and political theology, to feminist, womanist and *mujerista* theologies, to queer theologies, animal theology, and eco-theology. And, of course, varieties of religious studies, social-scientific collaborations with and integrations into theology, to theologies of religions and comparative theology.

This has been mirrored in ecclesiology, with comparative ecclesiology a recent development that the present editor has particularly commended elsewhere. And nor should one underplay the varieties of apophatic theology and differing constructive postmodern theologies. Perhaps hermeneutics, in particular, has helped pave the way for a constructive appropriation of attention to otherness in Christian theology. The many lessons to be learned from inter-faith dialogue, ecumenical endeavours and wider processes towards conflict resolution and truth, forgiveness and reconciliation have still more to teach us today.

And attention to otherness in a positive sense is not simply the legacy of recent intellectual and culture developments. For this can be traced to the very heart of the Christian tradition itself. The late Stanley Grenz, a post-conservative Evangelical who was taken from the world far too early, suggested, in his final book, that in theological and, indeed, ontological terms, such attention to the other helps offer an alternative to the 'mysticism of the One', where all difference is collapsed into that One, through bringing into focus 'another, equally powerful dimension of the apophatic way, namely, the acknowledgment that God is totally "Other" that has stood alongside the emphasis on the One at the center of negative theology since at least Gregory of Nyssa'.[11] The 'radical transcendence' of the One was the starting point for such reflection. Grenz sees that here Levinas and other postmodern approaches, along with the earlier Christian (particularly patristic) traditions, share in common that same concern of 'the interest in the integrity of the Other'.[12] Grenz goes further still, reminding us that Christianity firmly

believes that God would be God even were the world not to exist. In the depths of divine being, an 'Otherness' of God must therefore be part of the transcendent divine being – indeed, this entails that Otherness is a fundamental element of the doctrine of the Trinity. As Grenz states,

> This acknowledgment opens the way for an understanding of God as the one in whom Otherness is eternally present, an Otherness that is, in turn, freely given in God's gracious revelation. Hence, it opens the way to the acknowledgment that while God remains always incomprehensible, there is no God 'above' the unity-in-multiplicity or the multiplicity-in-unity disclosed in the revelational saga of the divine name. Furthermore, the divine Otherness means that absolute unity – Oneness apart from Otherness – need no longer be posited as the highest principle of reality. Rather, unity and multiplicity – Oneness and Otherness – demand equal emphasis.[13]

Grenz, following the other great Gregory of the Eastern tradition, Gregory of Nazianzus, stresses that both understandings must come together and should not be separated – the Oneness-in-Otherness and Otherness-in-Oneness must be seen not in isolation or competition but rather 'as interconnected and reciprocally related'.[14] The Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner had earlier considered similar themes in relation to the thought of Aquinas concerning the 'hiddenness of God'.[15]

And yet, despite the great achievements made throughout the first three quarters of the twentieth century, religious divisions and polemics have not disappeared but rather, sadly, have been intensified in our times. And indeed inhumanity, greed and oppression have intensified as well.

In theological terms, we see that on numerous recent ecclesiological and wider systematic and dogmatic methodological pathways, along with further manifest-ations in actual ecclesial attitudes and mode-of-being as well as in ecclesial practices themselves, even the world itself, which acts as a conceptual equivalent of the wider society in which particular communions find themselves, is shunned as a threatening 'postmodern other'. In turn this leads to the shunning, or at least the emphasizing, of a qualitative distinction from numerous religious and secular 'others' alike, thus forgetting the answer to the lawyer's question, 'But Lord, *Who* is my neighbour?' (Lk. 10.29–37).

Nonetheless, Phan points out that the movement towards dehumanising globalization is far from being uni-directional and he observes how the non-Western parts of the world have had a major impact in turn on the West, not least of all through immigration.

But the new socio-political, cultural and religious situation of cultural diversity, economic globalization and religious pluralism obviously has an impact on church and theology and presents new challenges. In response, Phan raises three key questions. The first addresses the cultural situation: how can the Catholic Church move away from its Eurocentric elements to become more truly catholic – a church at once truly local and universal? Second, addressing the socio-political situation: how can the church speak of the good news to the poor and the preferential option for the poor and marginalized and yet 'act in solidarity with those crushed by the forces of globalization'?[16] Finally, the core *religious* question: how might the

church not simply respect but also 'incorporate into its own life and worship the teachings and practices of other religions in order to be enriched and transformed by them'?[17]

Phan's work is one of the foremost examples of the great and continuing promise of genuinely pluralistic dialogue and encounter, which, alongside the equally great promise of a comparative method in theology in general and more recently in ecclesiology in particular, has been further demonstrated by various ecumenical, inter-faith and macro-ecumenical ventures, by numerous conferences and conventions, and by many scholars in a multitude of writings.

Although here addressing his own Roman Catholic communion in the first instance, Phan has helped illustrate that we cannot adequately answer these key questions posed by the postmodern world by obstinately appealing to universal reason or sacred authority in the postmodern world. Neither natural law nor divine revelation can form the basis of a universally applicable or normative metanarrative today: 'We are ineluctably socially located and historically conditioned animals'.[18] Instead, given that no Archimedean point exists from which to survey the entirety of history, he commends epistemological modesty,[19] the acknowledgement and embracing of other forms of knowing that are not addicted to the desire for certitude, are not obsessed with absoluteness and which do not rely solely upon rationality but also embrace imagination and the heart, 'the kind of knowledge that is proper to interpersonal relationships' as opposed to mathematical equations and physical laws.[20] Human knowledge is obtained through interaction, humble and respectful conversation, 'in a genuine *dialogue* with the other, in which one's own insights are humbly offered, the other's wisdom gratefully appropriated, and the quest for truth is undertaken together in mutual respect and love'.[21] Much of Phan's own work is enriching and tangible evidence that such dialogue is not only possible, but is also the way in which Christianity can steer a course between futile and nostalgic restorationism or the descent into absolute postmodern relativism and meaninglessness or, as David Tracy once put it, retrenchment or taking flight.

Explorations into Church and Religious Otherness: The Conversations Present in this Volume

Roger Haight has demonstrated in his pioneering comparative theological work that 'The realistic antithesis to relativism is better formulated as pluralism'.[22] In effect, he demonstrates that, today, the true antithesis to absolute relativism and nihilism is not conservative retrenchment but rather pluralism itself. Here mirroring the sentiments of Phan, he states that,

> as we begin the twenty-first century the Christian church is not in the same place as it was at the start of the twentieth century when the ecumenical movement got under way and then flourished. The demands of inculturation, reactions to globalization, and religious pluralism leave us with new problems. One way of dealing with these issues involves thinking pluralistically and comparatively. This imperative does not provide an alternative to the denominational thinking that all churches have to

practice. But denominational self-consciousness should be complemented with a more expansive vision of the world and the role of the church in it. Various comparative ecclesiological strategies can help here.[23]

In the spirit of Haight's sentiments, this volume brings together the contributions of the speakers from a series of lectures on the theme of 'Church in Our Times' hosted by the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Ecclesiology and the Hope Theological Society at Liverpool Hope University, throughout the first four months of 2006,[24] and it also embraces a number of invited contributions from wider international contexts. Thus we are privileged to be able to include voices from, and perspectives upon, Africa, Asia, America and Europe. More specifically our volume brings together voices, explorations and perspectives from England, India, Ireland, Norway, Pakistan, Scotland, South Africa, the United States and Wales, as well as distinctive ecclesial, gendered and methodological approaches and perspectives.

A number of our chapters primarily address the situation in and challenges for one specific church and ecclesial tradition. However, what became striking as the original course of talks continued each week – confirmed even more so in the later contributions that have also brought their rich gifts to this dialogical table – was an increasing awareness of just how many issues which, though discussed by individual authors vis-à-vis their own church, are also pressing concerns for other churches as well, where similar challenges are being faced today. All contributors share an open and constructive outlook in their treatment of their respective issues.

The complementarity, commonality and coherence of the papers, along with the manner in which a number of them together contribute towards making a cumulative case on similar issues of concern for 'the church in our times', constitute a major strength of this collection, in ecumenical terms.

Indeed, such commonality proved to be the major inspiration behind this volume itself: the aim is to show how Christians in very different contexts and from different communions, traditions and denominations are facing similar situations and can therefore benefit from greater conversation toward the end of discerning common responses to and strategies for dealing with those situations.

It is important to make clear that this is *not* a volume that seeks to launch a movement, nor one in which all sing from the same 'hymn sheet'. Far from it: As an affirmation of pluralistic reality, it is only natural that there should be disparate voices in this volume – not all would agree with sentiments and approaches taken in various other chapters. That is healthy and is the entire point that is reflected in each essay, namely, that diversity and plurality are blessings for the church and the wider world alike and need not be feared or shunned.

Keith Ward opens our volume with a reflection upon the idea of the church as Christianity's most distinctive and definitive idea. Yet the churches as currently constituted and understood fall short of the eschatological ideal that Christ called into being. Differences between and even within churches must be respected and if a more inclusive understanding of what it is to be church were allowed to prevail throughout the various traditions, then perhaps the church could more fully fulfil its mission.

Thereafter, the volume is divided into three parts. Part I explores 'Ecumenical and Pluralist Contexts and Questions'. Phyllis Zagano identifies and then constructively explores questions concerning the place and ministry of women in the church, one of the most fractious issues confronting Christians today, dividing the faithful within and across differing communions. Following an explanation of the teaching of particular churches concerning women's ministry, Zagano turns to suggestive engagement with the core issues at stake. She focuses in particular on the issue of women deacons and shows that the various traditions, along with a large number of ecumenical conversations and bilateral and multilateral conversations between churches (in particular, those between the Anglican, Old Catholic, and Orthodox churches), offer a surprising amount of agreement on this issue. Zagano believes there is cause for much hope for the vocations of women who seek to serve the church, particularly her own Roman Catholic community.

Ernst Conradie offers an extended reflection on the church as the 'household (*oikos*) of God', suggesting that it offers much promise for further ecclesiological illumination when considered in relation to wider theological questions concerning the 'economy of the triune God', e.g. questions of creation, providence, redemption and completion (eschatology). Numerous studies help illustrate how the notion of *oikos* can help function as a root metaphor for a Spirit-oriented doctrine of creation, an anthropology of stewardship, a soteriology and ecclesiology of inclusion grounded in true membership, an eschatology of hope, a pastoral theology of edification and an ethics of hospitality, home-making, sufficient nourishment and eco-justice. But Conradie also criticizes the notion of *oikos*, asking what the true place of the church in God's household truly is. He seeks to explore how the concept can still help redescribe the nature and mission of the church in society. Conradie draws upon a wide range of African ecclesiological sources throughout the chapter to illuminate his hermeneutical undertaking. Thus he provides an African perspective on the World Council of Churches' work on 'ecclesiology and ethics', with African metaphors, traditions and worldviews offering much promising food for further ecclesiological thought. All this helps him to commend a pneumatological balance to more specifically Christological ecclesiologies. The church comes to be understood as a humble yet nonetheless very important part of the larger household of God. The African understanding of dwelling within the extended family, and the group of metaphors to which that gives rise, offer a very important way of reappropriating the root metaphor itself. The church offers much to the wider household and such theological reflection in turn offers much inspiration for the church's social mission.

Paul M. Collins brings his considerable knowledge and experience of Christianity in India to bear upon an exploration of the theories and practices behind inculturation through focusing on the Jesuit missionary Roberto de Nobili as a case study. He thus constructs a critique, rooted in Dalit liberation theology, of adaptation, as well as of inculturation in general. Through exploring the challenges faced by the earlier missionaries in the context of colonial expansion, Collins explores 'unintended' inculturation as well as the two-way interaction between Christianity and each of Hinduism, Islam and Jainism that ensued. Returning to more modern developments, he discusses the fruits of those early

pioneers in the emergence of the Christian Ashram movement, exploring Protestant and Roman Catholic developments alike. Collins suggests that perhaps the true worth and value of inculturation can best be illustrated today through the thought and liturgies inspired by Dalit liberation theology, for 'The quest of Dalit liberation theology is a quest for justice, and thus by extension a quest for truth and for God'. Experience once more becomes a prime resource for theology.

John O'Brien, himself a missionary priest, explores the stories and experiences of the poorest and most marginalized Christians in Pakistan. Through this construction of 'ecclesiology as narrative', he hopes to explore questions such as what the Church actually is and what its practices should be about. The 'otherness' of the silence of the oppressed is thus seen as a resource for ecclesiology in its attempts to better appreciate and draw close to the 'otherness or holiness of God'. He goes on to tell the story of a people shunned by mainstream society who eventually found hope and self-identity, as well as affirmation of their own dignity through their process of becoming church. He explores the history of missions in Pakistan and the various phases of inculturation, first the growth in Protestant Christian villages and then the rapid proliferation of Roman Catholic communities. Offering along the way a critique of the five-fold class structure prevalent in that society, O'Brien's employment of ethnography helps lay the foundation of a liberative comparative ecclesiology, whereby an underclass can draw hope from the struggles endured by their forebears in a manner not dissimilar to Latin American theologies of liberation. He ends with some penetrating and challenging questions for practitioners of ecclesiology in general. He hopes that attention to the 'otherness' of the oppressed will help serve as a hermeneutical principle for a more truly catholic ecclesiology for the future, an ecclesiology that constantly refines itself through dialogue with the other.

Jenny Daggers looks through the lens of feminist hermeneutics at the history and development of Christianity's engagement with and study of other faiths. Exploring the critique of the earlier, particularly nineteenth-century forms of the comparative study of religions, which culminated in the work of Ernst Troeltsch, she argues that much of that tradition is grounded upon a domineering Eurocentric and colonial construct that continued to serve the ends of oppression and perpetuated the view of both European and Christian supremacy. Daggers next explores developments in the twentieth century and suggests that even the paradigm of pluralism which emerged by the later decades of that century was itself still a prisoner of Eurocentric thought patterns. She works towards a commendation of the notion of incommensurate particularity and, following key theorists such as Ursula King, Daggers suggests that a feminist critique has long been the missing element in religious studies. True openness to and affirmation of the other might thus be better facilitated. A 'moratorium' on white Western universals and an emphasis on particularity is charted as the way forward for the Christian theology of religions today. Gender justice and enhanced dialogue might follow.

In Chapter 7, I explore recent debate and developments concerning the Roman Catholic Church and its relations with religious 'others'. Starting off with a reflection on the positive embracing of the need to be an open and dialogical church, which Vatican II brought about, I then explore recent official church

documents that appear to indicate the increasingly prevalent return of Christian supremacist language and attitudes across the churches. Exploring Vatican documents from 2000 (*Dominus Iesus*) and 2007 ('Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church'), I consider the main purposes and intentions behind such documents, as well as exploring the negative impact they have had on relations between the Roman Catholic Church and other faiths. Perceiving both to exhibit the core characteristics of the 'neo-exclusivist' mindset that has spread throughout the wider Christian church in recent decades, I consider ecclesiological, wider theological, and hermeneutical critiques of the ecclesial self-identity exhibited in these documents. Such documents are part of the reaction to the perceived ills of postmodernity, particularly relativism. Further serious concerns are raised by the method utilized in the formation of such documents, whereby particular and context-bound interpretations of earlier church teachings are presented as definitive understandings of those very teachings themselves. I reflect upon the paradox that these documents appear to sit ill at ease with the immense progress made elsewhere in developing harmonious relations, cooperation and human unity between Catholics and those of other churches and faiths alike. I conclude that our divided world today requires a return to the humble openness to the religious other that Vatican II affirmed as an imperative for the church. It is time to jettison these renewed forms of the 'superiority complex' that have been found in many Catholic and wider Christian circles in recent decades. The time is long overdue for genuine and open dialogue with all religious others, so that greater human unity, the prayer and mission of Christ himself, might be forthcoming in these turbulent times.

Part II is concerned with questions of 'Church, Inclusivity and Diversity'. It opens with Steven Shakespeare's incisive essay on inclusive ecclesiology, which utilizes the philosophy of Jacques Derrida to cast the church as a 'community of the question'. As opposed to a community with fixed and determined answers and thus boundary lines, Shakespeare asks whether those who believe in the church as a truly inclusive community can come up with an ecclesiology worthy of that vision, as opposed merely to offering an ecclesiastical appropriation of some key elements of liberal society. Too often, he suggests, churches merely pay lip service to true inclusivity. What is deemed ecclesially essential is never considered in a way which does justice to the radicality of what it means to be an inclusive community. Too much Christian self-awareness and theological discourse continues to be informed by an idealised perfectionist ecclesiology, which fails to do justice to the harshness and ongoing challenges of the reality in which the church always finds itself – history. Offering a critique of the 'new traditionalism' found in the thought of those such as Hauerwas, MacIntyre and the followers of Radical Orthodoxy, Shakespeare unmasks the shallow simplicity of their attacks upon the 'secular' and liberalism, as he also challenges the interpretation and appropriation of Derrida by proponents of Radical Orthodoxy. Instead, he commends the ecclesiological promise of Derrida's challenge that we foster 'a radically open tradition, a communion of self-critical questioning, not of fixed positions'. Radical and embodied hospitality and living with imperfection and brokenness should characterize the church, rather than a harking after some imaginary era of

epistemological, theological, liturgical and ecclesial perfection. This is not liberal sociology, as Radical Orthodoxy's adherents might label it, but rather a genuinely Christian sensibility.

Mary McClintock Fulkerson also utilizes the social sciences in general and ethnography in particular in the service of ecclesiology, exploring how issues of race and gender affect the life and vitality of ecclesial communities. She suggests that our cultural representations, particularly those of bodies, are crucial to shaping 'our sense of who we are and who others are'. In addressing questions of inclusivity and marginality, Fulkerson wishes to contrast legal attempts to address the problems of social marginalisation with a wider attentiveness gained by exploring our social typifications – their effects on and implications for Christian practices. Thus 'being nice' is a default attitude that appears to act as a legal 'colour-blindness' which allows Christians to ignore their own prejudices and continuing injustices because they are content to believe that legislation takes care of racism, ableism and sexism. Utilizing case studies, she helps to demonstrate that church habits of official welcome, even though they employ the language of inclusion, are inadequate to address marginalisation and prejudices. These habits, she believes, allow faith to be couched too much in cognitive terms alone, leaving society's everyday habits and proclivities for other agencies to transform. Fulkerson suggests, alternatively, that 'we must construe faith so as to allow for the role of bodies, the visceral and fear/anxiety in our practices for "including" the marginalized. Otherwise, our theologies are too "cognitive" and thus "too nice" to matter'. Our sins are not simply the maintenance of negative stereotypes, but also obliviousness – a 'not-seeing' that can utilize the language of inclusiveness whilst ignoring the true reality and identity of others. New habituations will lead to better practices whereby people are truly welcomed and included, rather than simply afforded 'nice' politeness.

Steve Summers meditates on some of the most profound debates in recent decades concerning the Eucharist and explores their ecclesiological implications. Focusing, in particular, on the notion of 'friendship' as something definitive for the nature of the church itself, he argues that the Eucharist is not only a central sacrament, but also, literally, a 'meal with friends'. Thus the Eucharist is seen to be not an exclusive but rather a hospitable event – one which is not restricted to a privileged few but is rather open to others. Summers acknowledges that this poses threatening challenges to ecclesiology, but he is confident that the outcome of an engagement with such challenges will be most fruitful for the church in terms of its mission and in offering 'a robust relational and non-structural way of rethinking its identity'. Drawing on a wide variety of recent theological interpretations of the Eucharist from Tim Gorringe to Paul McPartlan to Jean-Luc Marion to William Cavanaugh, along with wider contributions from postmodern philosophy from those such as Derrida, Vattimo and Caputo, Summers offers a more truly relational *communio* understanding of the church, grounded on Jesus' words to the disciples in John 15, 'You are my friends'. Openness to the other and hospitality are thus central themes here also. Pointing towards the 'web of connectedness' that table fellowship not only illustrates but represents, Summers thereby offers a

'trans-significational' understanding of eucharistic table fellowship. The truly immense significance of the Eucharist is thus underlined anew.

The next chapter is the first of two which offer an extended reflection from an Anglican standpoint upon the ecclesiological implications of the Windsor Report. Mark Chapman draws parallels between the contemporary divisions across the Anglican churches and the treatment meted out to Bishop John William Colenso (1814–1883) when he sought to foster a more inclusive church in Natal, South Africa, in the nineteenth century, reaching out, in particular, to the Zulus. Colenso would today be termed a liberal and was castigated and even excommunicated by a fellow bishop for his views and practices. As sides were taken across the church, the controversy raged on, becoming a major impetus for the first Lambeth Conference, and the inspiration behind a series of debates on questions of truth and unity. Schism threatened the church and indeed, in South Africa, parallel authorities were set up. Chapman criticizes the method by which the Windsor Report has been composed. He argues that the report contains too little theology and too little attention to tradition prior to 1867 and is far too self-referential toward other documents produced by the Anglican Communion. The report was supposed to address the taxing problem of provinces 'doing their own thing', yet it ignores the legion of historical parallels here that might have informed its conclusions better. The report further overlooks the important question of how the emerging 'Instruments of Unity' of the Anglican Communion relate to the reality of what the Communion actually is – a collection of independent national churches as opposed to something analogous to the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, the Report appears to afford authority to certain positions and documents where it is unclear precisely what authority they actually do possess. In fact, there appears to be too rigid and restrictive an understanding of what such unity itself entails. Indeed unity seems to be privileged at the expense of truth. It 'confuses the partial rationalism of the Anglican Communion with the universal church'. Chapman looks at two further historical parallels, that of Archbishop Benson in the late nineteenth century and that of St Cyprian in response to the Novationist heresy in the third century, in order to draw the conclusion that 'attempts to reconcile truth and unity are far from new and present us with serious problems'. Anglicans forsake flexibility and diversity at their peril and should be wary of constructing a new, rigid quasi-magisterium. Truth is ultimately more important than even unity.

The second and very different, though complementary, assessment of the Windsor Report comes from George Pattison, who wishes to 'scratch an itch'. His aim begins from within an Anglican confessional standpoint – he wishes to help his church avoid making the current problematic situation much worse than it already is – but his reflections are also upon the very nature of the Christian Church itself and hence have wider application. Complementing Chapman's analysis, he begins by discussing the move towards affirming an unwritten *ius commune* of the worldwide Anglican Communion, a covenant that makes 'explicit and forceful the loyalty and bonds of affection' shared by the 44 churches of the worldwide Anglican family. Such a covenant is a rather piecemeal construct drawn together from various legal practices in particular churches. Its binding force would derive from the signing up to such a covenant. But Pattison questions what the

actual legal status of such principles might be. Surely the ' "legal" relationship, in other words, is merely the regulation of relationships within a community based on voluntary participation' and thus would be further subject to the laws of any particular society in which Anglicans find themselves? Hence, whatever norms the Anglican Church wishes to impose upon itself with regard, for example, to those who work and minister for it, they must also be just, in accordance with the best available practices of human justice in the surrounding context. In fact, the Anglican Communion, if it seeks to turn unwritten rules and principles into enforceable laws, is actually also making a very particular statement about its self-understanding of what kind of community it wishes Anglican churches to be, i.e., 'that its unconscious life is teleologically related to law and law-making'. Yet Pattison, drawing on insightful studies of the sacramental nature and significance of Christianity, believes that the church should at one and the same time not only abide by the principles of (true) justice in accordance with the wider society (not what unjust societies might impose), but also allow the church, in a sacramental sense, to point beyond its present state and the norms of society towards, in a Pauline and Reformed sense, 'the incalculable transcendence of what shall be'. In other words the laws that regulate the church's life in the world are not what make the church itself. The church is more truly about a community of eschatological witness to truth than about rigid regulation. The Windsor Report risks reversing such priorities.

The third and final part of this volume contains a variety of insightful 'Constructive Explorations for the Future'. It begins with three perspectives on issues which pertain to the Roman Catholic Church in recent times, but which also offer much food for thought of much wider relevance throughout the entire Christian family. Bernard Hoose discusses how the church has changed many times and in many ways over the course of its history and explores a narrower question concerning precisely what sort of changes will become necessary for it to flourish in the future. He focuses, in particular, on how the Roman Catholic Church is governed and administered and explores how that church has changed for better or worse in the modern era and might perhaps be improved again in the future, allowing the fruits of the positive changes of Vatican II to come still more fully to fruition. Primarily, it would appear that the increasing centralisation witnessed in this church in recent decades has not been in the best interests of its mission and community. Next, Hoose turns to changes in attitude and moral quality and looks at the moral significance of those periods of the church where excessive control has been employed. He discusses occasions where doctrinal disputes have brought about un-christian forcefulness in theological argument, before moving on to examine how a clerical and hierarchical 'caste system' in the church has been used to subjugate those deemed to be 'lay people', with many of the latter often content to sit back and allow decisions to be made for them. Third, Hoose looks at changes in teaching. Noting famous cases where the church shifted its position on particular moral issues, Hoose offers suggestions as to where changes in the future might allow the church to fulfil its mission and live the gospel more fully in these times. For instance, transformation of its teachings on artificial contraception and homosexual partnerships 'are long overdue'. Divorce and

second marriage constitute another contentious area, as does the issue of women priests. Whilst Rome may often try to curtail such debate by declaring certain matters closed or taught definitively, Hoose suggests that true change can only come about when there are changes in attitude and/or moral quality amongst Catholics themselves. Finally, Hoose discusses changes in style, be this in relation, for example, to the liturgy or the comportment of bishops. There have been negative examples of such change as well. The key to determining whether they are for good or ill depends on whether they actually reflect the aforementioned positive changes in attitude and moral quality themselves. Institutions can err without all their members necessarily following suit. Not all voices of criticism or voices for change need to be forcefully rejected and suppressed. They may be calling the institution to be more fully its true self.

David McLoughlin further explores that uneasy relationship between the theologian who serves the church and the official authorities of that same church (again, considering in particular the Roman Catholic context). He does not focus on the academy as the locus of the work of such theologians but rather the *ecclesia* itself. He notes the numerous cases where theologians who serve the Church steadfastly and loyally have nonetheless come under suspicion and been censored or even deprived of their teaching posts and licences. McLoughlin sets this against the backdrop of the Church's response to the modern world and the modern intellectual and cultural climate before considering recent developments against the backdrop of the postmodern intellectual and cultural climate. He further explores the uneasy relationship between the Church and its theologians by reflecting on the work of the Belgian Dominican Edward Schillebeeckx and his understanding of what constitutes 'orthodoxy' from one age to the next – in particular, Schillebeeckx's insight that 'Orthodoxy is not dependent simply on the act of faith nor simply on the context but rather on the proportional relationship between the two'. Furthermore, what constitutes orthodox belief is dependent on neither theologians nor central church authorities alone but rather the entire church community. McLoughlin next considers what we mean by the 'kingdom of God' and offers some challenging reflections that point towards an openness to those at the margins of society – the kingdom as a mission of 'going out to the other'. Vatican II seemed to suggest that the kingdom and the church are *not* identical, hence the church serves the wider world because the kingdom concerns the future of both. But tensions continue to arise where others try to equate the church with the kingdom itself. Such tensions are reflected in the uneasy relationship between many theologians and the church today and indeed, in the differing understandings of the relationship between the church today and other faiths, as well as the wider world. McLoughlin offers a twofold understanding of the church's mission – the kingdom values and signs are operative outside the church and wherever the church finds this it must commend and support such activity. The church must be sacrament, not landlord of the kingdom.

Jayne Hoose wishes to explore the *collective* nature of the journey towards truth in the church and hence suggests that a key element of the Roman Catholic tradition lies not just in the specifics of what the church teaches, but also, and fundamentally, in the process of dialogue by which such teaching itself is

established. Hoose also begins by recalling the Vatican II call to respectful openness and engagement with the voices of others and the need for dialogue in order better to 'discern the signs of the times'. The shift away from a top-down model of teaching towards a renewed affirmation of the more collaborative concept of the *sensus fidelium* continues to offer insights concerning the disagreements in the Church today, for in recent times authoritarianism has stifled genuine debate and dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church. Using recent case studies such as the Thomas Reese affair, and the 'closure' of debate on women's ministry in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, she illustrates how that church has moved away from the affirmation of dialogue and communal discernment. She argues that 'Denying the tradition of dialogue through closing the debate discredits the teaching authority of the Magisterium and appears at odds with its own teaching' and further weakens the moral authority of the Church. Hoose thus seeks to highlight approaches to and teachings on dialogue, illustrating how tradition is a process, and one that must embrace the voices in wider societies, as opposed to being merely a means of ensuring consistency of outcome. Her consideration of challenges to the integrity of this tradition, and her identification of the need for continued vigilance if the tradition of dialogue is to be preserved and protected, offer a very constructive model for understanding and engaging with tradition that is applicable far beyond the confines of the Roman Catholic Church: 'Tradition must dialogue with what is contemporary in order to be credible'.

The Norwegian theologian Ola Tjørhom offers some refreshingly honest yet positive reflections on how the church might reach a healthy and constructive balance between unity and diversity in both its life and mission. Approaching such questions from an ecumenical and an ecclesiological framework, he begins by setting the scene with a portrait of the contemporary ecumenical situation within Christianity, reflecting on the causes of the present ecumenical winter. Tjørhom next explores what aspects are fundamental to any shared communion, and yet upon which disagreements remain, including sacramentality, mission, ministry and structures of leadership and governance. A fresh exploration of such divisions need not lead towards the conclusion that 'mere coexistence or a "reconciled denominationalism"' are all that should be sought by ecumenical endeavours. But neither is structural unity the only goal of ecumenism; rather, what we should aim for is 'a common life in love, solidarity and mutual accountability'. Utilizing the fundamentals of an ecclesiology of communion, grounded in Trinitarian thinking, he declares that 'This is the unity we seek – a full, inclusive, sacramentally anchored, mutually committed and eschatologically directed *communio*-life'. Tjørhom moves on to correct some misunderstandings of the implications of allowing diversity, before appropriating pneumatological thinking, the concept of catholicity and attention to the care for fellowship, *koinonia* itself, in order to reappraise what might be meant by unity *in* diversity. A dialectical approach is to be preferred. The quest for unity must avoid all tendencies towards repression. Unity must, by necessity, include a significant amount of diversity. Openness and generosity should be the guiding ecclesial virtues.

Our volume ends with a most hope-filled essay by Kenneth Wilson, who seeks to explore a new approach to ecclesiology. Learning is fundamental to the very

nature of being a Christian community, of being church itself. Wilson seeks to discuss the purpose of a life of faith and of the being of the church, concluding that any church which is not continually 'hoping to learn' is a church that lacks a fundamental mark of what it is to be church itself. Embracing a rich variety of discussion partners from across the history of the Christian and philosophical traditions alike, Wilson illustrates how the church has in fact been a 'learning community' throughout its long story. The problem is that, at times, it has forgotten this fact and acted as if the opposite were the case, so that the church has instead been constituted in simple legal terms or around power dynamics. This is detrimental to ecclesial life: 'Definition blights experience, control replaces experiment, anxiety undermines confidence, and conventional practice becomes a substitute for living enquiry'. The life of faith, a seeking after God, requires the right conditions and environment, as well as nurturing, in order to flourish. The church affirms the triune God whose own life, analogically understood, consists of conversation and hence 'the conversation of the church is not self-referential and private, but public, inclusive, illuminating and affectionate'. Wilson unpacks the implications of this by considering three areas where the church finds conversation today very difficult. The first is with people of other faiths and of no faith. The second concerns the very notion of truth itself. The church at times seems to believe that it simply possesses truth, as opposed to being charged with bearing witness to it and to seeking it out in a collective fashion. Third, Wilson explores the problem of how the church needs to learn *from* the world itself. The church does not possess final answers and neither does it exist in a vacuum. Therefore, if the church is to help the world flourish, it must listen as well as speak to those beyond the church's own confines. He concludes his essay and our volume by suggesting that it is in the stance of 'hoping to learn' that the key to the future of the church and the fulfilment of its mission lies.

We see in the Other and through-otherness the reflection of the wondrous ground of being that Christians acknowledge as Wholly Other, the God who is unity in diversity. Churches today must resist any renewed temptation to embrace an existence alienated from the wider societies in which they find themselves and indeed to perceive themselves in opposition to the 'world' in general. Nor should they seek to appropriate and manipulate the language of 'otherness', and in particular, of victimhood, for themselves. Instead, they should embrace the other as other and meditate upon the parable of the sheep and the goats. In whom do we find Christ today? The gospel teaches us that we find him in the most surprising of places. Before offering the following essays to you as further food for pluralistic thought, as is my genuine privilege, let us close with the words of David Tracy, a theologian who has sought to reflect upon the other and otherness throughout his long and distinguished career (speaking here from within the Roman Catholic context). Returning us to the subject of Denys Turner's reflections, Tracy's closing words have particular pertinence in the present political, social and religious climate,

'Kill them all; God will know God's own' was not merely a notorious saying in the midst of the campaign against the medieval Cathari. Unfortunately, for our ambiguous history, the Cathari are not the only noble, brilliant, fragmentary cultural
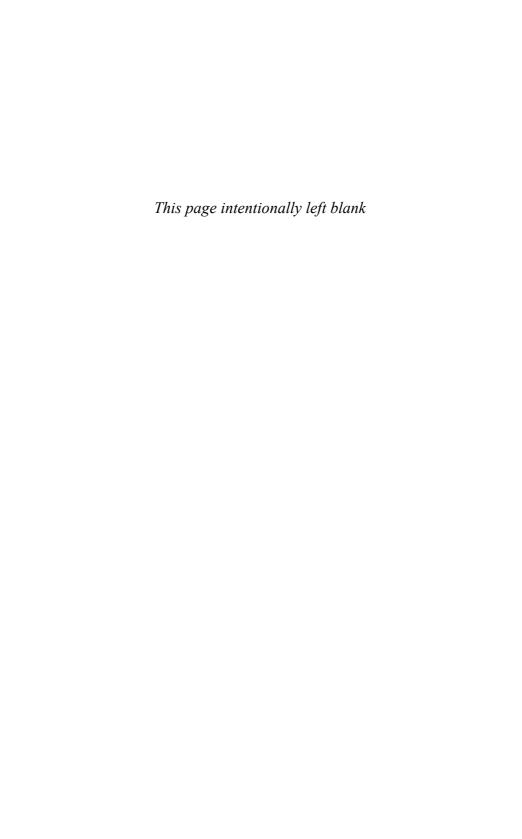
and spiritual movement that has been levelled by the reigning totality system of the period under the banner of universality as uniformity. Perhaps in our own day where 'otherness' and 'difference' (not merely particularity) have become so prominent, there is a new opportunity for all to affirm as both catholic and Catholic the new and old forms and fragments of the Great Tradition as it expands exponentially in our period past its Eurocentric origins into a world church, filled again with vibrant new forms, particularities, differences, into a new Catholic and catholic unity-in-diversity.[25]

Feast of All Saints
1 November 2007

Notes
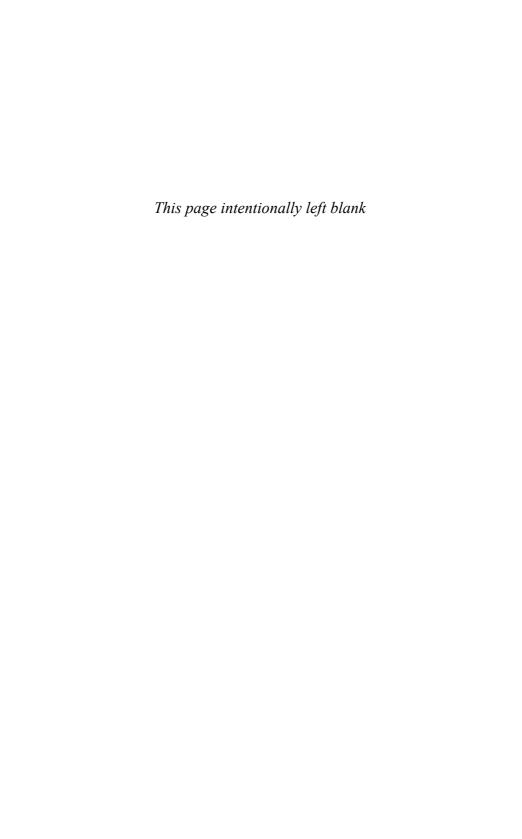
1. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/6636227.stm, accessed 29 October 2007.
2. Delivered at the King's College Conference Centre, University of Aberdeen, 6 February 2001, published as Seamus Heaney, 'Through-Other Places, Through-Other Times: The Irish Poet and Britain', in *Finders Keepers – Selected Prose: 1971–2001* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002). See the discussion by Paul Gillespie, 'Can Powersharing lead to a place of through-otherness?', *Irish Times* (12 May 2007). Drawing upon Eugene O'Brien's study of Heaney, *Searching for Answers* (London: Pluto Press, 2004) Gillespie points out that the same theme is prevalent, also, in Derrida, particularly his famous essay on Europe, as it is in Levinas. Heaney's appropriation of Rodgers in its wider context is also discussed by Rajeev S. Patke, *Postcolonial Poetry in Englis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 22ff. See, also, Norman Vance, *Irish Literature Since 1800* (London: Longman, 2002) 174–5 and Gillian McIntosh, *The Force of Culture: Unionist Identities in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999) *passim*.
3. William Robert Rodgers, 'Armagh' in his *Collected Poems*, ed. with a Memorial Introduction by Dan Davin (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971) 91. The poem was first published in his second collection *Europa and the Bull and Other Poems* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1952), and is discussed by Heaney in 'Through-Other Places', 366.
4. Key works by Levinas of relevance and influence here include *Time and the Other* (1948, ET. Richard Cohen, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1990) *Totality and Infinity* (1961, ET Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press 1987) *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence* (1974, ET Alphonso Lingis, The Hague: Martinus Niihoff Philosophy Texts, 1981) and *Ethics and Infinity?* (1982, ET Richard Cohen, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985). Sean Hand has edited a very fine collection in *The Levinas Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). David McLoughlin discusses Levinas in more detail in Chapter 16, below.
5. Derrida's thought obviously developed and underwent various stages and changes along the way of his career (some commentators speaking of an earlier attentiveness to linguistics and epistemology that blossomed into a later emphasis upon the ethical implications of his fundamental arguments). His writings of most relevance here include numerous essays in different collection, most famously 'Violence and Metaphysics: an Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas', in his *Writing and Difference* (1967, ET and introduction by Alan Bass, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) but, amongst his own key volumes of significance are *Of Grammatology* (1967, ET Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), *Given Time. 1. Counterfeit Money* (1991, ET, Peggy Kamuf, Chicago, Il.: University of Chicago Press, 1992), The *Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe* (1991, ET Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1992), *The Gift of Death* (1992, ET, D. Willis, Chicago, Il.: University of Chicago Press, 1995), *Aporias* (ET Thomas Dutoit, Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1993), *On the Name* (ET David Wood, John P. Leavey Jr. and Ian

McCleod, Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1995), *Politics of Friendship* (1994, ET George Collins, New York: Verso, 1997); *Of Hospitality* (1997, ET Rachel Bowlby, Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 2000).

6. Cf. Gerard Mannion, 'Compassion as the Fundamental Basis of Morality', in *Moral Theology for the 21st Century: Essays in Celebration of Kevin T. Kelly* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), pp. 237–51.

7. Peter C. Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), p. xvii.

8. Ibid., p. xix. See also Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007), pp. 22–3.

9. Denys Turner, 'How to Kill People', in Denys Turner, (*Faith Seeking*) (London: SCM Press, 2002), pp. 57–65.

10. Ibid., p. 61.

11. Stanley Grenz, *The Named God and the Question of Being* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), p. 330.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p. 331.

14. Ibid.; cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, 'Oration on Holy Baptism', *Oration* 40.41, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd series, vol. 7, ed. Philip Schaff (1893, repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 375.

15. Cf. also Rahner's various and better-known discussions of the notion of God as 'Wholly Other' and 'Absolute Mystery', and of the equivalence of the immanent and economic Trinity. See, for example, his *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), esp. chs 1 and 2 and, for his consideration of the Trinity, 4 and 5. See also his *Hearer of the World* (New York: Continuum, 1994), esp. part III, 'The Hiddenness of Being', pp. 55–89. Amongst Rahner's many, many relevant essays, see, for example, 'The Hiddenness of God' in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 16 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979), pp. 227–43; 'An Investigation of the Incomprehensibility of God in Saint Thomas Aquinas', ibid. pp. 244–54, and 'Oneness and Threefoldness of God in Discussion with Islam', in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 18 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983), pp. 105–21. Peter Phan discusses the enormous potential of Rahner's thought for inter-religious dialogue in his 'God as Holy Mystery', ch. 6 of *Being Religious Interreligiously*, esp. pp. 109–14. I have briefly discussed Rahner's thought on this subject in *Schopenhauer, Religion and Morality* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), esp. pp. 273–7.

16. Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously*, p. xix.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., p. xx.

19. On the importance of humility for dialogue, c.f. Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 126, 132–9, 155, 200, 229.

20. Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously*, p. xx.

21. Ibid.

22. Roger Haight, *Ecclesial Existence* (New York and London: Continuum, 2008), 'Preface', p. ix.

23. Roger Haight, 'New Challenges and New Initiatives In Ecclesiology', in Gerard Mannion (ed.), *Comparative Ecclesiology: Critical Investigations* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2008), pp. 201–2.

24. The other speakers in the lecture series included Bernard Hoose, David McLoughlin, Paul Murray, George Pattison, Stephen Shakespeare, Keith Ward and Kenneth Wilson.

25. David Tracy, 'Fragments and Forms: Universality and Particularity Today' in Giuseppe Ruggieri and Miklós Tomka (eds), *The Church in Fragments: Towards What Kind of Unity?* (*Concilium*, London: SCM Press, 1997/3), 122–9, at pp. 128–9.

This page intentionally left blank

PART I

ECUMENICAL AND PLURALIST CONTEXTS AND QUESTIONS

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 1

ECUMENICAL QUESTIONS ON WOMEN AND CHURCH

Phyllis Zagano

The Nature and Purpose of the Church (1998, 2005), a Faith and Order study document from the World Council of churches (WCC),[1] reflects what the churches can say together about the nature of the church as a whole, identifying points of division and attempting to offer a framework for the churches in their common confession, life and witness. The by-laws of the Faith and Order Commission state that its purpose is to

> proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, in order that the world may believe.[2]

Nowhere in the document is the question of ministry by women addressed. Yet one of the most serious points of fraction within and among Christian churches is the ordination of women. Some members of the World Council of Churches admit women to full ministry as priests or pastors. Others admit women to ministerial service as deacons.

The Catholic Church[3] admits women to neither.

While the Catholic Church does not belong to the World Council of Churches, there is a Joint Working Group of the Vatican and the Council that has met regularly since 1965,[4] and the Catholic Church does conduct individual ecumenical dialogues with certain member churches of the WCC. One can assume that these churches adhere to *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* in its current form.

This essay addresses the question of ecumenical dialogue from the Catholic perspective, particularly as regards the ministry of women. Except in negative terms, ordaining women is not a point of ecumenical dialogue in and among a number of Christian churches, particularly the Catholic Church. That is, certain churches (and especially the Catholic Church) have noted that the practice of ordaining women to the priesthood is a stumbling block, particularly in relations with the Anglican Communion, and in relations with those Old Catholic Churches that ordain women as priests.

The voice of women who seek ordination in Catholicism and in those other churches that still resist the ordination of women to any grade of order is rarely heard officially. That is, few internal dialogues or studies in or among these

churches on the matter of the ordination of women actually include women, and there is virtually no example of official ecumenical dialogue touching on women's ordination to ministry that includes women among churches that resist their ordination. The immediate projection is that those that do not ordain women, either as deacons or as priests, do not wish to consider this internally, nor are they willing or able to discuss women's ordination (again, to either or both grades of order) in ecumenical discussion. This reticence stands in stark contrast to the general consensus among church members that the ordination of women to ministry, whether as deacons or as priests, or as both, is essentially a non-issue and one that should (and must) be overcome if the given church is to survive.

A surprising backdrop to this situation is the apparent movement within Catholicism toward accepting the fact that women are 'ordainable' as deacons, even prescinding from the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood. Several times, as we shall see, Pope Benedict XVI has publicly noted the import of ministry by women, the possibility that women might obtain 'governance', and the Catholic Church's resoluteness against the ordination of women as priests. These signs might lead toward his recommending a return to the tradition of women deacons. Clearly, the acceptance or revival of the tradition of women deacons in the Catholic Church would strengthen the common understandings of the nature of the person and the unity of their calling in the nature of church among all Christians. Yet, in the complicated world of ecumenical dialogue, women's ordination in the Catholic Church remains at best a non-issue.

There are three distinct situations that must be examined: first, dialogue between Catholicism and the Anglican Communion, the validity of whose orders Catholicism denies, and which ordains women as deacons and as priests; second, dialogue between Catholicism and the Union of Utrecht Old Catholic Churches, the validity of whose orders Catholicism accepts, and which ordain women as deacons and as priests; and third, dialogue between Catholicism and Orthodox churches, the validity of whose orders Catholicism accepts, some of which ordain women only as deacons.

In the arena of Catholic–Anglican relations, the question of the ordination of women is inexplicably neuralgic. That is, the Vatican has carefully but clearly noted that the promotion of Anglican women to the priesthood has damaged the ecumenical dialogue, at least from Rome's point of view. Yet if, as stated in *Apostolicae Curae*,[5] the Catholic Church considers Anglican orders invalid, why does Rome dissent from the ordination of women as priests within the Anglican Communion? Quite baldly stated, if nothing happens in Anglican ordination, why is it a problem if nothing happens to women ordained within the Anglican Communion?[6]

In the arena of relations between Catholicism and Old Catholic Churches, the question of ordination touches on other, older questions of jurisdiction. That is, Catholicism recognizes the validity of the orders of certain Union of Utrecht Old Catholic Churches. The status of women ordained within Old Catholic Churches has not been fully explored by the Catholic Church, but rather apparently ignored.

In Catholic–Orthodox dialogue, as well as in relations with the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Old Catholic Church of the Czech Republic (a Union

of Utrecht Church), the question of ordained women deacons has not arisen. However, there are substantial mutual-recognition agreements between Catholicism and Orthodoxy and between Catholicism and the Armenian Apostolic Church. There is a long history up to the present of women deacons in both Orthodoxy and the Armenian Church.

Catholicism and Women Deacons

The crucial movement within Catholicism regarding each of these three categories of Churches – the Anglican Communion, the Old Catholic Churches, and the Orthodox Churches – is that the Catholic Church – or at least Pope Benedict XVI – seems prepared to accept the common older tradition of ordaining women as deacons, thereby joining the current practice of those with which the Catholic Church continues ecumenical dialogue, and particularly those with which it shares mutual-recognition agreements. Of particular import are those churches with which the Catholic Church considers itself to be in almost perfect communion.

Several recent statements by Pope Benedict XVI seem to indicate that he is leaning toward restoring the ancient tradition of women deacons within the Catholic Church. On three separate occasions in the recent past – in March 2006, in August 2006, and in February 2007 – Benedict has mentioned three crucial points, which together combine to support the notion of the ordination of women as deacons. The first of these is formal 'governance', the second is formal 'ministry', and the third is his recounting of the import of women throughout history – and especially as told in the New Testament – in each of these two spheres.

In responding to a question during his Lent 2006 meeting with the priests of the Diocese of Rome, Benedict said it was reasonable to ask if 'more space, more positions of responsibility, can be given to women'.[7] Again, in August 2006, Benedict made much the same comment.[8] Finally, in February 2007, Benedict said that 'many women were also chosen to number among the disciples . . . who played an active role in the context of Jesus' mission' and that Paul's 'well-known exhortation: "Women should keep silence in the churches" (1 Cor. 14.3) is instead to be considered relative'. Benedict also remarked that day that in the first Christian communities, 'the female presence was . . . not in any way secondary'. St Paul, he said, 'begins with the fundamental principle according to which among the baptized "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female" ' and 'the Apostle accepts as normal the fact that a woman can "prophesy" in the Christian community (1 Cor. 11.5), that is, speak openly under the influence of the Spirit, as long as it is for the edification of the community and done in a dignified manner'. Therefore, Benedict said, St Paul's subsequent assertion that 'women should keep silence in the churches' 'is instead to be considered relative', (*va piuttosto relativizzata*) and the problem of contradictory indications should be left to the exegetes.[9]

I have parsed the above set of comments in more detail elsewhere.[10] Suffice it to say that Benedict's formulaic response to questions of ministry by women in the

Church typically includes several points: women have ministered throughout the history of the Church, from the days of Jesus to today; the priesthood is restricted to men; women may be able to exercise formal 'governance' and 'ministry' in the Church. My conclusion is that, given the historical-theological recognition of women's ministry by Pope Benedict XVI, himself as historical theologian, and given the restrictions against any persons other than clerics exercising 'governance' or 'ministry' in the formal sense within the hierarchical framework of the Church, the only way to include women (give them 'more space') in formal Church 'governance' and 'ministry' is by readmitting them to ordination to the diaconate.[11]

Benedict XVI's historical sensibilities must be taken into account in this discussion. As a scholar of Augustine of Hippo, Benedict must know – and probably shares – Augustine's thoughts on women's ability to image God.[12] As Henry Chadwick points out, 'Against exegetes of 1 *Cor.*11:5–7 (such as Ambrosiaster), Augustine devoted some part of his argument in *De Trinitate* (12.7.9f.) to opposing the notion that women are not in the image of God as men are. His doctrine that the image of God is entirely in the mind made that conclusion natural and inevitable.'[13] A male God is a limited God, and thereby unacceptable to Christian belief. Benedict has publicly agreed that the God of philosophy is neither male nor female, and the God of theology is both.[14]

Even if serious scholars and exegetes agree that women are made in the image and likeness of God, there is still (often angry) denial that women can image Christ, and that denial was once at the forefront of the argument against the ordination of women as priests in the Catholic Church, as presented in *Inter Insigniores*, the 'Declaration on the Question of Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood' (15 October 1976).[15] Known as the 'iconic argument' (only a man can image Christ), and paired in *Inter Insigniores* with the 'argument from authority' (Jesus chose only male apostles), the 'iconic argument' disappeared in the later document that sought to end the controversy. This later document, the Apostolic Letter of John Paul II, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 'On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone' (22 May 1994),[16] relies solely on the 'argument from authority'. While *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* drops the 'iconic argument', and falls short of being an infallible declaration, it nevertheless is quite forceful in its presentation:

> Although the teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal Tradition of the Church and firmly taught by the Magisterium in its more recent documents, at the present time in some places it is nonetheless considered still open to debate, or the Church's judgment that women are not to be admitted to ordination is considered to have a merely disciplinary force.
>
> Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. *Lk* 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.[17]

Later discussion resulted in the rendering of an opinion by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that the teaching of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* was to be held as an infallible teaching of the Magisterium:

> This teaching requires definitive assent, since, founded on the written Word of God, and from the beginning constantly preserved and applied in the Tradition of the Church, it has been set forth infallibly by the ordinary and universal Magisterium (cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* 25, 2).[18]

This opinion of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was approved by John Paul II, and signed by its then Prefect, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, and its Secretary, then Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone.[19] The opinion, which seeks to render infallible the present determination against women priests, indicates several dimensions of difference between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion.

While the question of the ordination of women as priests within the Catholic Church is officially closed to consideration, the question of women deacons is not. The matter of women priests does not enter into the discussion of women deacons, even in the churches (Catholic and Orthodox) that have apparently definitively ruled against women priests. They typically regard the extant historical evidence of women priests as describing only those only within Gnostic sects.[20] But if women priests have been definitively ruled out, then consideration of the readmission of women to the permanent diaconate should be easier.

Within the Catholic Church, the question of women deacons is officially unsettled. The return to the practice of ordaining women to the diaconate in the Catholic Churches (Latin and Eastern) would complement the burgeoning return to the practice of ordaining women as deacons in the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece, a church whose sacraments and orders Rome recognizes.[21] The return to the practice of ordaining women as deacons has already taken place in another church which Rome also considers in 'imperfect communion' with itself: the Armenian Apostolic Church.[22] Each of these churches has common agreements with Rome as to their authentic apostolic succession and the validity of their sacraments. Further, the Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic (a signatory to the Union of Utrecht) ordains women to the diaconate (but not to the priesthood).[23] Finally, His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide since 1991, has suggested that the restoration of the female diaconate is possible in all of Orthodoxy.[24]

It would seem that the movement toward accepting the fact that women are 'ordainable', even prescinding from the question of ordination to the priesthood, would strengthen the common understandings of the nature of the person and the unity of their calling. If the Catholic Church is willing, as it appears it may be, to move toward a broader recognition of the dignity of women as regards their eligibility for ordination, again, even prescinding from ordination to the priesthood, that might clear the way for more mutual understanding in

ecumenical dialogue, though relations between the Anglican Communion and certain Union of Utrecht Churches are complicated.

   The three distinct 'dialogues' detailed below on the question of the ordination of women frame the question of the place of women in ministry in the churches, and delimit the possibilities for the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion

Anglican–Roman Catholic dialogue was disrupted in 2003, following the decision of the Episcopal Church in the USA to consecrate as bishop an openly partnered homosexual priest, Canon Gene Robinson, as ninth Bishop of New Hampshire.[25] Additional difficulties erupted within the Anglican Communion regarding the Episcopal Church following the selection of the Most Revd Dr Katharine Jefferts Schori, previously Bishop of Nevada, as 26th Presiding Bishop in June 2006.

   There are two principal vehicles for Catholic–Anglican dialogue, the International Anglican–Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM), and the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC).

   IARCCUM, an initiative of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Vatican (Pontifical Commission for the Promotion of Christian Unity) on behalf of the Pope, was launched in 2001 'in order to foster ecumenical efforts between the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church'.[26] IARCCUM is an episcopally led body aimed at fostering practical initiatives.

   Separately, ARCIC has met since 1967 and is the principal instrument of theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. In 1973 ARCIC issued a joint statement on orders, which presented a common understanding of the relationship of ministry and ordination:

> Both presbyters and deacons are ordained by the bishop. In the ordination of a presbyter the presbyters present join the bishop in the laying on of hands, thus signifying the shared nature of the commission entrusted to them. In the ordination of a new bishop, other bishops lay hands on him, as they request the gift of the Spirit for his ministry and receive him into their ministerial fellowship. Because they are entrusted with the oversight of other churches, this participation in his ordination signifies that this new bishop and his church are within the communion of churches. Moreover, because they are representative of their churches in fidelity to the teaching and mission of the apostles and are members of the episcopal college, their participation also ensures the historical continuity of this church with the apostolic church and of its bishop with the original apostolic ministry. The communion of the churches in mission, faith and holiness, through time and space, is thus symbolised and maintained in the bishop. Here are comprised the essential features of what is meant in our two traditions, by ordination in the apostolic succession.[27]

There is no further explication of the ordination of deacons, and the focus is on the historical continuity of the authority of the apostles through the office of bishop. It is the function and authority of the individual bishop in relation to the primacy of

Peter, accepted by Catholicism, that has brought about the most dialogue and discussion.

At the 1976 ARCIC meeting an agreed statement noted that the Anglican Communion had particular difficulty with the concept of papal infallibility and with the notion of immediate and direct papal jurisdiction.[28] A second agreed statement on authority in the church was published following the 1981 meeting in Windsor, England, and placed the primacy in a somewhat different light, emphasizing the autonomy of local churches:

> The importance of the bishop of Rome among his brother bishops, as explained by analogy with the position of Peter among the apostles, was interpreted as Christ's will for his Church.
>
>   On the basis of this analogy the First Vatican Council affirmed that this service was necessary to the unity of the whole Church. Far from overriding the authority of the bishops in their own dioceses, this service was explicitly intended to support them in their ministry of oversight. The Second Vatican Council placed this service in the wider context of the shared responsibility of all the bishops. The teaching of these councils shows that communion with the bishop of Rome does not imply submission to an authority which would stifle the distinctive features of the local churches. The purpose of this episcopal function of the bishop of Rome is to promote Christian fellowship in faithfulness to the teaching of the apostles. [29]

The two major matters of concern are infallibility:

> Anglicans find grave difficulty in the affirmation that the pope can be infallible in his teaching ... [although] the doctrine of infallibility is hedged round by very rigorous conditions laid down at the First Vatican Council ...

and papal authority:

> The claim that the pope possesses universal immediate jurisdiction, the limits of which are not clearly specified, is a source of anxiety to Anglicans who fear that the way is thus open to its illegitimate or uncontrolled use. Nevertheless, the First Vatican Council intended that the papal primacy should be exercised only to maintain and never to erode the structures of the local churches.[30]

In each case the strictures of Vatican I are called upon, where both papal infallibility and papal authority are clearly circumscribed. Each concept, however, found a strict constructionist home during the long papacy of John Paul II (1978–2005), each lending itself less to ecumenical dialogue, including and especially on these matters.

In 1998, ARCIC published a third agreed statement on authority, which acknowledged – more or less – the authority of the Pope to speak for the Catholic Church and, in some matters, for the Anglican Communion.[31] The agreed statement obliquely addresses the ordination of women:

> Even though progress has been made, some serious difficulties have emerged on the way to unity. Issues concerning authority have been raised acutely for each of our

communions. For example, debates and decisions about the ordination of women have led to questions about the sources and structures of authority and how they function for Anglicans and Roman Catholics.[32]

The 'serious difficulties' include the expanding acceptance of the ordination of women as priests in more and more provinces of the Anglican Communion, and the consecration of women as bishops in some of them. The concept of women in authority over men – women bishops in authority over male priests – is a neuralgic one for Catholicism, despite the historicity of women wielding ecclesiastical juridical authority over male clergy up to 1873 in the territory of the monastery of Las Huelgas de Burgos in Spain.[33] Anglican women bishops currently serve in New Zealand, Canada and the United States. Some Anglican provinces canonically accept women bishops, but have not yet consecrated any. Others ordain women as priests and deacons, still others only as permanent deacons.[34] Several African provinces ordain only men.

The rift in the Anglican Communion can only be expected to increase. Neither Gene Robinson nor Martyn Minns, who leads the theologically conservative Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANA) under the aegis of the Anglican Church of Nigeria, was invited to the 2008 Lambeth Conference.[35]

The polarity of the opposing views in the Episcopal Church casts into stark relief the problems of ecumenical dialogue. Those who tend to side with the election of Bishop Jefferts Schori also tend to support the election and consecration of Bishop Robinson. Those who do support the more 'Catholic' interpretations that eliminate the possibility of actively homosexual clergy and women clergy gravitate toward structures such as CANA, or Anglican membership organizations such as Forward in Faith, which operates in the United States, Great Britain and Australia.

It is unfair to conjoin the moral question of homosexuality with the ecclesiological and theological questions of women's ordination, but in the broadest strokes that is how the picture is often painted. In fact, the question of women is central to both the internal and external dialogues of the Anglican Communion, and in each case the question of authority arises.

First, the question of papal authority is closely connected with the question of women's ordination in that the Catholic Church has repeatedly stated that it does not have the 'authority' to ordain women as priests. As regards the Anglican Communion, some of whose member provinces maintain their authority to ordain women as deacons, priests and bishops, the internal split provides an interesting commentary on the Catholic doctrine.

For the Catholic Church, women priests and bishops are considered officially out of the question. But, as has been pointed out, the ordination of women deacons has specifically been omitted from the two most recent documents on the ordination of women as priests. Similarly, several Anglican provinces (Indian Ocean, Southern Cone, Congo and Pakistan) and some dioceses (Sydney, Australia; Quincy, Illinois; Fort Worth, Texas) ordain women only to the diaconate, while, as noted earlier, African provinces (with the exception of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda) ordain only men. One of these African provinces, Nigeria, is

well known for attempting to consecrate 'missionary bishops' for the dissenting parishes and dioceses in the United States.[36]

The matter of women priests and later, of women bishops, clearly formed a focal point for the other neuralgic issues within the Anglican Communion, but the matter of women deacons is relatively a non-issue. On the larger scale, where questions of papal infallibility and papal authority are under consideration, women as priests and women as bishops become part of the mix. But in no case does the current or future restoration of the tradition of women deacons present any bar to ecumenical discussion and agreement, principally because Catholic teaching says that deacons 'receive the imposition of hands "not unto the priesthood, but unto the ministry"'.[37]

If Catholic interpretation of Anglican orders is that (following *Apostolicae Curae*) Anglican ordination is not to the (sacrificial) priesthood, but 'unto the ministry', then there could be Catholic recognition of the ordination of Anglican women as deacons, while the present discipline of reordaining Anglican men who wish to become Catholic priests would continue. Anglican women priests would not be eligible for reordination, although their prior ordinations as deacons could conceivably be recognized.

The Catholic Church and the Old Catholic Churches

The Catholic Church recognizes the validity of the sacraments and orders of Union of Utrecht Old Catholic Churches. As with the Anglican Communion, one can assume that the Catholic Church would recognize those women ordained within the Old Catholic Churches – particularly those women ordained as priests – less than those men ordained within the Old Catholic Churches, but no official statement has been made regarding the practices of any of these churches.

Among the Union of Utrecht Old Catholic Churches, four ordain women both as deacons and as priests: the Old Catholic Churches in Germany (beginning in 1996),[38] Austria (1998), the Netherlands (1998) and Switzerland (2002).[39] The Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic ordained a woman deacon in 2003, and at present does not ordain women as priests.

The Union of Utrecht Old Catholic Churches developed in reaction to questions of papal authority. The Church of Utrecht was formed in the Netherlands in 1723 to counter the papal assertion of authority over clergy and property. In 1870, several Old Catholic dioceses were established under what was known as the Union of Utrecht, then in reaction to the Vatican I dogmas of papal infallibility and supreme jurisdiction. By 1889, the Old Catholic Bishops of the Netherlands, Austria, Germany and Switzerland had signed the Union of Utrecht.[40]

Old Catholic Churches enter into ecumenical dialogue through the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference, whose *ex officio* head is the Old Catholic Archbishop of Utrecht.[41] This body includes both Union of Utrecht Churches and others. Anglican–Old Catholic dialogue is conducted by the Anglican/Old Catholic International Co-ordinating Council, which first met in

1999, and was established by the International Bishops' Conference and the Lambeth Conference.

Of the member churches of the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference, those of the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Czech Republic and Poland[42] are considered by the Catholic Church to have valid sacraments and orders. One additional church, which traces its apostolic succession and thereby its sacramental validity to the break incurred through the Union of Utrecht, the Polish National Catholic Church in the United States (Scranton, Pennsylvania), no longer belongs to the Union of Utrecht and does not ordain women to any rank of order.[43] The clergy of each of these, that is, the clergy of the historic Union of Utrecht Old Catholic Churches, when they request to be received as Catholics, in principle are received as clergy, although no women clergy have asked to test the principle.

To complicate matters further, while the Catholic Church is not in full communion with the Anglican Communion or the Philippine Independent Church, both of these are in full communion with Union of Utrecht Old Catholic Churches.[44] In addition, there are numerous very small Old Catholic groups in the United States, some of which claim to be descendants of Union of Utrecht Old Catholic Churches.[45] While the Catholic Church technically regards their orders and sacraments as valid, when the clergy of these other Old Catholic groups (male or female) – in the United States at least – request reception to the Catholic Church they are received as laypersons.

Independent of these, beginning in 1996, synods of the Old Catholic Churches in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Switzerland voted to admit women to the diaconate and, separately, to the priesthood, and in theory to the episcopate. The Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic did not open all grades of order to women, but in 2003 it voted to admit women to the diaconate.[46] While future synods of the Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic may take up the matter of women priests, it is currently the only Western church, whose orders and apostolic succession are recognized by the Catholic Church, that ordains women as deacons and not as priests.[47]

Given the acceptance of the apostolic succession of the Czech Old Catholic bishop who ordained a woman as deacon, and without reference to the practices of other Old Catholic Churches, the matter of the ordination of a woman as deacon in a church whose sacraments and orders are recognized by the Catholic Church creates an interesting opportunity for dialogue on the very matter eliminated (both directly and indirectly) from current ecumenical discussion. While women deacons and priests were ordained in the underground Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia,[48] the Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic presents an ordained woman whose ordination was agreed to by Synod and performed publicly, and which is ratified by continued ministry.

The Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic has entered into various ecumenical arrangements, variously recognizing itself to be in communion with other churches, mostly in Europe, which the Catholic Church does not recognize. Whether the ordination of one woman deacon in this church might become a test case regarding the validity of diaconal ordination for women is yet to be seen.

The Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches

The Catholic Church engages in dialogue with the Armenian Apostolic Church within the context of dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox Churches.[49] The independent Armenian Churches of Echmiadzin and Cilicia are unified theologically, but administratively divided into separate, independent churches. The Catholic Church's participation in Catholic–Oriental Orthodox dialogue is conducted and understood through the Vatican II document *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which specifically and unequivocally recognizes the sacraments of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Subsequently, three Catholic Church–Armenian Church Joint or Common Declarations, in 1970, 1996 and 1997, reinforce those understandings, especially as regards the Eucharist and orders.[50]

The Armenian Apostolic Church has a long history of monastic women deacons – there are extant photographs of nineteenth-century Protodeaconess Sister Hrip'sime Aghek'-Tahireanc' of Jerusalem in her liturgical vestments.[51] Ordained women deacons have, since the 1950s, participated as deacons in parish and cathedral liturgies (in Etchmiadzin, Tiflis and Constantinople). There are three women deacons of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia in Lebanon, and the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople lists Mother Hrip'sime, ordained in 1984, as proto-deacon.[52]

The fact that these are ordained women deacons in the Armenian Church does not interfere with ecumenical dialogue between it and the Anglican Communion or the Orthodox Churches, but it presents an interesting question to the Catholic Church: since, like the Old Catholic Church of the Czech Republic, the Armenian Church does not ordain women as priests, and since the Armenian Church's sacraments and orders are recognized as valid by the Catholic Church, does the Catholic Church respect the validity and liceity of the ordinations of women deacons? One would think the answer is yes.

The Catholic Church also engages in dialogue with the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece, which unilaterally declared its autocephaly in 1833, and received its independence from Constantinople in 1850. Its Holy Synod voted in October 2004 to restore the order of women deacons.[53] The Synod vote does not apply to the Greek Orthodox Church as it exists in Australia, Canada, Ireland, the United Kingdom, or other areas of the world that are part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate headquartered in Constantinople and led by His All Holiness Bartholomew I.

Catholic–Orthodox dialogue is conducted by the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue, established in 1979, the fifth plenary session of which (1988) approved a document stating common affirmation of the apostolic succession and validity of sacraments of each member of the Commission – the Catholic Church and the fourteen autocephalous and autonomous Orthodox Churches. While apostolic succession and common sacramental recognition were agreed to, the question of papal primacy was left for further meetings.

The joint Catholic–Orthodox document, *The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church, with Particular Reference to the Importance of*

the *Apostolic Succession for the Sanctification and Unity of the People of God*,[54] defines the diaconate as part of the sacrament of order, 'exercised at the service of the bishop and the priest, in the liturgy, in the work of evangelization and in the service of charity',[55] much like the traditional Catholic understanding, which sees the deacon as ordained to the ministry of the Word, the liturgy, and charity. Women deacons are not mentioned, though earlier sections of the document reaffirm the common individual traditions of a male-only priesthood, apparently reaffirming (without examining) the 'iconic argument', calling the bishop 'the icon of Christ the servant among his brethren'.[56] But the concept of Christ as servant applies more to diaconal ministry and not to the priest or bishop serving *in personae Christi capitas ecclesiae*. That the diaconate is incorporated into the episcopal ministry is well signified by the bishops' wearing the dalmatic of the deacon under the priestly chasuble at major liturgical ceremonies.[57]

The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church does not address the long-standing tradition of Orthodox women deacons, ordained in modern times according to the ancient Byzantine ritual used by the Orthodox Saint Nectarios (1846–1920) for two monastic women deacons in 1911.[58] Greek Orthodoxy knew monastic women deacons through the mid-twentieth century, and the October 2004 Synod of the Orthodox Church of Greece, which restored monastic women deacons, also saw discussion about non-monastic women deacons.[59]

Conclusions

The triangulation of ecumenical dialogue among the three traditions investigated here – the Anglican, the Old Catholic and the Orthodox – finds them well in accord with each other and even in full communion with each other in certain circumstances. For the most part, these traditions are members of and adhere to the statements of the World Council of Churches.

Yet individually each tradition engages in bilateral ecumenical dialogue with the Catholic Church. Each dialogue presents the same core difficulties: the ordination of women, the function and place of papal authority, and the function and place of papal infallibility.

While each tradition ordains women, within each tradition there is room for any of several choices, typically locally: women not ordained at all; women as deacons only; women as deacons and priests only; or women as deacons, priests and bishops. The present discipline of the Catholic Church is for women not to be ordained at all.

While some traditions respect the notion of papal authority and papal infallibility, with restrictions, they do not adhere to papal jurisdictional authority and they severely limit their understandings of the ways in which the Pope can speak on matters of faith and morals.

Hence, it is unlikely that the fact that the Catholic Church officially states it lacks the authority to ordain women as priests and deacons will affect those traditions that do ordain women as priests and deacons, and there is little

opportunity in Catholic understandings for the Catholic Church to recognize the validity of the orders of women priests and bishops, even where it has agreed to the validity of sacraments and orders of another church.

However, the Catholic Church has made no statement regarding its ability to ordain women as deacons. Given that the call of deacons is demonstratively distinguished from the call of priests (i.e. it is the community that presented the first deacons, who had hands laid upon them by the apostles, Acts 6.1–6), and given that the Catholic Church has mutually accepted the validity of the sacraments and orders of at least the Union of Utrecht Old Catholic Churches and the Orthodox Churches mentioned in this chapter that ordain women as deacons, it would seem that it could accept the validity of the ordinations of women as deacons in those churches.

Such acceptance would present the logical question to the Catholic Church: when will it act to restore the tradition of women deacons within itself?

Appendix: World Council of Churches members discussed in this chapter

Anglican Communion:

Anglican Church of Kenya; Anglican Church of Tanzania; Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa – Province of the Anglican Church of the Congo; Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion); United Evangelical Church 'Anglican Communion in Angola';* Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia; Anglican Church of Australia; Anglican Church of Korea; Anglican Communion in Japan (Nippon Seiko Kai); Anglican Church of the Southern Cone of America [Argentina]; Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil; Anglican Church of Canada; The Episcopal Church [USA]; Episcopal Church of Burundi; Episcopal Baptist Community (Congo); Episcopal Church of Rwanda; Episcopal Church of the Sudan; Episcopal Church in the Philippines; Scottish Episcopal Church; Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church*; Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East [Egypt]; African Methodist Episcopal Church [USA]; African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church [USA]; Christian Methodist Episcopal Church [USA].

Old Catholics

Union of Utrecht
Catholic Diocese of the Old Catholics in Germany; Old Catholic Church of Austria; Old Catholic Church of Switzerland; Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands

Other
Catholic Mariavite Church in Poland; Polish Catholic Church in Poland; Polish National Catholic Church

Orthodox

Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church; Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church [India]; Orthodox Church in Japan; Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Poland; Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania; Orthodox Church of Finland; Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia [Czech Republic]; Romanian Orthodox Church; Russian Orthodox Church; Serbian Orthodox Church [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia]; Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa [Egypt]; Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East [Syria]; Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem [Israel]; Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East;

Orthodox Church in America; Armenian Apostolic Church; Armenian Apostolic Church [Lebanon]

Sui Generis

Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East (Iraq); Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East; N. A. Diocese; Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]

   *Associate members of the World Council of Churches

Notes

1. World Council of Churches, *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*, Faith and Order Paper 181 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1998) has been superseded by *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, Faith and Order Paper 198 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2005). Each is at http://www.oikoumene.org/index.php?id=2753 (accessed 3 May 2007).
2. Ibid (2005), no. 1.
3. As in formal ecumenical dialogue, churches in this essay are referred to as they refer to themselves. The church headquartered at the Vatican refers to itself as the Catholic Church, not the Roman Catholic Church, and it consists of the Latin Church and the 22 Eastern churches affiliated with Rome.
4. See   http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/joint-working-group-between-the-roman-catholic-church-and-the-wcc.html.
5. Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter 'On the Nullity of Anglican orders' (*Apostolicae Curae*), 18 September 1896.
6. This neuralgic reaction may also be due to the increasingly strong grounds for recognizing Anglican orders, in which case the validity of Anglican women priests cannot be ignored.
7. 'Discorso improvvisato da Benedetto XVI al Clero romano: I temi dell'incontro: vita, famiglia e formazione dei sacerdoti', 2 March 2006, reported by ZENIT on 3 March 2006: http://www.zenit.org/italian/visualizza.php?sid=7283. Translation mine; the original reads, 'non si possa offrire più spazio, più posizioni di responsabilità alle donne'.
8. In an interview with Bayerische Rundfunk, Deutsche Welle, ZDF and Vatican Radio at his summer residence at Castelgandolfo on 5 August 2006, conducted in German and translated by the Vatican: http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2129951,00.html. See also 'Pope Says Church Not a String of "Nos"', *New York Times*, 13 August 2006.
9. Benedict XVI's catechesis at the general audience on February 14, 2007 was first reported and posted by the Vatican Information Service as 'Women Did Not Abandon Jesus' http://212.77.1.245/news_services/press/vis/dinamiche/c0_en.htm. That posting – and translation – has now disappeared and been replaced by the official Vatican translation: 'Women at the service of the Gospel': http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20070214_en.html, which is essentially correct, although somewhat wooden. The original Vatican Information Service dispatch (and translation) can be accessed at http://www.catholicweb.com/media_index.cfm?fuseaction=view_article&partnerid =24&article_id=3031. I have used the official translation.
10. Phyllis Zagano, 'The Question of Governance and Ministry for Women', *Theological Studies* 68 (2007), 348–67.
11. There are those who continue – against all historical evidence – to argue that women have never been ordained to the diaconate. Some of the more recent work demonstrating the contrary includes: Roger Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1976; ET of *Le ministère des femmes dans L'Église ancienne: Recherches et synthèses*, Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1972); Aimé George Martimort, *Deaconesses: An Historical Study* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986; ET of *Les diaconesses: Essai historique*,

Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1982); Ute Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000; ET of *Amsträgerinnen im frühen Christentum: Epigraphische und literarische Studien*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996); Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, *Ordained Women in the Catholic Church: A Documentary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). The debate between Gryson and Martimort centres on whether ordained women received the sacrament of holy orders; the negative interpretation drives the 2002 document of the International Theological Commission of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, officially in French: 'Le diaconat: Évolution et perspectives', *La documentation catholique* 23 (19 January 2003), 58–107, and also published in Italian: 'Il diaconato: Evoluzione e prospettive', *La Civiltà Cattolica* 1 (2003), 253–336. The unofficial English translation by the Catholic Truth Society has been published as 'From the Diakonia of Christ to the Diakonia of the Apostles' (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2003; Mundelein, Ill.: Hillenbrand Books, 2004).

12. Benedict XVI obtained his doctorate in theology in 1953 with a thesis entitled 'People and House of God in St Augustine's Doctrine of the Church'. His second dissertation, which qualified him for university teaching, was on 'The Theology of History in St Bonaventure'.

13. Henry Chadwick, 'Philosophical Tradition and the Self', in G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown and Oleg Grabar (eds), *Interpreting Late Antiquity: Essays on the Postclassical World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 78. Chadwick earlier notes Augustine's insistence that in mind and soul men and women are equal, but that childbearing makes women socially secondary to males (Ibid.).

14. As Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph Ratzinger delivered a talk at St Peter's Lutheran Church in New York City entitled 'Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: On the Question of the Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today', Erasmus Lecture for the Rockford Institute Center on Religion and Society (27 January 1988), and met the following day with journalists. This event is recounted in Phyllis Zagano, 'Catholic Women Deacons: Present Tense', *Worship* 77 (2003), 386–408. I asked him about the maleness/femaleness of the God of philosophy and of theology.

15. The 'Declaration', essentially an opinion rendered by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, signed by its then-Prefect Franjo Cardinal Seper and approved by Paul VI, is among the lower types of Vatican documents, and did not present infallible teaching. Canon 749.3 specifies that 'No doctrine is understood to be infallibly defined unless this is manifestly demonstrated.' See Francis G. Morrissey, *Papal and Curial Pronouncements: Their Canonical Significance in Light of the Code of Canon Law*, 2nd edn (Ottawa: Faculty of Canon Law, Saint Paul University), 1995.

16. At http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_22051994_ordinatio-sacerdotalis_en.html.

17. *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 4.

18. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'Responsum ad Dubium' (28 October 1995), *AAS* 87 (1995), p. 1114.

19. Tarcisio Cardinal Bertone SDB was named Archbishop of Genoa in 2002, elevated to the cardinalate in 2003, and returned to Rome as Secretary of State in the service of Benedict XVI in 2006.

20. See Irenaeus, *Haer.* I, 13, 2–3; III, 23, 25; Epiphanius, *Haer.* 49, 2–3; cf. also 78, 23; 79, 1–3; Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio* 35, 3; Tertullian, *De Praesr. Haer.* 41, 5; *De Baptismo* 17, 4; Cyprian, *Epist.* 75, 10.

21. Phyllis Zagano, 'Grant Her Your Spirit: The Restoration of the Female Diaconate in the Orthodox Church of Greece', *America* 192.4 (7 February 2005), 18–21; tr. into Italiam as 'Chiesa Ortodossa Greca: Il ripristino del diaconato femminile', *Adista* (26 February 2005). The Holy Synod voted to restore the monastic female diaconate, but discussion and consideration was also given to the active female diaconate. The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith uses the term 'sister Churches' when referring to individual Orthodox Churches in relation to the Church of Rome: see 'Note on the Expression "Sister

Churches"' (30 June 2000), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000630_chiese-sorelle_en.html (accessed 5 February 2007). This Note was signed by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.

22. A few ordained women deacons minister in Lebanon. The Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey officially lists 'Mother Hrip'sime Proto-deacon Sasunian, born in Soghukoluk, Antioch in 1928; became a nun in 1953; Proto-deacon in 1984; Mother Superior in 1998. Member of the Kalfayian Order': *Oratsuyts'* (Istanbul: Armenian Patriarchate, 2001), p. 254, tr. for me by Fr Krikor Maksoudian. For the history of Armenian women deacons, see Abel Oghlukian, *The Deaconness in the Armenian Church*, tr. S. Peter Cowe (New Rochelle, NY: St. Nersess, 1993) and M. Kristin Arat, 'Die Diakonissen der Armenischen Kirche in kanonischer Sicht', *Handes Amsorya* (1987), 153–89.

23. The international Old Catholic community consists of the autonomous Old Catholic Churches in the Austria, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States, associated by the Union of Utrecht. The Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic has mutual recognition of sacraments with the Old Catholic Church of Mariavites, the Independent Catholic Church in the Philippines, and the Anglican Communion.

24. 'Bartholomew said that there were no canonical reasons why women could not be ordained deacons in the Orthodox Church': National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *News about the Eastern Churches and Ecumenism*, no. 5 (February 1996), p. 1, reporting from Service Orthodoxe de Presse, 'Genève: Visite du Patriarche œcuménique en Suisse', no. 204 (January 1996), p. 3.

25. His June 2003 election as Episcopal Coadjutor of the Diocese of New Hampshire was followed by the consent of the House of Deputies and House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church (USA) at its 2003 General Convention, his consecration on 2 November 2003, and his investiture as diocesan bishop on 7 March 2004.

26. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20011124_iarccum-arch-canterbury_en.html (accessed 18 May 2007).

27. Anglican/Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission, 'A Statement on the Doctrine of the Ministry' (Canterbury, 1973), 16; available at http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/arcic/doc/e_arcic_ministry.html.

28. Anglican/Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission, 'Authority in the Church I' (Venice, 1976); available at http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/arcic/doc/e_arcic_authority1.html.

29. Anglican/Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission, 'Authority in the Church II' (Windsor, England, 1981), 12; available at http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/arcic/doc/e_arcic_authority2.html.

30. Ibid., 24.c, 24.d.

31. Anglican/Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission, 'The Gift of Authority (Authority in the Church III)' (Palazzola, Italy, 1998); available at http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/arcic/doc/e_arcicII_05.html.

32. Ibid., 3. The only Catholic woman member of the dialogue was Sister Sara Butler MSBT, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of St Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, Illinois, now a member of the International Theological Commission and author most recently of *The Catholic Priesthood and Women: A Guide to the Teaching of the Church* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2006).

33. The royal monastery was founded around 1180 and the abbesses' ecclesiastical jurisdiction – upheld on appeal by the Curia – included the granting of faculties for confession, celebration of Mass, and preaching, until exempt jurisdictions were abolished by Pius IX with the Bull *Quae diversa*. See C. G. Herberemann *et al.* (eds), *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New Haven, Conn.: Knights of Columbus, 1910), p. 513.

34. Florence Li Tim-Oi was ordained priest on 25 January 1944 by the Bishop of Hong Kong. In 1974, three retired bishops of The Episcopal Church ordained eleven women as priests in Philadelphia; two years later the General Convention authorized the ordination of women as

priests and bishops. The first woman to be consecrated bishop was Barbara Clementine Harris, made Suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts in 1989. The first woman diocesan bishop was Penny Jamieson of Dunedin, New Zealand.

35. See Chapters 11 and 12 in the present volume for further discussions of the current challenges on such issues for the Anglican Church.

36. The Anglican Church of Nigeria considers baptism and Eucharist as Gospel sacraments and considers the remaining five – confirmation, penance, ordination, marriage, and extreme unction – not to be Gospel sacraments, on the grounds that 'they are either a corruption of apostolic practice or states of life as allowed in the Scriptures': The Church of Nigeria, *Articles on Belief*, 25, http://www.anglican-nig.org/articles.htm.

37. *Lumen Gentium*, 29. The internal quote is from *Constitutions of the Egyptian Church,* III.

38. On 27 May 1996 German Old Catholic Bishop Joachim Vobbe ordained Old Catholic deacons Regina Pickel-Bossau and Angela Berlis to the priesthood. Bishop Vobbe is the author of *Geh zu meinen Brüdern* (Bonn: n.p., 1996), which argues the case for the ordination of women.

39. The Old Catholic Church of Switzerland first ordained women deacons around 1991 and women priests in 2002.

40. The Union of Utrecht also rejects the dogma of the Immaculate Conception promulgated by Pius IX in 1854, and rejects the disciplines (but not the doctrine) of the Council of Trent.

41. At present, Joris Vercammen (b. 1952).

42. Specifically, the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands, the Catholic Diocese of the Old Catholics in Germany, the Old Catholic Church of Austria, the Christian Catholic Church of Switzerland, the Old Catholic Church of the Czech Republic, and the Polish-Catholic Church of Poland.

43. United States Catholic Conference, Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, 'Pastoral Guidelines Concerning Admission of Polish National Catholics to Sacraments in the Roman Catholic Church (Canon 844)', available at http://www.rcab.org/Eand I/polishNationalCatholics.html.

44. The Iglesia Filipina Independiente broke from Rome in 1902. The Bonn Agreement of 2 July 1931 established intercommunion (since 1958 'full communion') between the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht and the Church of England, since extended to the Anglican Communion.

45. Among the others that use the term 'Old Catholic' in the United States are the Old Catholic Church of America, the Old Catholic Church in North America, the Catholic Apostolic National Church, and the Independent Old Catholic Church of America. The Catholic Church technically recognizes the validity of orders in the Autocephalous Church Movement (the Catholic Apostolic Church), which has ordained women since the 1960s, but since it receives persons ordained by the Movement as laypersons it has made no statement regarding the validity of women's ordination within it.

46. Hana Karasova was ordained deacon in October 2003 by Old Catholic Bishop Dusan Hejbal: Martina Schneibergova and Jana Sustova, 'Die altkatholische Kirche hat ihre erste Diakonin', Radio Praha report, 30 October 2003. The full text of the report is at http://http://radio.cz/de/artikel/46864.

47. The Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic has one bishop, eleven priests, and three deacons, and an approximate membership of 3,200 persons in ten parishes.

48. In 1970, Ludmila Javorová (b. 1932) was secretly ordained to the priesthood in the Czechoslovakian underground Koinótés fellowship by Roman Catholic bishop Felix Maria Davidek (1921–1988), who is considered an affiliated bishop of the Diocese of Brno, Moravia, Czech Republic. The Catholic Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith declared all Koinótés' ordinations illicit in February 2000, eventually regularizing 50 celibate and 22 married men by reordaining them *sub conditione*, making no direct statement about the ordained women. See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration, 'On Bishops and Priests Ordained Secretly in the Czech Republic' (11 February 2000). Javorová was not invited to be reordained and her bishop reportedly asked her not to exercise priestly ministry.

She has complied. As many as five other women were ordained, some solely to the diaconate. See Miriam Therese Winter, *Out of the Depths: The Story of Ludmila Javorova, Ordained Roman Catholic Priest* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), and Petr Fiala and Jiří Hanuš, *Skrytá církev, Felix M. Davídek a společenství Koinótés* (Brno: CDK, 1999).

49. The others in this dialogue are the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Egypt; the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, Damascus; the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia; the Orthodox Church of Eritrea; and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church.

50. Two of these declarations are with Echmiadzin and one with Cilicia: between Paul VI and Vasken I, Supreme Catholicos and Patriarch of All Armenians (Echmiadzin, 1955–95), 12 May 1970; between Pope John Paul II and Catholicos Aram I Keshishian (Cilicia, 1995–present, 25 January 1997); between John Paul II and His Holiness Karekin I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians (Echmiadzin, 1995–99), 13 December 1996.

51. See Oghlukian, *The Deaconess in the Armenian Church*; also Arat, 'Die Diakonissen der Armenischen Kirche in kanonischer Sicht'.

52. In the official church calendar published by the Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey: 'Mother Hrip'sime Proto-deacon Sasunian, born in Soghukoluk, Antioch in 1928; became a nun in 1953; Proto-deacon in 1984; Mother Superior in 1998. Member of the Kalfayian Order': *Oratsuyts'*, p. 254.

53. It is worth mentioning here that the ecumenical councils generally agreed to by all Christendom (except for the Oriental Orthodox, who recognize only the first three, and the Assyrian Church of the East, who recognizes only he first two) are: Nicaea I (325 AD), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (430), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (553), Constantinople III (680), and Nicaea II (787). The Armenians did not attend councils after 430.

54. Available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox _docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19880626_finland_en.html.

55. Ibid., 43.

56. Ibid.

57. 'The vestments worn by the bishop at a liturgical celebration are the same as those worn by presbyters; but in accordance with traditional usage, it is fitting that at a solemn celebration he wear under the chasuble a dalmatic (which may always be white). This applies particularly to the celebration of ordinations, the blessing of an abbot or abbess, and the dedication of a church and an altar': *Ceremonial of Bishops* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1989), 33.

58. St Nectarios the Wonderworker was briefly Metropolitan of Pentapolis, but was removed from office in 1890. He became an educator in Greece, and in 1904 founded a female monastery, the Holy Trinity Convent in Aegina, to which he retired in 1908. His body was found incorrupt after death. The Orthodox Church declared him a saint in 1961.

59. 'Church Steps Back to the Future', *Kathimerini English Daily*, 9 October 2004; available at http://www.hri.org/news/greek/ana/2004/04-10-09.ana.html#14. See also Zagano, 'Grant Her Your Spirit'.

Chapter 2

The Whole Household of God (oikos): Some Ecclesiological Perspectives

Ernst Conradie

Introduction: Ecumenical Discourse on the Household of God*

In recent ecumenical discourse the notion of the 'whole household of God' (*oikos*) has been employed as a theological root metaphor. The power of this metaphor lies in its ability to integrate in particular three core ecumenical themes on the basis of derivatives of the Greek root *oikeo* (to dwell), which forms the etymological root of the quests for economic justice (the *nomoi* or regulations within the household), ecological sustainability (the *logos* or underlying principles of the household) and ecumenical fellowship (*oikoumene* – participating as members of the whole household of God).

Such ecumenical discourse on the household of God is best understood within the context of the whole work of God (creation, providence, redemption, completion), which has traditionally been described as the 'economy of the triune God', from which the term 'economic Trinity' has also been derived. Christian communities live from the conviction that the whole household (*oikos*) belongs to God and has to answer to God's economy.[1]

On this basis, the 'whole household of God' may serve as a theological root metaphor for current discourse on a wide variety of theological themes. It has been employed for an ecological doctrine of creation based on the indwelling of God's Spirit in creation[2] and in the ecclesial community, an anthropology of stewardship (the *oikonomos*[3]) or one of being 'at home on earth',[4] a soteriology and an ecclesiology focusing on the way of becoming members of the 'household of God' (Eph. 2.19–22), an eschatology expressing the hope that the house which we as humans inhabit (the earth) will indeed become God's home,[5] a pastoral theology toward the edification of the household (*oikodome*), and an ethics of eco-justice,[6] inhabitation (in the built environment), homemaking, hospitality and sufficient nourishment.[7] Although one may also develop a Christology on this basis (Christ being the cornerstone of this house according to Eph. 2.20), there is a tendency in ecumenical discourse on the *oikos* metaphor to move away from a Christological focus towards a pneumatological orientation.[8]

In ecumenical discourse on life and work and on justice, peace and the integrity of creation, the household of God serves as a theological root metaphor for

reflecting on a number of aspects: the integrity of the biophysical foundations of this house; the economic management of the household's affairs; the need for peace and reconciliation amidst ethnic, religious and domestic violence within this single household; a concern for issues of health and education; the place of women and children within this household; and an ecumenical sense of the unity not only of the church, but also of the whole of humankind and of all of God's creation, the whole inhabited world (*oikoumene*). Given this strong ethical emphasis, it is not always entirely clear from ecumenical discourse what difference it would make to describe the planetary household as the household *of God*, that is, in terms of God's inhabitation. There is indeed a danger of talking about the household of God without talking about (or to) God.

It should be clear that the household of God as a theological root metaphor has considerable strengths. It builds on and provides impetus to the widespread recognition (especially in indigenous and ecological theologies) of the theological significance of place (and not only of time) and locality.[9] The metaphor of the household of God will appeal to families who treasure a sense of homeliness and those (often women) for whom homemaking constitutes a major part of their daily lives. Perhaps it will also appeal to those, for example in Africa, who have been denied a home: (environmental) refugees, the homeless waiting on some housing scheme, those who have been forcibly removed from their ancestral homes (also under apartheid in South Africa), street children, battered women, (potential) rape victims for whom 'home' is indeed a dangerous place, and all those who have not found a place where they can feel at home. It may also be applicable to countless species whose habitat has been invaded for the sake of human interests. Clearly, although the earth does not yet provide a home for all, the yearning of Christian hope is that all God's creatures will find a lasting home in God's household.

Like all metaphors, the notion of the 'household of God' has certain limitations. Since any notion of the household is necessarily a form of social construction, it can easily be employed to serve the interests of patriarchs (the proverbial *paterfamilias*), possessive parents, the propagation of preconceived 'family values', the restriction of slaves, women and children to the private sphere, or the domestication of emancipatory struggles. Many a dictator has tried to portray himself as a 'family man'. In pluralist, industrialized societies the influence of the household is often restricted to the sphere of the private or to recreation after hours. The use of the *oikos* metaphor may therefore unwittingly reinforce the marginalisation and privatisation of Christian witness in society.

Alternatively, the inclusiveness of the notion of a household may be expanded to such an extent that it has no boundaries – unlike any particular household. The application of the anthropomorphic notion of home to non-human species is not by itself problematic since other species also engage in house-building activities. However, ecosystems do not, strictly speaking, provide a house for species, but a habitat to thrive in. As Michael Welker observes, the image of the earth as a house does not take the self-productive activity of the earth into account. This is, in fact, already evident from the earth's own agency according to the first creation narrative in Genesis. Earth is portrayed not so much as a house but rather as an active empowering agent which brings forth life.[10]

Moreover, if a household can offer no sense of belonging inside and can exclude nothing on the outside, then it becomes virtually meaningless and no longer offers any sense of being at home. The household with its fenced vegetable and fruit garden, for instance, epitomises the human need for *surrounded* social and moral space. Indeed, housing typically precedes life. The enclosure not only defines and protects; it also demarcates an open frontier describing the identity of the household but on that basis also the possibility of communication with what lies outside the enclosure.[11] If the boundaries of the household are rigid and closed, the inhabitants will wither away and die. Or, as Konrad Raiser suggests, the ecumenical household 'constantly displays this duality between boundary and openness, independence and relationship, rest and movement, the familiar and the alien, continuity and discontinuity'.[12]

What is the Place of the Church in God's Household?

The argument of this chapter is that reflection on the boundaries of the household raises important ecclesiological questions since it is no longer clear what the notion of the household refers to. In ecumenical theology the fellowship of churches (*oikoumene*) is typically portrayed in terms of the image of a household. However, there are also calls for a 'wider ecumenicity' which would incorporate all human beings, based on the unity of humankind and not only the unity of the Church,[13] and inviting dialogue with people of other living faiths. This usage seeks to recover the original scope of the 'whole inhabited and habitable world'. In the ethics of economics, the site of the household is understood as the global economy. In ecological theology it is the earth itself (the biosphere) which is typically portrayed as the household of God. It is argued that the household of God cannot be conceived in anthropocentric terms as a communion of human beings. The household includes more than family members, friends, neighbours, visitors, foreigners and (in African terms) the communion between the living and the dead. It also includes domestic animals, livestock, food supplies, clothing, furniture, appliances, energy supplies, water supplies, gardens, trees, flowers, soil, and all the building materials of the house itself. Accordingly, the earth itself is ultimately the larger house which human beings inhabit together with multiple other life-forms.

If the metaphor of the household receives such more inclusive (if not planetary) connotations, this invites the question how it may be employed in an ecclesiological context to redescribe the nature and mission of the church in society.[14] If the church is not itself the household of God, what is its place and mission within this household? In what way is it a function of God's economy? What is the scope of the household which is to be built up (*oikodome*)? How should membership of the household of God be understood? Does the metaphor of the household, precisely as the household *of God*, help to clarify the orientation of the church not only on its own edification, but also on the needs of society? To widen the scope of the *oikos* metaphor (seeing the smaller households within the larger household) may help to establish the inextricable relatedness of church, economy and earth and thus to link the mission of the church to economy and

earth. However, it does not clarify the distinct nature of the church itself. In what way is the church as *oikos* similar to the earth as *oikos*? In short, can the 'household of God' still offer a root metaphor for *ecclesiological* reflection? Or has ecumenical discourse arrived here in a dead end of theological confusion?

It should be clear that these questions call for a revisiting of (Protestant) discourse on the complex relationship between church, society, state and civil society. Since these are dominant themes in the twentieth century, it would be unwise to take theological shortcuts to redeem the *oikos* metaphor for ecclesiological reflection without cognizance of what is at stake in this regard.

One may, of course, argue that all (theological) metaphors have limitations, suggesting the need for a variety of metaphors. Indeed, the notion of the household of God may be complemented by reflection on the church as *ekklesia* or as *koinonia*.[15] However, simply switching from one metaphor to another will not facilitate and may actually evade detailed critical investigation. It will also underestimate the staying power of theological *root* metaphors and conceptual models. They provide an integrating power within theological traditions for centuries. The question is therefore whether 'the whole household of God' may provide a suitable root metaphor for ecumenical Christianity in this century.

In this contribution I will opt to stay with the *oikos* metaphor. I will explore the ecclesiological dimensions of this metaphor in conversation with two discourses in particular, namely ecumenical contributions on the household of God as reflected in the 'Ecclesiology and Ethics' project of the World Council of Churches and contributions to ecclesiology from within contemporary African Christian theology.[16] In a final section I will offer some concluding comments.

The World Council of Churches on Ecclesiology and Ethics

In 1992 the World Council of Churches commissioned a study project on 'Ecclesiology and Ethics' to be conducted jointly by its Faith and Order team (Unit I) and its Justice, Peace and Creation team (Unit III). The aim of the project was to explore the link between what the church is and what the church does. The need for such a project was based on the perception that the ecumenical discourses on 'faith and order' and on 'life and work' have become disjointed. In ecumenical reflections on the witness of the church in society there is a tendency to underplay the distinct contribution which the church *as church* can make. Similarly, in ecumenical reflections on the nature of the faith and the order of the church there is a tendency to avoid controversies on what the mission of the church entails. Although it seems obvious that any reflection on the faith and governance of the church should have significant ethical implications and that discourse on the social agenda of the church should draw on a theological understanding of the church, this project gave ample evidence of the unresolved controversies in ecumenical discourse in this regard. This emerged at the three conferences on the theme of 'Ecclesiology and Ethics', namely on 'Costly Unity' (Rønde, Denmark, 1993), on 'Costly Commitment' (Tantur, Israel, 1994) and on 'Costly Obedience' (Johannesburg, 1996). A concluding report, entitled *Ecclesiology and Ethics:*

Ecumenical Ethical Engagement, Moral Formation and the Nature of the Church, was published by the WCC in 1997.[17]

Before I analyse the report on *Ecclesiology and Ethics* it may be helpful briefly to explore some other contributions on the ecclesiological significance of the *oikos* metaphor. It is interesting to observe that there are two contrasting routes which may be followed in this regard. These are related to two Greek words which are both derived from the root *oikeo*, namely *oikodome* (the edification of the household) and *paroikia* (resident aliens). These routes also relate to an emphasis either on the nature or on the mission of the church, that is, on 'ecclesiology' or on 'ethics'.

In his stimulating study *God's Spirit: Transforming a World in Crisis*, Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz developed the notion of 'ecodomy', derived from *oikodome*. Ecodomy is the art of inhabiting instead of dominating the earth, our house. Müller-Fahrenholz explains:

> In its literal sense this term refers to the building of the house, but its meaning can be extended to any constructive process. So the apostle Paul uses the word for the building up of Christian communities. He calls his apostolic mission a service to the *oikodomé* of Christ (2 Cor. 13:10). He reminds members of Christian communities that they should behave towards each other in the spirit of *oikodomé* (Rom. 14:19). They are called to use their specific gifts and talents (charisms) for the *oikodomé* of the Body of Christ (Eph. 2:21), just as they are reinforced and strengthened by the pneumatic energy of this body.[18]

Müller-Fahrenholz subsequently calls on Christian congregations to become ecodomical centres and to form ecodomical networks and covenants which can respond to contemporary challenges. The calling of the church is to become partners in God's ecodomy.

Here we need to raise the question whether this description of the *mission* of the church in God's household also helps us to understand the *nature* of the church. What are the implications of an expansion of the connotations of the household from Christian communities to the 'whole inhabited world'? How are Christian communities related to other groups who may share their ethical goals and values?

The position of Christian communities in society may also be characterized with the term *paroikia,* which literally means 'living away from home'. The church is a community of 'resident aliens' (*paroikoi*), without citizen rights, in the world (1 Pet. 2.11). God's elect people are strangers (*parepidemoi*) in the world (1 Pet. 1.1) who are called to live their lives as strangers in reverent fear (1 Pet. 1.17). Müller-Fahrenholz also recognizes the need for an emphasis on the Church as *paroikia* in society:

> It is understandable that some of the small and persecuted Christian groups began to see themselves as communities of aliens and exiles in a hostile world, whose true homeland was in the heavens (cf. 1 Pet. 2:11). Eventually each local Christian church came to be called a *paroikía*, a home away from home, as it were, a place of refuge.[19]

However, Müller-Fahrenholz regards this emphasis on the *paroikía* character of the Church as merely an important corrective. He says:

> There is an undeniable tension between *oikodomé* and *paroikía*. Whereas the former implies purpose and creativity, the latter tends towards separation of earth and heaven and fosters an escapist spirituality. But this need not be the case. The notion of *paroikía* is useful in underscoring that the followers of Christ can only be strangers in a world that rejects them. ... Ecodomical communities cannot be at peace with the violent powers that threaten to throw the world into chaos; rather they must seek to correct and transform a world in crisis.[20]

Douglas Meeks adds that 'The message of 1 Peter is that the household of God offers these homeless people a home.'[21] They are not called to be homeless, but to come home.

In a South African contribution, Flip Theron acknowledges, with specific reference to Müller-Fahrenholz, that the emphasis on the *paroikia* character of the church may foster an escapist spirituality, but simply adds that this does not need to happen. By contrast, Theron insists that the metaphor of the church as *paroikia* in society is of fundamental (instead of corrective) importance for an understanding of the nature of the church, since it is (for him) a function of the eschatological character of a church of the cross. He thus recalls that 'The English "parish", the Dutch "parogie" and the German "Pfarrer" which derive from this word (*paroikía*), still remind us that the church consists of "resident aliens". Training a "Pfarrer" involves training a "foreigner". The education of a parson, implies training for a *paroikia*.'[22] He eloquently warns against the danger of the church becoming a mere reflection of society:

> Quite understandably the church is always tempted to lay another foundation than the 'one already laid', namely the crucified Christ (1 Cor 3:11). That happens when it becomes fascinated by the isolated form of creation instead of focusing on the *trans*-forming and therefore critical character of the creative Word of the cross. It then loses its *paroikía* character and becomes nothing more than a reflection of society. The salt has lost its saltiness. 'It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men' (Matt 5:13).[23]

Indeed, if the church were to domesticate (pun intended!) the 'strange new world' of the Bible (Barth), the message of the church would become a mere replica of other social movements in the context of civil society. Since I have discussed the theological roots of Theron's contribution elsewhere,[24] it may only be necessary here to observe that Theron's main interest is an understanding of the (eschatological) nature of the church. In his whole œuvre he is less explicit on the mission and the social agenda of the church in society.

These contrasting views cast new light on references to the *oikos* metaphor in the project on Ecclesiology and Ethics. In a section on moral formation in the report on 'Costly commitment' the *oikos* metaphor is explicitly employed to find a way of describing the relationship between ecclesiology and ethics. It suggests that the *ekklesia* may be understood as a 'household of faith' and notes that this may help to

describe the ethical character of the church: the ethos of the household is 'the way of life, the distinctive patterns of thinking and acting, which characterize those who live within the household'.[25] The local household of faith is the place where such a way of life is nurtured. It then notes that the concept is helpful to relate the witness of the church within the economic and ecological realities of society, but also to the various households or families which make up the local church (the household as a 'little church' – John Chrysostom) and the organizational patterns (allowing for a variety of charisms) and relations of power within Christian churches (the ordering of the church already constitutes an ethic, a way of being church in the world).

In the section of the report on 'Costly Obedience' the term 'household of life', referring to an 'inclusive horizon of human belonging' in the context of 'life together on this planet', is also used.[26] Nevertheless, this report deliberately avoids attempts at a grand ecumenical synthesis and emphasizes, instead, the need for moral formation in particular, local Christian communities. This prompts the question how a sense of the *oikoumene* (the 'locality' for the ecumenical church, namely the inhabited earth[27]) may be recovered. It notes that 'the very word *oikoumene* seems to violate the post-modern preference for particularity, evoking as it does the notion of the unity of the human race in the household of God'.[28] On this basis, the report recognizes the challenges of formulating an ecumenical vision, of finding appropriate structures for ecumenical fellowship and of speaking an ecumenical language.

In these ways, 'the notion of *oikos* mediates between the micro and the macro levels of human life and activity'.[29] Unfortunately, the report fails to comment on the metaphorical extension from the *Christian* family to the local community as a household *of faith*, to the management of the house (economy), the household of life, to the 'whole household of God'. Although the root (*oikos*) is present at all these levels, it is not clear what the 'house' includes and excludes in each case and how it is constituted – by God, by faith, through ecumenical fellowship, by society, by offering a planetary habitat for humans, etc.

These reflections on the Ecclesiology and Ethics project do not yet help to clarify how the nature and the distinctive mission of the church within the whole household of God may be understood. It should also be noted that the recent WCC Faith and Order Paper on *The Nature and Mission of the Church*[30] briefly mentions the notion of the household of God, but does not employ it to any significant extent. It describes the church as a 'sign and instrument of God's intention and plan for the world' and draws in this regard on the four images of the people of God, the body of Christ, the temple of the Spirit and the fellowship of believers. Although it builds on the Ecclesiology and Ethics project, this document is far more detailed in its attempt to find ecumenical synergy on the nature of the church and somewhat less explicit on the mission of the church in the world.

African Christian Theologies on Ecclesiology and Ethics

Can the metaphor of the whole household of God be employed to clarify the nature and mission of the church within an African context? This is an important question for ecumenical Christianity, given the shifting centre of gravity in Christianity towards countries of the southern hemisphere. Can African Christianity help the ecumenical church to find its place in God's household? An important dimension of this question is related to the place women occupy in churches and in households in Africa. In terms of church membership and involvement women are *the* dominant force in most African churches, but institutional churches have largely marginalised their experiences, voices and gifts.

It is interesting to note that household imagery seems to be particularly attractive within African contributions to ecclesiology. This is evident, for example, from the metaphors of the family of God, kinship, the clan and ancestral communion which are often employed. In the discussion below I will investigate the fruitfulness of the *oikos* metaphor with reference to two edited volumes on the nature and mission of the church, namely *The Church in African Christianity* and *On Being the Church: African Women's Voices and Visions*.[31] I will not seek to make a substantive contribution toward an African ecclesiology – which, as a tenth-generation Euro-African, I would be hesitant to do. Instead, I will offer some reflections on its ecumenical significance.

1. In African contributions to ecclesiology there is an apparent resistance to drawing any clear distinction between the agenda of the church and that of the state or civil society. This may be the result of the hesitance in African traditional culture and religion to define strict boundaries between different spheres of life, including the sacred and the profane. This may also be due to the overwhelming societal challenges which both state and church are called to address. In many African countries Christianity is numerically strong and in rural areas local churches are often the best vehicle for delivering a range of social programmes, since there is a lack of other well-functioning social institutions and since churches command some degree of moral leadership. Given the urgent nature of such societal challenges, churches find themselves called to respond in whatever way they can. Although there is recognition of the distinct spiritual contribution which churches can make in this regard, pastors often have to assist in areas which would elsewhere be the task of various levels of government. Church leaders and ecumenical bodies regularly address societal concerns at the macro-level. In the telling words of Peter Kanyandago, speaking of unfair international trade: 'Christians cannot leave this serious problem in the hands of politicians only.'[32]

2. In the fairly substantial literature in African Christian theology on the nature and mission of the church much is said about the indigenisation of the African church, Christian ministries and the mission of the church in society but comparatively little about the distinct nature of the church. Overtly, the focus is indeed on ethics and not so much on ecclesiology. The two volumes of essays identified above serve as welcome exceptions in this regard. As Mugambi observes:

The numerous problems facing Africa today could be traced back to the missionary era and even beyond. The Church itself is challenged to find practical responses to these problems, but the Church can only do this when it is itself renewed and redefines itself so that its very existence will incorporate within itself and its mission the questions and concerns of the African context today.[33]

3. A detailed study of the relationship between Christ and the Spirit (the *filioque* controversy) in various African Christian theologies could yield some important pointers for wider ecumenical discourse. There is an understandable fascination in African theologies with the figure of Jesus Christ – who was introduced to most of Africa by Western missionaries. Given the highly ambiguous legacy of mission, African theologians raise Bonhoeffer's famous question in an acute way: who is Jesus Christ, for us, today? Many contributions take the 'many faces of Jesus' in Africa as a point of departure for further reflection.[34] On closer inspection, the Christological centre of the church in Africa therefore reveals an underlying, conflicting diversity. At the same time, there is an almost innate attraction towards the power and work of God's Spirit, to healing, exorcism, prophecy, charismatic leadership and the infusion of God's Spirit in Christian ministries. This is obviously related to the balance of material and spiritual forces, which is emphasized in probably all African worldviews. In this light further reflection on the relationship between Christ and the Spirit may well prove to be highly stimulating. Essentially, the question is whether the God of our ancestors, the God who created us, is the same God who redeemed us in Jesus Christ.

4. African discourse on the nature of the church may provisionally be classified into three groups.[35] Firstly, some contributions stress the institutional dimensions of the church. While some criticize the mainline churches for taking over Western styles of organization and leadership, others are attracted precisely by positions of honour and status within hierarchical church structures. This does not apply to churches of Western origin only; several African Indigenous Churches (AICs) have adopted similar structures when they have become larger and well established.

By contrast, there is a second group of contributions which emphasize that the church is a movement driven by the Spirit and not primarily an institution. They encourage unstructured forms of worship, charismatic leadership and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Examples of such churches include the Spirit-type ('Zionist') African Indigenous Churches and emerging churches with a Pentecostal orientation.

The third group of contributions, where the church is regarded neither as an institution nor as a movement, but as essentially a group of people, a worshipping community, including the living and the dead, is especially important here. It is here where images of the church such as the family of God, the communion of the saints, membership of a clan and ancestral fellowship are particularly attractive.

The church may be portrayed as a *fellowship*, the household of God. This is evident, for example, in an essay on the 'Ecclesiology of African Independent Churches' by Zablon Nthamburi: 'Through the Holy Spirit the Church is transformed into a household of God whose love unites all its members into an unbroken fellowship.'[36] He notes that such fellowship is reminiscent of the African

concept of the extended family, where every member is to be respected and appreciated and is able to make a contribution.[37] Membership of the church is not defined in institutional terms but in terms of being incorporated into the new family of God. Membership thus implies fellowship and nourishment but also family discipline.[38] Where there is an emphasis on the church as a family, there may emerge a need for evolving institutional structures in order to ensure the smooth transition from one generation of leaders to the next.[39]

The church may also be portrayed as an analogue to an *African clan*. In an essay on 'The African Clan as the True Model of the African Church' John Waliggo emphasizes that the church is primarily a clan (Israel) or a family (being brothers and sisters in Christ) and not an institution. He seeks to demonstrate that the clan system in Uganda offers a prefiguration of Christian fellowship, for example in terms of the election of leadership, leadership as serving the interests of the family and clan, the involvement of all members of a family (the laity) in housekeeping, the incorporation of new members within an open-ended clan (e.g. through marriage and adoption/baptism), the need for family discipline, the sense of unity, belonging, oneness, togetherness and celebration in families, and the role of family meals (the Eucharist), enjoyed at the house of the head of the extended family.[40]

The church may also be portrayed as a form of *communion with the ancestors*. This is the argument of an extensive essay on 'The Church as Christ's Ancestral Mediation' by Charles Nyamiti.[41] In a deliberate attempt to retain continuity with Catholic orthodoxy, he argues that the triune God may be understood in terms of ancestral kinship between Father, Son and Spirit. God has allowed us to participate in this ancestral kinship through adoption in Christ, who has become our brother, proto-ancestor and mediator. The church is the extension of Christ's ancestorship to human communities.[42] Throughout the essay Nyamiti refers to the (tripartite) church as militant, suffering and triumphant in order to emphasize that this ancestral communion incorporates those who have died in Christ (and those in purgatory!). He recognizes the role of non-African ancestors in faith and argues that 'with regard to adult non-canonized African individuals, only Christian hope (not certainty) can be the basis of venerations of them as our ancestors in Christ'.[43] He suggests that this model of the church implies the regular and frequent cult of the ancestors, in a Christianised form, where Christ's mediation will serve as the basis for members of the church to act as mediators for one another and in communion with the saints.[44] In this way he stresses the fellowship of earthly members of the church with the saints in heaven. A church without communion with its heavenly members is a truncated church, a body with missing members.[45] Indeed, for Nyamiti, the call for an African ancestral ecclesiology entails reflection on the church in the light of the confession of the communion of saints.[46] He also stresses that this is crucial in order to guard against a purely secular ecclesiology, where the church is seen as one institution amongst others at work in civil society.[47] He adds:

> It is not surprising that many ecclesiologies today are primarily secular in orientation: they present the Church mainly as a human societal body chiefly concerned with earthly welfare such as social justice, peace, liberation from hunger, disease, socio-

economic or political oppression and the like. In some of the worst cases the Church's task is reduced to the socio-political level.[48]

On this basis Nyamiti reflects on a number of traditional and other characteristics of the church, including the hierarchy, *diakonia*, healing and hospitality.

In an essay on 'The Church as a Family Model' Tanzanian Catholic theologian Aidan Msafiri explores the strengths and weaknesses of this model for the church in Africa on the basis of the correlation between an African understanding of family and the church as the family and household of God. Amongst the strengths he mentions the Trinitarian, theocentric and Christocentric dimensions of the family of God. Interestingly, he also highlights the profound unity and interconnectedness between the human family and the cosmos in traditional African cosmologies. Humans have to respect trees for mediating life, rivers for communion, and mountains like Kilimanjaro for connecting people with God. Amongst the limitations of the model he identifies patriarchal cultures, the changes in the structure and cohesiveness of African families, and a degree of exclusivity, since human families are typically more limited in scope than what a vision of the unity of humankind would require.[49]

Despite the attractiveness of such metaphors for an African ecclesiology, Isabel Phiri observes that African women theologians have pointed out that African communities and families are typically structured along patriarchal principles – which women find oppressive for themselves and their children.[50] She nevertheless adopts the language of community in order to describe the church as a healing community, with reference to the healing ministry of Mayi NyaJere in Chilobwe, Malawi. Here she follows the lead of Mercy Amba Oduyoye, who also refers to the household of God in the title of a chapter on ecclesiology in her *Introducing African Women's Theology*.[51] Oduyoye distinguishes between the house and the hearth – the latter in the warm sense of homeliness that mothers are typically called upon to provide within the larger household (the *oikonomia*). She refers to the church as the 'hearth-hold' of Christ within the larger household of God (understood expansively as the cosmos itself).[52] She supplements such a notion of the household with the Christian understanding of fellowship (*koinonia*), a participative partnership of both women and men based on equity and mutuality – that is, on mutual caring, a sharing of skills and other resources, and an African sense of hospitality, a theme which she explores in another chapter on 'Hospitality and spirituality'.[53]

This pattern is followed in several other essays in *On Being the Church: African Women's Voices and Visions*. The point of departure is indeed communion, fellowship, *koinonia*. However, the emphasis is on the need for inclusive participation within that communion, in such a way that the communion can be enriched by the gifts and ministries of the women who constitute a clear majority in most churches in Africa. Oduyoye thus understands Christian ministry in terms of an equal partnership of both men and women.[54] Likewise, Dorcas Akintunde, in discussing the subordination of women in the Christ Apostolic Church in Nigeria, calls for partnership in the exercise of power.[55] In a discussion on 'Sex, Gender, Power and HIV/AIDS in Malawi' Fulata Moyo calls for the reign of

agape, understood in terms of mutuality, reciprocity and companionship in marriage relationships.[56] The task discerned in all these contributions is for women and men to discover their true humanity in Christ. As Mary Tororeiy notes in an essay on 'Voices from the Periphery', what is at issue in African women's theology is to find a common humanity as part of God's creation (with reference to Bonhoeffer's emphasis on being human).[57] She nevertheless recognizes that the church is not merely a human institution; it is the one body of Christ, brought together through the Spirit of Christ. It is only on this basis that women and men can find their place in the one household of God as equal partners. In a remarkable formulation, where she maintains a neat balance between a Christological *and* a pneumatological description of the household of God, she says:

> The Church in Africa is challenged to rise above the purposeful subordination of women. It has to open its arms to a Gospel of Christ that is for all, so that women are enabled to enjoy full citizenship, membership and participation in the Body of Christ, from which they have been denied for so long. Above all, the Church is not a human institution. It becomes Church not because some people decided to come together, but because the Holy Spirit brought them together in one Body. Therefore, as we attempt to discern the role of women and/or men in the community of faith, there is a need to heed and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit of God. The task awaiting the feminist endeavour is to find a place in the one household of God.[58]

5. These perspectives on an African ecclesiology do not yet offer an answer to questions on the place and mission of the church in God's household. They typically stress the continuity between the church and the rest of God's household, both in terms of being part of God's creation and in terms of the (patriarchal) distortions found in both church and society. They describe the nature of the church in terms of a free community of equals, but seem to place less emphasis on the distinctiveness of the church community within the larger human community.

The Place of the Church in God's Household

The Christological concentration which is so evident in the work of Bonhoeffer and Barth may help the church to gain clarity on the distinctness of its place in God's household. The (limited) space in the midst of the world which the church occupies is characterized by the earthly symbols of incarnation and cross, water, bread and wine. This offers a strong corrective to contemporary discourse on the *oikos* metaphor in which different manifestations of the household imagery are all too often confused and conflated with one another. Church communities live together with other communities within the household of God, but have a very specific understanding of the foundations of the house, namely in terms of divine justification on the basis of the vicarious work of Christ. It can only seek to contribute to the building of the house on that basis. Indeed, the most important contribution which the church community can make within the civil community

is to be itself, to proclaim the gospel of the reign of Jesus Christ. The church can best be relevant within the world if it focuses on its own subject matter.[59]

However, this Christological concentration in the contributions of Bonhoeffer and Barth should perhaps be balanced, especially in the African church, by a centrifugal pneumatology which recognizes the presence and activity of the Spirit of Christ in every sphere of the household. This may help the church to follow the movement of the Spirit and to understand its own mission. An understanding of the place and mission of the church in God's household therefore requires further reflection on the relationship between the work of Christ and of the Spirit. Moreover, it requires reflection on the relationship between cosmos and *eschaton*, redemption and the completion of God's work, life and eternal life, house and home, earth and new earth.

How, then, should the place and the mission of the church within the larger household of God be understood? One may perhaps speak of the church as occupying a humble room within the larger household of God. Within this (upper) room the church community may celebrate its adoption as children (not merely as resident aliens) within the household. It acknowledges that Jesus is the door through which one may enter this room and through whom the homeless may experience both a refuge and abundant life (Jn 10.9). However, the church cannot be restricted to one room of the house. That would amount to a privatisation of the sphere of influence of the church and to a domestication of the power of the gospel. Perhaps an open-plan house would suit the church best. The church has to retain a presence within the larger household. Here the African notion of the *ikhaya*,[60] the household of the extended family with its many huts and large communal space, is particularly apt. The church may be at home within the larger household, in the communal spaces, in the public square and the marketplace.

Moreover, the church offers a particular vision of the very architecture, building and ownership of the house. The church is that place within the house where one can find traces that bear witness to the presence of the owner and keeper of the house. The church also concerns itself with the rules for the management of the house. On this basis the church can proclaim that this is indeed the household *of God*, despite the devastating impact of sin in the world. On this basis Christian communities may also act, precisely as children and heirs of the household, as domestic servants in the house, adopting the way of Jesus Christ towards the well-being of the whole household. This should entail the church's involvement in housing schemes for the homeless, its participation in the search for appropriate forms of habitation and in numerous tasks of housekeeping,[61] but it also entails an invitation to others to abide in Christ (Jn 15.4), to hear that the Holy Spirit lives amongst the community of disciples (Jn 14.16), to long for life in the house of the Father (Jn 14.2–3). Indeed, the church community longs for the day when this household will offer a home for all God's creatures. It prepares the house for the homecoming feast. It does not long for another home; it hopes that the house it inhabits will indeed become God's own home, on earth as it is in heaven.

Notes

* This chapter is an abridged version of the following two-part article: 'The Whole Household of God (*oikos*): Some Ecclesiological Perspectives', *Scriptura* 94 (2007), 1–9, 10–28.

1. See Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 33–4.

2. Behind much of the current ecumenical discourse on the *oikos* metaphor lies the seminal work of Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), in which he emphasizes the indwelling of God in creation through the Spirit.

3. Larry Rasmussen observes that 'if English had adopted the Greek word for steward (*oikonomos*), we would immediately recognize the steward as the trustee, the caretaker of creation imaged as *oikos*': 'Theology of Life and Ecumenical Ethics', in David G. Hallman (ed.), *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1994) p. 118.

4. Numerous contributions to ecological theology focus on the need for humans to recognize that they are 'at home on earth'. For a critical engagement with such discourse, staying with the root metaphor of the household of God, see my *An Ecological Christian Anthropology: At Home on Earth?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

5. In my *Hope for the Earth: Vistas on a New Century* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2005), I employed the distinction between 'house' and 'home', suggesting that the earth is the house which we humans inhabit, but that it is not our home yet. Christians may hope to come home, that God's home will be made on earth, as it is in heaven.

6. The term 'eco-justice' is often used in ecumenical discourse to capture the need for a comprehensive sense of justice that can respond to both economic injustice and ecological degradation. Eco-justice within the household of God is stressed, for example, in the study document on *Alternative Globalization: Addressing Peoples and Earth* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2005), produced by the Justice, Peace and Creation team of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The term 'eco-justice' was coined by William Gibson and popularized by Dieter Hessel: see esp. Dieter Hessel (ed.), *After Nature's Revolt: Eco-justice and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992).

7. See the eloquent description by Douglas Meeks of what 'home' entails: 'Home is where everyone knows your name. Home is where you can always count on being confronted, forgiven, loved, and cared for. Home is where there is always a place for you at the table. And, finally, home is where you can count on sharing what is on the table' (*God the Economist*, p. 36).

8. This is especially evident in Konrad Raiser's influential work, *Ecumenism in Transition: Challenges and Hopes for a New Millennium* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1991). Raiser explores the need for a paradigm shift in ecumenical theology from a 'narrow' Christological focus towards a 'broader' pneumatological orientation which would supplement (but not replace) the earlier paradigm.

9. The category of space/place emphasizes the rootedness of all forms of life and highlights the relationship between the issues of ecology (inhabited space) and justice (the control over space). See Sigurd Bergmann, 'Space and Spirit: Towards a Theology of Inhabitation', in Sigurd Bergmann (ed.), *Architecture, Aesth/ethics and Religion* (Göttingen: Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 2005), pp. 45–103.

10. Michael Welker, *Creation and Realiy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), p. 41.

11. See Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 144.

12. Raiser, *Ecumenism and Transition*, p. 88.

13. This theme is derived from the Uppsala assembly of the WCC (1968). In discourse on the unity of humankind three ecumenical themes are related to one another: (1) the unity of the church, (2) the church as a sign of unity to the world, and (3) the universality of God's reign over all people.

14. I am using the word 'church' here primarily as a theological category and not as a sociological category describing different social manifestations of the church.

15. These terms are also considered in the WCC project on 'Ecclesiology and Ethics' (see the discussion in the next section of the text).

16. In the *Scriptura* article I have also explored the *oikos* metaphor with reference to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's notion of *sanctorum communion* as well as Karl Barth's distinction between *Christusgemeinde* and *Bürgergemeinde.*

17. Thomas Best and Martin Robra (eds), *Ecclesiology and Ethics* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1997).

18. Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *God's Spirit* (New York: Continuum, 1995), p. 109.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., p. 110.

21. Meeks, *God the Economist*, p. 96.

22. Flip Theron, 'The church as a *paroikia* and 'Higher Critical' Theological Training', *Ned Geref Teologiese Tydskrif* p. 38 (1997), 257.

23. Ibid., pp. 261–2.

24. See Ernst Conradie, 'Kosmos, kerk en eschaton: In gesprek met Flip Theron', *Ned Geref Teologiese Tydskrif* p. 45 (2004), 788–805.

25. Best and Robra (eds), *Ecclesiology and Ethics*, p. 43.

26. Ibid., p. 52. Elsewhere the report speaks of the Church as such a moral 'household of life' (87).

27. Ibid., p. 76.

28. Ibid., p. 77.

29. Ibid., p. 44.

30. *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper 198 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2005).

31. Jesse Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa (eds), *The Church in African–Christianity: Innovative Essays in Ecclesiology* (Nairobi: Acton, 1998); and Isabel Phiri and Saroniji Nadar, *On Being the Church: African Women's Voices and Visions* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2005).

32. Peter Kanyandago, 'The Disfigured Body of Christ and African Ecclesiology', in Mugambi and Magesa, *The Church in African Christianity*, p. 190.

33. See the concluding comment in Jesse Mugambi (ed.), *The Church and Reconstruction of Africa: Theological Considerations* (Nairobi: AACC, 1997), p. 231.

34. For references, see the indexed bibliography edited by Ernst M. Conradie and Charl E. Fredericks, *Mapping Systematic Theology in Africa: An Indexed Bibliography* (Stellenbosch: SUN Press, 2004).

35. I am drawing here on an essay by Douglas Waruta, 'Towards an African Church: A Critical Assessment of Alternative Forms and Structures', in Mugambi and Magesa (eds), *The Church in African Christianity*, pp. 29–42.

36. Zablon Nthamburi, 'Ecclesiology of African Independent Churches', in Mugambi and Magesa (eds), *The Church in African Christianity*, p. 45.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., pp. 52–3.

39. Ibid., pp. 53–4.

40. John Waliggo, 'The African Clan as the True Model of the African Church', in Mugambi and Magesa (eds), *The Church in African Christianity*, pp. 111–27.

41. Charles Nyamiti, 'The Church as Christ's Ancestral Mediation', in Mugambi and Magesa (eds), *The Church in African Christianity*, pp. 129–77. This essay builds on Nyamiti's earlier work on an ancestral Christology.

42. Ibid., p. 132.

43. Ibid., p. 147.

44. Ibid., p. 142.

45. Ibid., p. 168.

46. Ibid., p. 144.

47. Ibid., p. 144.

48. Ibid., p. 167.

49. Aidan Msafiri, 'The Church as a Family Model', in Emmanuel Katongole (ed.), *African Theology Today* (Scranton, Pa: University of Scranton Press, 2002), pp. 85–98.

50. See Isabel O. Phiri, 'The Church as a Healing Community: Voices and Visions from Cilobwe Healing Centre', in Phiri and Nadar (eds), *On Being the Church*, p. 30.

51. Mercy Amba Oduyoya, 'The Household of God: Studies in Ecclesiology', in Mercy Amba Oduyoya, *Introducing African Women's Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), pp. 78–89. She notes that the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians has agreed to promote the biblical imagery of the household to designate the community under God. Oduyoye adds that 'The church is indeed the hearth-hold with God as mother, the whole earth as the hearth and all human beings as the children of God. Dealing with the Church, however, they would specifically see a community that claims special relationship with Jesus of Nazareth who was named the Christ' (p. 80). It is interesting to note that the household metaphor is used here in both the narrower (local Christian communities) and wider sense (all human beings, the economy, the earth, the cosmos) of the word. Note also the subtitle of the volume of essays titled *Groaning in Faith: African Women in the Household of God*, edited by Musimbi Kanyoro and Nyambura J. Njoroge (Nairobi: Acton, 1996). The metaphor of the household of God is used throughout this volume despite the patriarchal overtones of many African households. The place of women in the household of God is explored both in the wider sense of society (see Grace Ndyabahika's essay on 'Women's Place in Creation') and the narrower sense of church (see Musimbi Kanyoro's essay on *koinonia* entitled 'God Calls to Ministry: An Inclusive Hospitality'). The place of the church within the larger household of God is not explored in any depth in this particular volume.

52. Ibid., p. 79.

53. Ibid., pp. 90–109.

54. Oduyoye, 'Ecclesiology in African Women's Perspective', in Phiri and Nadar (eds), *On Being the Church*, p. 151.

55. See Dorcas Akintunde, 'Partnership and the Exercise of Power in the Christ Apostolic Church, Nigeria', in Phiri and Nadar (eds), *On Being Church,* pp. 80–95.

56. Fulata Moyo, 'Sex, Gender, Power and HIV/AIDS in Malawi', in Phin and Nadar (eds), *On Being the Church*, pp. 184–94.

57. See Mary Tororeiy, 'Voices from the Periphery: Being Church as Women in Kenya', in Phiri and Nadar (eds), *On Being the Church*, p. 169.

58. Ibid.

59. For the background to this paragraph, see my discussion in the *Scriptura* article on the household of God in the work of Bonhoeffer and Barth.

60. This is a particularly rich Xhosa expression suggesting the fecundity of the land, the presence of the ancestral spirits, the harmonious co-existence of relatives within closely knit kinship systems, the availability of sufficient food, bountiful herds of livestock, joyous social gatherings, hospitality shown to visitors and travellers, story-telling around the fire in the evenings and much laughter. In the father's village there will be many houses, or smaller huts, traditionally built from branches and mud with thatched roofs. One hut will serve as the sleeping quarters for a husband and wife and small children. Cooking, washing and eating will be done communally while social gatherings will take place in the evenings around an open fire. Whenever the family is extended, especially through marriage or the birth of children, new huts will simply be added for the newcomers. In traditionally sparsely populated areas there will always be room to extend the father's household.

61. Note the following comment by Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike: 'The sacrifice that mothers make for their children sheds light on the selfless character of the divine love for humanity. Millions of African women are struggling in body, wasting away and working hard in tilling the land, baby-sitting, home-keeping, cooking, washing clothes, fetching water, looking for firewood and petty trading in fruit and vegetables, leading the singing and prayers at liturgical and paraliturgical celebrations, so that the lives of others may flourish': 'African Women's Legitimate Role in Church Ministry', in Mugambi and Magesa (eds), *The Church in African Christianity*, p. 67.

Chapter 3

Culture, Worship and Power: A Case Study of South India

Paul M. Collins

This chapter is born of my ongoing research into the theories and practice of Christian inculturation in South India. During the past five years I have met and conversed with lay and ordained Christians, theologians, activists and evangelists of all the main denominations there; and with Hindus, Muslims and occasionally Jains. In particular I have learnt much from conversations with colleagues at the Tamilnadu Theological Seminary (TTS), Arasaradi, Madurai. Colleagues at TTS have articulated a critique, rooted in Dalit liberation theology,[1] concerning the practice of inculturation. This is offered as part of an ongoing conversation concerning adaptation, inculturation and Dalit critique, which I hope will enrich that dialogue.

The Initial Problem

The relationship between Christian churches and other faith communities in India is to be understood in the colonial context of pre-independence India. The Portuguese, French, British and Dutch, and other Europeans were successively drawn to India for the purposes of trade. However, from the outset of this contact Europeans often embedded trade within military occupation. Thus the Christian colonists, unwittingly or otherwise, saw their faith tradition in relation to India's indigenous faith traditions as a conflict and a power struggle. The technology enjoyed by the Europeans meant that the struggle was heavily weighted in their favour. This was true no less for indigenous Christian communities than for other faiths. The Christian church was inextricably bound up with military occupation from the outset of European colonialism in India. By the mid-nineteenth century those who sought self-determination for India identified the Christian churches with the British Raj and many of them looked to expel the churches along with the British, who seemingly had brought those churches with them.

Kaj Baago[2] and M. M. Thomas[3] argue convincingly that in the nineteenth century it was not Indian Christians who first formulated an indigenous interpretation of Christ, but members of the Brahmo Samaj, and Baago identifies in particular Kesavanchandra Sen and P. C. Mozoomdar.[4] These men are seen as inspiring Christians to take up the task of beginning an indigenous Christian

theology and also contributing to the separation of Christ from the institutional church, which becomes an ongoing feature of the development of indigenous understandings of Christ and Christianity in India. The initial separation of Christ and institutional Christianity is probably to be attributed to Ram Mohun Roy, founder of the Brahmo Samaj; and this is also a feature of the writings of Vivekananda and others in the Ramakrishna Mission.

Following the Revolt of 1857, the association of Christianity with the British Raj was so self-evident and so keenly felt that in 1858 some Nadar Christians in Tinnevelly (Tirunelveli) in present day Tamil Nadu broke away from the Church Missionary Society[5] and formed The Hindu Church of the Lord Jesus.[6] This is perhaps the first concrete instance in India of the person of Christ being deliberately separated from the institutional churches. There were parallel moves in Bengal, led by Lal Behari Day and Krishna Mohun Banerjea.[7] In 1887 K. C. Banerjea and J. G. Shome, impatient with discussions among the churches, abandoned church allegiance and formed The Calcutta Christo Samaj, inspired, as the chosen name indicates, by the Brahmo Samaj.[8] Their purpose was the propagation of Christian truth and promotion of Christian union, and it was the hope of its founders to gather all Indian Christians within it, thereby eliminating the denominations.[9]

However, this experiment was short-lived: the Christo Samaj ended in 1894. The idea of an independent Indian church was proposed by Shome at the Calcutta Missionary Conference in 1882, and K. C. Banerjea argued for the need for a 'truly indigenous theology' at the Bombay Missionary Conference in 1892.[10] A main factor which prevented the creation of an independent Indian church at this stage was the financial dependence of many low-caste and outcaste Christians on Western missionaries. A parallel movement also emerged in Madras in 1886 with the formation of The National Church of Madras, founded by S. Parani Andi (Pulney Andy). In this instance, however, the inspiration came not from India and the Brahmo Samaj, but from liberal theologians in Britain, in particular from the publication of *Essays and Reviews*.[11] None the less, the aims of the Madras group were the same as those of the Calcutta group. Both sought to reclaim the Asian character of Christianity and to create a single self-supporting and self-governing church for India, from which the marks of Western denominations had been eradicated. S. Parani Andi also argued that Indian Christians needed to work with the philosophy and thought-forms of India in order to become truly indigenous; furthermore, he argued, only Indians themselves could do this.[12]

An Earlier Problem

A situation parallel with that of the later nineteenth century arose from the mission strategy of Francis Xavier and the early Jesuits in India in the sixteenth century. The Europeans' lack of awareness of the cultures and social structures of India meant that missionaries were on the whole able to evangelise only those on the margins of society: those who were outcastes or of low caste. When the Jesuit Roberto de Nobili arrived in India in 1605 his ability to stand back from the

situation permitted him to analyse both the socio-cultural situation and the current mission strategy. His analysis of the effects of the missionaries' work on the coast led him to realize that their status as *Paranghis* together with that of their converts meant that Christianity itself was perceived as an abomination.[13]

An Earlier Solution

In response to this realisation Roberto de Nobili began a totally novel and in many ways challenging mission strategy in South India. De Nobili settled in the temple city of Madurai, now in Tamil Nadu. His practice was rooted in his awareness and analysis of the reception of attempts at evangelisation, particularly in the coastal areas of present-day Tamil Nadu. His insights into attitudes toward European missionaries and their converts and the reception of their evangelistic endeavours among the indigenous population[14] is the more remarkable, since these attitudes seem to have either been passed by or dismissed by other missionaries. In making this observation I suggest that what he perceived was the fundamental Eurocentricism of most sixteenth- and seventeenth-century missionaries, which made it impossible for them to consider anything other than their own perceptions and attitudes as of value. It is in his ability to transcend this attitude that de Nobili demonstrates his most fundamental contribution to the processes of adaptation or inculturation.

There are a number of ways in which de Nobili's work may be categorized: first, his own personal praxis; second, the practice he permitted for neophytes; third, his own theorizing about what he was doing in terms of adaptation; and fourth, what might be said to be the outcome of his endeavours in terms of theological reflection and change or addition to the tradition.

In terms of his own praxis de Nobili adopted the lifestyle of a *sannyasin*.[15] This was a thoroughly researched decision, pursued with utter dedication and commitment, even when he journeyed to the west coast of India to meet with fellow Jesuits or other Europeans. Cronin mentions certain instances where de Nobili deviated from the strictures of *sannyasi* practice; for example the use of animal skin parchment for writing certain letters. Nonetheless de Nobili embraced the outward observances of a *sannyasin* to such an extent that the majority of Brahmin teachers and others among the authorities in Madurai were quite clear that he was both a *sannyasin* and a *guru*.[16] To undertake to be a renunciate following traditional Indian understanding was for him an entirely legitimate expression of his calling to renounce all for Christ as a Jesuit.[17]

As regards the practices he permitted for neophytes, that 'permission' is rooted in de Nobili's perceptions of the outcomes of missionary practice in South India, which he had been able to witness from his arrival in India. It is his analysis of the rejection of Christians and Christianity by much of the population in terms of 'Paranghism' that led him to discriminate between those rituals and customs which he designated as 'social' and therefore acceptable, and others which he designated as entirely religious and thus superstitious and forbidden to Christian adherents. This discriminatory tool of categorizing practice as either social or religious

(idolatrous) enabled him to permit neophytes to follow certain indigenous practices, which meant that they would not be ostracized by their peers in the community at large. He provided guidance not only about day-to-day matters but also some of the festivals celebrated among the Tamil people. In particular he gave permission for an adapted celebration of the festival of Pongal, an important Tamil harvest celebration.[18] A further example was that de Nobili had a church built in an 'Indian style'. This further facilitated the transition for the neophytes from one adherence to another, as it did not necessitate 'becoming European'.

The theory of adaptation which de Nobili evolved is a closely worked-out theoretical and theological methodology which, he is at pains to argue, is rooted in both the New Testament witness and the Catholic Tradition. Here his ability to 'think otherwise' is supported by appeals to outstanding historical figures of the European church such as Pope Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas.[19] De Nobili argues convincingly that his practice, while being new in the sense that adaptation in India is new, is in reality only what the church has been doing since St Paul preached to the Athenians. He is able to indicate many instances where 'pagan' practice was permitted to continue or was 'baptized' into a Christianized form, becoming integral parts of European Christian tradition and practice. In other words what de Nobili indicates is that his theory and practice are not new, but rather, perhaps, forgotten and neglected. He recognized the complexity, sophistication and highly developed nature of the culture and religious traditions of South India during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and he was able to perceive that the people he encountered were not savage pagans, but were highly educated and enjoyed a social and political life which was intricately ordered and controlled.

Thus there are numerous instances of de Nobili crafting Christian theological terms in Tamil and Telugu and in Sanskrit. Two particular examples demonstrate how his theory and practice of adaptation flow into theological reflection and development. Rather than refer to a church building by the customary European term (*Igregia*) de Nobili took to using the indigenous term *koil*,[20] which was also used to refer to the temples of the local gods and goddesses. This was certainly a matter of debate and controversy. However, it demonstrates de Nobili's willingness to attempt to see things from the perspective of those with whom he was seeking to communicate. Another example is seen in his deliberate change in the form of address to God from *Tambiran*, meaning 'the Lord had no Lord' in Tamil, to *Saruvissuren* (*Saruvesvaran*), meaning 'Master of all things'.[21] In making this change de Nobili sought to use terminology which he felt gave a clearer indication of the deity to which he made appeal.

Modern Critique of de Nobili's Method

Among the apparent difficulties for modern scholars examining de Nobili's work is not only his appeal to 'appearance',[22] but also his apparent hostility to the religious traditions he encounters (for example) in Madurai. For some commentators it would seem that de Nobili is simply putting on a façade, even acting a part,[23] in

order to convince his hearers of the rightness of Christianity, almost by trickery. However, I want to argue that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that his was no charade, and that his negative attitude towards the religious traditions of South India may be explained at least in part by his desire to maintain a transparent integrity of Catholic Christian truth-claims in the face of the considerable opposition to his work of adaptation among the Catholic hierarchy in India. Part of de Nobili's rhetoric in defence of his work is rooted in a shared polemic against 'superstition', which inevitably invites a negative evaluation of religious and social customs and habits. This does not mean that de Nobili should in any sense be considered a crypto 'Hindu' or that many of his attitudes were not formed by the shared preconceptions of seventeenth-century European Catholics and Jesuits. However, as scholars such as Saulière have argued,[24] de Nobili did in many ways value and respect the culture and the people among whom he laboured for so long.

The questionableness of de Nobili's praxis in relation to caste reiterates the earlier question of the seeming externality of the praxis. If in fact he was not taking the customs and practice of those around him seriously, might not that excuse his collusion with the caste system? If he were simply exploiting indigenous customs for the present moment, in order at some future time to reveal a more Western Christian paradigm, might this be more acceptable? It seems clear that de Nobili saw no reason to overturn the ordering of Indian society and its customs, since he accepted these as parallel to his own experience of Italian society. His permission to the neophytes to go on with their customs and way of life was not temporary. Such an interpretation is further supported by Clooney's appeal[25] to Foucault's work on appearance and reality in the seventeenth century.[26] Thus, while de Nobili accepted current Indian norms and practice, his ability to 'think otherwise' led him to discern a way through the confrontation between Christian and Indian traditions that was evident as a result of the usual missionary methods. Through his method of 'adaptation' he enabled different praxis, theory and theological perceptions to emerge, which were perceived as genuinely Indian. Thus it may be argued that de Nobili had a dynamic view of the relationship between Christian and Indian traditions, which meant that at least to some extent he did impute value to the traditions of those among whom he worked.

The Indian Renaissance

The Indian Renaissance represents a resurgence in confidence in Indian philosophy and culture through an appeal to an age prior to the arrival of the Moghul and later foreign powers. In terms of the power dynamics between culture and worship, the Indian Renaissance, to be seen in such movements as the Brahmo Samaj (founded in 1828), plays a significant role in providing a paradigm for nationalist-minded Christians to formulate strategies for creating an indigenous Christianity. This relates in particular to the renewed ashram movement, which emerges from both the Renaissance and nationalist movements. I will examine two Christians who sought to respond to the paradigm offered by the Indian Renaissance.

The first is Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, who took the robes of a *sannyasin* in 1894. Initially at least this move was not welcomed or accepted by the authorities of the Catholic Church. However his persistence, just like de Nobili's, meant that his lifestyle came to be tolerated. Upadhyay's motivation was of course different from that of de Nobili. It was rooted in his involvement in the drive for Indian nationhood, but the taking of the robes of a *sannyasin* was directly parallel with de Nobili's perception that Christianity in India was wearing European clothes. Upadhyay wrote that

> People have a strong aversion against Christian preachers because they are considered to be destroyers of everything national. Therefore, the itinerant missionaries should be thoroughly Hindu in their mode of living. They should, if necessary, be strict vegetarians and teetotalers, and put on the yellow *sannyasi* garb. In India a *sannyasi* preacher commands the greatest respect. The central mission should, in short, adopt the policy of the glorious old Fathers of the South. The missionaries should be well-versed in Sanskrit, for one ignorant of Sanskrit will hardly be able to vanquish Hindu preachers.[27]

Thus Upadhyay argues that the praxis of de Nobili's mission in Madurai is the inspiration and example for his own practice and experimentation. To this appeal is added the further dimension of the ashram. The ashram was seen by Upadhyay as a place in which others would be trained for mission, out of which a brotherhood of celibate missionaries would emerge. Again this is not unlike de Nobili's practice, although explicit appeal to the Indian tradition of the ashram is an extension of de Nobili's own theorizing. Saulière and more recently Paul Pattathu have argued that it is legitimate to argue that de Nobili's mission in Madurai was an 'ashram'.[28] Upadhyay's experiments in ashram living did not long endure, but they also became part of that which inspired later generations.

Also in this period there is the figure of Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889–1929), a convert to Christianity from Sikhism who never became an affiliate of any particular church. He had used yoga to seek realization of God, and declared that he reached illumination, having received *samadhi* in a vision of Christ.[29] Although understood to be a 'Protestant', he adopted the lifestyle of a *sannyasi* as Brahmabandhab had done and became a wandering preacher, journeying across northern India. Unlike several of the other figures who pioneered an indigenous Christianity in India, Sundar Singh based his theology on the thought-forms of the *Upanishads* rather than the *Vedas*. Perhaps surprisingly he was accepted both by theologians in the West and by Western missionaries in India. The reason for this may be that despite his thorough grounding in the Hindu scriptures, he was also forthright in his denunciation of Hinduism. Baago argues that Sundar Singh's contribution to indigenous theology is much greater than has often been admitted, and that his influence continues to be acknowledged to the present day.[30]

Christian Ashrams and Gurus

Following Indian independence four Europeans – two Frenchmen, a Belgian and an Englishman – made their home in South India as Christian *sannyasins*: Fr Jules Monchanin, Fr Henri Le Saux (Abhishiktananda), Fr Francis Acharya and Fr Bede Griffiths, whose life and ministry is associated variously with the two ashrams of Kurisumala in Vagamon, Kerala and Saccidananda (Shantivanam) in Thannirpallai, Tamil Nadu.[31] As Catholic priests and monks of the Benedictine or Cistercian orders they explicitly acknowledged de Nobili as their inspiration, though mediated through the closer example of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay. As Robin Boyd comments, the tradition of de Nobili had been renewed and brought to life by Upadhyay.[32] Bede Griffiths interpreted the work of Monchanin and Le Saux as a renewal of the initiatives of de Nobili and Upadhyay, seeing himself as inspired and empowered by the example and praxis of Upadhyay and de Nobili to become a Christian *sannyasin*. Abhishiktananda argues that de Nobili sowed the seed of the Christian *sannyasa*,[33] a tradition in which he undoubtedly saw himself participating. However he is at pains to distinguish his own praxis from de Nobili's, arguing that for him becoming a Christian *sannyasi* was an end in itself and not a means to an evangelistic end:

> We must remain clearly aware of the fact that sannyasa is not a way or a means for other things, . . . and it is precisely that which differentiates the sannyasa as taken by Roberto de Nobili from the traditional sannyasa we are speaking of now.[34]

Developments from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s

In the period following the Second Vatican Council various initiatives towards inculturation were taken by both Protestant and Catholic Christians in India. One such initiative is the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) in Bangalore, founded by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India in 1967 to embody and encourage the values and ideals of church renewal. In particular it was to focus on four main areas of work: (1) social justice, seeking liberation and the creation of a just society; (2) inter-religious dialogue with people of any religion or ideology; (3) inculturation of all aspects of Christian living; and (4) authentic Christian spirituality.[35]

One outcome of the work at NBCLC is *The Mass for India*, first published in 1974. It maintains overall the shape of the Latin Rite, with four sections.: Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist and Concluding Rites. Paul Puthanangady argues that the three main indigenous traditions of worship in India, Vedic, Tantric and Agamic, may in different ways be related to the Christian Eucharist, understood in terms of sacrifice and personal communion, and that these traditions were explicitly drawn upon in the creation of the new rite for India, in particular the Agamic form, and to a lesser extent the Vedic.[36] The rite begins without an entrance procession, in place of which rites are celebrated to 'form' the worshipping community present. The presiding priest is greeted with a

tray of flowers, with a small lamp in its midst. The priest then similarly greets the congregation. Puthanangady argues that this has no specific religious meaning and is also used in social life.[37] However, some might argue that this is akin to rituals and gestures performed by Brahmin priests in temples; e.g. it is akin to a form of *puja*. The rites of purification which follow involve sprinkling the congregation with water. A large brass lamp is then lit and priest and people stretch out their arms and hands towards the light to receive the light of Christ, drawing it back with a gesture of arms and hands to their foreheads.

The Liturgy of the Word includes the ceremonial placing of a book (the Lectionary) on a low reading desk, during which it is garlanded and incensed. All remain seated on the floor throughout, e.g. no one stands for the Gospel reading. At the Preparation of the Gifts for the Eucharist a tray adorned with eight flowers is also presented, which is waved over the eucharistic elements and placed on the low altar. The Anaphora, which is no longer in general use, focuses on an understanding of salvation history which acknowledges God's involvement in the history of India. The Concluding Rites include no dismissal, as it is not customary to 'dismiss' or send anyone away from a celebration in India. The scope and radical nature of this rite has perhaps inevitably elicited a considerable amount of critique. I will draw in particular upon the critique of two Western scholars, Bryan Spinks[38] and K. Virginia Kennerley.[39]

The Anaphora of the Mass is built upon phraseology not only from the Bible, but also from Hindu scriptures, including the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Spinks sees no fundamental objection to this crafting of the prayer, arguing that 'In principle this is no different from equating Jesus with the Logos of Hellenistic thought-forms, or the employment of pagan sacrificial terminology in the *canon missae*'.[40] However, where Spinks does find issues to be resolved is in the stanzas of proclamation, in particular the first and fifth stanzas. In the first stanza of the proclamation of creation, Spinks asks whether in the processes of inculturation, the Christian doctrine of God and creation has been qualified by placing too much emphasis upon Hindu mythology and philosophy. His critique of stanza V relates in particular to the issue of inter-religious dialogue and of the Christian tradition in relation to pluralism. The main thrust of Spinks' critique is that stanza V assumes that the processes of inter-religious dialogue are complete[41] and that it is therefore possible to weave together the plurality of religious traditions of India into a harmonious construct in relation to the Christian tradition. This certainly presumes a great deal and indeed can be seen as a rather hegemonic Christian claim. He strongly argues that stanzas I and V are untimely and points to the need to maintain an ongoing and open dialogue between liturgical and doctrinal scholars.

Virginia Kennerley identifies a further set of issues in her critique of the Mass for India. She raises the issue of the reception of such a liturgy in the rural parishes of India, and argues that many priests in rural parishes have condemned the rite as too sophisticated. This points to the extensive plurality of cultures in India, and thus to the need for different forms of worship for use in different regions and different socio-religious contexts. She suggests that an Indian rite would need to allow local adaptation perhaps around a common core, for both the rite itself and

the Anaphora.[42] Kennerley commends the composers of the Mass and Anaphora for producing a very beautiful rite, which she suggests is 'deeply expressive of the consciousness of Christians in dialogue with Hinduism'.[43]

However, it would appear that for the vast majority of Indian Christians the references and inferences of such a rite are too subtle, and require a level of education in and awareness of Hindu scriptures which is simply not shared by most faithful Christians. Thus Kennerley's critique points to issues of relating inculturation to the concerns of people at the grassroots of the church. While Spinks points to issues of a more general kind, both offer useful insights into the theological and cultural issues raised by these particular texts as well as by the task of inculturation per se.

Worship and prayer at Saccidananda Ashram, Shantivanam, the Benedictine house of the Catholic Church notably associated with Bede Griffiths, entails a conscious bringing together of Hindu and Christian traditions. For example the ashram community consciously follows in the way of *sannayasa*, expressed in a lifestyle which embraces poverty and simplicity. Signs of this life are the wearing of saffron-coloured robes, walking barefoot, sitting on the floor and a vegetarian diet.[44] This lifestyle is also expressed in worship:

> The community meets for prayer in common three times a day, in the morning after meditation, when the prayer is followed by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, at midday and in the evening. At our prayer we have readings from the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita as well from the Tamil classics and other Scriptures, together with psalms and readings from the Bible, and we make use of Sanskrit and Tamil songs (bhajans) accompanied by drums and cymbals. We also make use of 'aarti', waving lights before the Blessed Sacrament, and other Indian customs.[45]

Various signs and symbols accompany these prayer times, including the use of sandal paste in the morning, *kumkumum* at midday to mark the 'third eye' on the forehead, and ashes (*vibhuti*) in the evening. Sandal paste is understood as a symbol of divinity and grace; the third eye is the eye of wisdom, known not only in India, but also in the icon tradition of the Greek Orthodox Church. Wisdom is also associated with the feminine, either in terms of the mother goddess in Hinduism, or the Blessed Virgin Mary or Christ himself in Christian tradition. Ashes, used in the Western Christian tradition on Ash Wednesday, are used each day in the ashram as a symbol of purification from sin. The offering of *aarti* in lights or incense is understood as an expression of honour and worship:

> The root meaning of aarti before the central shrine in a temple seems to be this. The inner sanctuary of a temple is always kept dark to signify that God dwells in the cave of the heart. When lights are waved before the shrine [this], as it were, reveals the hidden God.[46]

The honouring of the Blessed Sacrament in this way points to Christ hidden in the sacrament and allows the congregation to share in the light of Christ, taking the light to themselves in gestures of the hands and arms. The Eucharist is celebrated

according to the Latin Rite, but this is enriched through the use of various symbols, particularly at the taking of the bread and wine:

> At the offertory of the Mass we make an offering of the four elements – water, earth, air and fire. Every Hindu puja consists in the offering of the elements to God, as a sign of the offering of the creation to God. In the offertory therefore, we offer the four elements as a sign that the whole creation is being offered to God through Christ as a cosmic sacrifice.[47]

The rituals and symbols employed at Shantivanam as part of the Daily Office and Mass are unmistakably symbols used in temple worship. Equally the form of the Mass is manifestly that of the Latin Rite. The mode of inculturation of the Eucharist here is not to create new liturgical texts, but to express Western forms in an Indian way, using Indian rituals and symbols. The Office is supplemented with the use of Sanskrit chants and the reading of Hindu and other scriptures as well as the use of symbol and ritual. However, the setting of these practices in the common life and worship of a Christian monastic community does transform these rituals and symbols. The Hindu forms are apparent, but the Christian ethos and context, and the content of the rites, bring about a transformation: a transformation of what is originally 'Hindu' and also a transformation of the Latin rite. One way in which to categorize the outcome would be to use the language of hybridity. However, another way of describing the outcome would be to recognize the rites as *sui generis*. The worship offered at Shantivanam is the outcome of dialogue and encounter. It is also the context in which the emergence of new human community is sought in accordance with the vision of the ashram community articulated by Bede Griffiths.[48]

Critique of such practice on the basis that the rites and symbols employed are borrowed in part from high-caste traditions cannot be denied. However, the ashram community is a transformational context. It is also an experimental context. As with any monastery its life is not meant to be lived out generally, although it may well be inspirational. The question therefore arises: to what extent can the liturgical and ceremonial practices of Shantivanam provide a context in which the transformation of widespread Hindu customs is achieved? Equally it is important to consider the reception of such experimentation by Hindus themselves. Selva J. Raj asks the question: 'Do these contrived or formal experiments actually promote or erode the prospects of interreligious dialogue?'[49] He recounts that in the late 1980s

> many Hindus and some Christians strongly protested against the Catholic attempt to adapt Hindu religious symbols, rituals, images, institutions, and architecture into Christian forms of worship as offensive to their religious sentiments. The Sanskritization of Christianity also sparked animated theological debate between Swami Devananda and [Bede] Griffiths.[50]

It is clear from Raj's research that 'The reaction of Hindus is ... quite varied. While some adopt the proverbial universalist and tolerant approach, others regard such efforts as highly offensive to their religious sentiments.'[51]

A particular critic of the experiments at Shantivanam is K. V. Ramakrishna Rao, who asks if such experiments in relation to Hinduism would ever be repeated by Christians in relation to Islam.[52] Other critics perceive the experiments as 'reckless religious and cultural adventures', or simply as 'fraudulent'.[53] Such critique raises the fundamental question of the ownership of religious rites and symbols. Are such matters the 'copyright' of a particular faith or religion; or do they exist in such a way as to be, more loosely, component parts of a more generalised culture? It is evident from the breadth of the popular response to the experiments at Shantivanam that there is no ready-made consensus concerning these issues.

The Church of South India

When the eucharistic rite of the Church of South India (CSI) was first produced (1950) it was hailed as an important step forward for the ecumenical and liturgical movements. However, later reflection lead to a re-evaluation of the rite as 'a miscellany of foreign liturgical writings, fabricated in the theologian's or liturgist's study rather than emerging from South India's worshipping congregations'.[54]

The use of this eucharistic rite in rural parishes raises many issues about its relevance to or resonance with the lives of worshipping people, just as the Mass for India might. Villagers often express their faith outside of worship through the use of dance and drums and other instruments, and also the epic poetry of their forebears, performed as a kind of recitative. Could not such forms be used in the celebration of the Eucharist? While it is true that the rite itself is essentially foreign in its form and content, the ethos of worship of itself is less problematic. Worship is often accompanied with local instruments and songs (*bhajans*), including *bhakti*-style lyrics, with the congregation seated on the floor.[55] Indian melodies are also used to sing such texts as the Nicene Creed. The use of lamps in worship has also become quite widespread.[56]

Bishop Sundar Clarke also offers a critique of the standard CSI rite of the Eucharist. He goes beyond the critique of Garrett and argues that the rite is essentially the product of the English and of high-caste Indians.[57] In distinction to this Sundar Clarke argues that worship should reflect the struggles of the faithful to fight poverty, caste oppression and all forms of injustice and exploitation. Thus the only way forward is for liturgy to reflect these struggles and the culture of those who are engaged in struggle. He commends the use of local indigenous art forms and dance, e.g. *Bharathanatiyam* (traditional Indian dance).[58] He also recommends the much greater use of the fruits of nature, to demonstrate an interconnectedness with the creation, such as the use of mango, palm leaves and sugar cane, and lamps as symbols of light, e.g. a central lamp, *kuthuvilka*. The element of water, he suggests, is also important. He recognizes that this conceptuality strongly echoes the understanding of *advaita*, but he is clear about distancing himself from any understanding of reality as illusion, *maya*. The symbol

of the cross plays an important role in the expression of the reality of suffering. He also advocates a more joyous and festive spirit in worship, including hand-clapping and arm-raising. He is keen to explore the use of the body and posture, mentioning the possibility of using yoga and prostration.[59]

The work of Sundar Clarke and others, such as Eric Lott, Christopher Duraisingh and Samson Prabhakar,[60] led in 1986 to the publication of a draft Indian Contextual Liturgy for use in the CSI. While this rite does contain references in Sanskrit, on the whole it is deemed to be less 'elitist' than its Roman Catholic counterpart, using more widely acknowledged rituals.[61] Those composing the CSI contextual rite consciously set their faces against what is seen as the Sanskrit culture of the Mass for India. They were conscious that the vast majority of CSI congregations are rural and of low-caste or outcaste status. Thus to produce a liturgy heavily reliant upon the thought-forms of the ancient Hindu scriptures and philosophy is seen to be as remote from the Indian villager as the Judaeo-Christian thought-forms which it sought to adapt. Kennerley articulates the reality that 'Its Brahmanic quality is also offensive to former Hindus who have experienced oppression from the higher castes.'[62]

Thus the CSI rite avoids the *Agamic* ritualistic style of the NBCLC rite, in favour of a more spontaneous, *Prabhandic* style. Indeed the very words 'indigenisation' and 'inculturation' are rejected as synonymous with 'Sanskritization'. In the CSI there is a preference for the word 'inter-cultural' to describe the experimental liturgy. Nonetheless fears of syncretism still remain, together with an antipathy amongst some towards Hindu traditions and customs. These factors, together with the effects of globalization, have tended to militate against the processes of inculturation.

Dalit Liberation Theology

Since the late 1980s the growing movement for Dalit liberation has also found a voice among Christian theologians in India.[63] These theologians focus on the oppression experienced by the Dalit peoples of India, who are perceived by the people of caste to be ritually impure and therefore untouchable and outcaste. The critique of casteism offered by these theologians has been extended to the practice of the churches themselves. Thus some writers have pointed to the praxis and example of de Nobili as legitimizing ongoing casteism within the churches today,[64] and the critique of de Nobili is also extended to those who follow in the *sannyasi* tradition. This critique of modern praxis has been aimed at the work of individuals as well as of the ashrams with which they are associated. The focus of the critique is that appealing to the *sannyasi* vocation as well as to other elements of Hindu tradition in terms of scripture and symbols is to collude with the system, which oppresses the Dalit peoples.

The liberation of the Dalit peoples would mean a radical realignment of customs and traditions, but above all of power relations. The liberation theologians argue that for the churches to embrace high-caste traditions uncritically is to collude with and reinforce the power relations which oppress

and marginalise the Dalit peoples. Undoubtedly it is anachronistic to expect that such an argument should be found in the seventeenth century, even in someone as able as de Nobili to 'think otherwise'. There is however one aspect of de Nobili's theorizing which may have influenced contemporary practice in the longer term with respect to both adaptation and casteism, and that is his insistence that it is possible to distinguish between religious and non-religious customs. In his own terms this was a remarkably useful strategy. However, as Andrew Webb has argued,

> De Nobili simply artificially divorced Hindu socio-cultural phenomena from their identity as functional institutions forming an integral part of the religion itself. . . . His appearance caused it to be believed that he was a Hindu reformer, but his theologically uncompromising stance vis à vis Hinduism meant his message was simply dissected, as he failed to relate to his audience on a deeper level. Without an appreciation of the indissoluble bond between the religious and social aspects of Hindu culture as vital twin bases from which to proceed to deeper inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue, the potential of this sort of approach was limited.[65]

Webb's critique is itself also anachronistic in its expectations. However, the point made about the separation of religious and cultural customs remains valid, particularly in relation to discourse on contemporary adaptation. For this strategy of 'separation' remains current in the ways in which churches variously allow or justify inculturation in South India today.

In relation to the praxis of the twentieth-century *sannyasins* and their ashrams, it is evident that all of them were influenced by the critique, which emerged from reforming Hindu teachers from the Brahmo Samaj onwards, of the failures of caste and the appalling plight of the untouchables. None of the ashrams referred to above would in any sense seek to defend casteism either within or outside the churches. However, the question remains as to whether their praxis in relation to Hindu customs and symbols is in itself collusion with Brahminical Hinduism and thus a form of casteism. What is at stake here is the underlying attitude to inter-religious relations, as well as the possibility of separating social hierarchy from religious practice. However, such separation is at least in one sense untenable in the Indian context, as the social and the religious are inextricably bound together. However it may be that as a result of Dalit liberation critique such a separation becomes necessary in order to rescue and rehabilitate the riches of Indian religious and philosophical tradition from the processes and power play of 'Sanskritization'.

The emergence of Christian theology from the perspective of the Dalit and tribal (*Adivasi*) peoples is a factor which needs also to be brought into dialogue with those who have been involved in the processes of intentional inculturation in terms of the design and construction of church buildings and other sacred spaces. An important feature of the experience of Dalit people who become Christians or Muslims is the possibility of freedom of access to the sacred space (church building or mosque), from which they were excluded as outcastes from the *varna* system. Such access is highly symbolic of a person's changed status in society, a status

which was reinforced in some people's eyes by the difference between church buildings and Hindu temples.

The Western model of a church offered a clear alternative to the temple and was often situated at the centre of the new cities which the colonialists built. The church gave its members a new identity, especially to those Indian Christians who as Dalits had formerly been denied access to the Hindu temple.[66]

Following independence, however, such church buildings were clearly identified as leftovers from the British occupation which meant that to some extent Indian Christians were excluded from the mainstream of Indian life. Jyoti Sahi interprets this marginalization as resulting in 'The present position of Christian Dalits as twice-alienated ... often a direct outcome of nationalism and a return to a Hindu caste-ridden society, which has become politicised.'[67]

One way in which Indian Christians can counteract these regressive tendencies in Indian society is to appeal to a more global perspective. It is in the light of these tendencies that the achievements of earlier attempts at architectural inculturation are being rejected by Adivasi and Dalit peoples. As those whose forebears have been excluded for millennia from mainstream Indian society, the Adivasi and Dalit peoples have no interest in borrowing from or reconstructing the religious, philosophical and cultural practices and ethos of Hindus. Therefore for such peoples to find an indigenous rather than Western form of expression of architecture means doing something quite different from adapting 'royal' temple styles. Jyoti Sahi describes a number of attempts to adapt tribal architectural forms to create indigenous church buildings.[68] However, the situation is not so clear-cut for Dalit Christians, whose culture does not have examples parallel to those of the Adivasi. Attempts to find expression for the Dalit peoples in an indigenous style will need to be an ongoing task of development rooted in a dual process of listening to the people and enabling their conscience.

> The church building must not only ground a community in its past but should also act as a sign of liberation from former systems of oppression. We can never ignore the fact that the built temple or church has tended to serve an oppressive role as much as a liberative one.[69]

Liturgies for Dalit Liberation

A discussion of the Dalit liberation theology critique of attempts at inculturation in South India must note immediately that all those engaged in this task acknowledge that worship should be a means of seeking liberation and justice for all, and should never be a means of oppressing others. However, those seeking liberation for the Dalit peoples of India take a particular perspective regarding the socio-religious traditions of India and voice this distinctive perspective in relation to attempts at inculturation made by Christians who may not share the experience of oppression and injustice at first hand.

A. Alfred Stephen has argued that from a Dalit's perspective any worship is oppressive if the culture from which it originates is oppressive.[70] Stephen cites F. J.

Balasundaram's quest to reclaim a Dalit culture which Balasundaram sees as hidden beneath the layers of caste Hinduism, a culture marginalized by conquest and the resultant exclusion under Brahminical Hinduism, a culture totally reliant on an oral tradition. Stephen's quest to reclaim Dalit culture is focused on an attempt to form a modern-day counter-culture.[71]

He seeks to interpret Dalit religion as one in which local deities are seen as protectors, in the context of ongoing oppression and social exclusion. In the attempt to identify the qualities of authentic worship from a Dalit perspective, Stephen sets out a number of basic criteria.

First, he identifies the fundamental need for self-respect, and thus for liturgy which recognizes and affirms the common humanity of Dalit peoples in equality with all others.

Secondly, as a wounded community, Dalit peoples have come to know God as being on their side of the struggle. As an extension of this understanding, as peoples in the role of an enforced servanthood, they have reappropriated the notion of *diakonia*, and have come to see God as 'Servant'. This insight is again something requiring clear articulation, celebration, and indeed instantiation in the ethos and character of worship.

Finally, it is necessary to understand that language itself can be an instrument of oppression from both pulpit and altar. Thus it is necessary to avoid oppressive language from high-caste traditions and cultures in liturgical texts and in preaching.

Various attempts have been crafted to create indigenous worship for Christians of a Dalit or low-caste origin. One such attempt is to be seen in the publication *Bhakthi Pancha Pushpanjali*,[72] authored by the staff of Gurukul Lutheran Theological College in Chennai. Five orders of worship are offered, including *Worship in a Dalit Perspective*. Such initiatives, however, have tended to remain confined to educational and training institutions.

In the year 2000, while I was on sabbatical leave in South India, I was privileged to participate in a seminar held at Kodaikanal, a hill station in Tamil Nadu. The seminar was organized by the Dalit Resource Centre, based at the Tamilnadu Theological Seminary in Arasaradi, Madurai. Christian priests and pastors, Catholic and Protestant, as well as Hindu and secular Dalit activists, shared in this event, aiming to craft liturgies which would raise awareness of the complex issues facing congregations seeking to embrace a worship style appropriate to the ongoing liberation of Dalit peoples. The outcome of this seminar was a collection of liturgies entitled *Vazhipaduvom: Dalit Liturgies*.[73]

The core aim of this collection is to reflect 'the life events, sufferings and happiness of Dalits who toil and sweat, who meet atrocities in everyday life'.[74] In the introductory essay of the collection, Dhyanchand Carr sets out further criteria in the quest for an authentic liturgy from a Dalit perspective.[75] He clearly identifies the activity of worship with the divine purposes in creating and redeeming, and in particular with God's quest for justice for all. The expression of this is to be the core of all liturgy. For Carr redemption is the bringing in of new life and new values, which worship must both express and empower. In creating and celebrating liturgy there needs to be a clear understanding of the relationship

between God's story of redemption, and the human stories of (1) the dominant classes and (2) the oppressed. Worship should articulate this patterning of human experience by these three stories:

> Christian worship should be the confluence of these three stories leading to a new story of God with the new human community. That is, the two stories of humankind along with that of the story of how God is bound together in the above two stories, takes the shape of a play in the worship. This play is the reflection of truth and symbolises truth. So, because of this, this Lord's story should bring about a change in the other two stories. This is the final aim of a christian worship.[76]

Carr goes on to spell out how the effects of this transformation need to be expressed in repentance by the oppressors, and the emergence of a new social order. It is interesting to note how this radical perspective on liturgy and worship echoes so clearly the vision of Bede Griffiths in his understanding that the ultimate goal of seeking liturgical inculturation is the emergence and formation of a new human community (*sangha*).[77] So, despite approaching the quest for an authentic Indian liturgy from apparently different perspectives, Carr and Griffiths share a common core vision of the outcome of true worship.

Dalit Critique

I have already drawn attention to the critique of inculturation offered by Dalit liberation theologians. Their critique is one which is rooted in this issue of values, and of actual power and oppression. The quest of Dalit liberation theology is a quest for justice, and thus by extension a quest for truth and for God.

It is also a quest rooted in the experience of Dalit peoples: experience which becomes a primary resource for theology. Michael Amaladoss argues that in the encounter between gospel and culture, the gospel needs to be interpreted and made active in the contemporary context, so that it becomes relevant and prophetic. Such a hermeneutical process requires accurate reading of the signs of the times, and needs to start with questions posed by contemporary life. To enable such processes he identifies a need to remove the discussion of inculturation from the hands of an elite who have often been seen as prejudiced against popular culture and religion. In order to secure a renewal of popular culture and religion in the task of inculturation, Amaladoss suggests that the churches need to place trust in local communities and in the *sensus fidelium*.[78]

It might be expected that from the perspective of Dalit liberation theologians, inter-religious dialogue, particularly with caste Hindus, is something that could only centre on a critique of casteism: a critique which must necessarily involve dismantling a great deal of Hindu practice and its underlying preconceptions. This is of course the case to a large extent. However, Sathianathan Clarke offers a more nuanced approach to the complex issues involved in inter-religious dialogue.[79] Thus he argues that where theology has an 'advocacy function' this does not entail silencing the voices of 'others':[80] 'Thus, in Indian-Christian Theology the caste

communities' voices are in constructive and critical dialogue with the voices of Dalit communities.'[81]

Furthermore, he argues that if theology is really to become inclusive, it is necessary for theologians to be concerned not only with formally declared constructs and beliefs, but also with how people express their innermost feelings and thoughts. Thus dialogue 'implies both a plurality of voices and a plurality of forms'.[82] Clarke is particularly concerned to point to what he perceives as a deficiency in Western theology: not taking imagination and inner feelings sufficiently into account in making its formulations. Clarke goes on to offer insights into the significance of the unspoken and symbolic, which are profoundly important not only in terms of inter-religious dialogue and inter-caste relations, but also in terms of the task of inculturation itself:

> In general, in India, anyone familiar with the complexity of symbolic interaction will know that along with what is said one must also be attentive to what is communicated through actions (gestures and postures) and what is communicated through deliberate non-action and silence.[83]

He relates this in particular to unconventional modes of expression, arguing that such modes are to be found among subaltern communities, and that there needs to be a good deal of sensitivity to this on the part of those seeking to dialogue with and relate to the members of these communities. This is also advocated by Jyoti Sahi, who writes that it is needful 'to liberate the symbol from its secondary position to the word, as part of a much bigger programme of finding the sources of insight in the common people'.[84]

Clarke goes on to argue that for theology truly to include the multiform nature of its sources among different communities it will need to recalibrate how it receives, assembles and interprets sources. Thus 'it is not simply enough for Indian-Christian theology to champion the inclusion of the subaltern communities; it must also create space for their particular mode of expressing and communicating their reflections'.[85] In terms of receiving sources of theology from Dalit communities this means acknowledging that there will be no textual source, as these communities have for so long been forbidden the use of 'sacred text'. Rather, sources from Dalit communities will include music, painting, dance, weaving, song and architecture. Thus theology as we know it, i.e. *theo-logia*, needs also to acknowledge that there is *theo-graphia* and *theo-phonia*;[86] alongside words, what is drawn and spoken needs to be received and valued. Clarke's insights have profound implications for the conduct of Christian theology, inter-religious dialogue and the task of inculturation.

The appeal to *theo-graphia* and *theo-phonia* must necessarily reshape the criteria for and conduct of inter-religious dialogue and inculturation. It emerges from such an approach that Dalit theology and Dalit identity are not to be seen as a single overarching story, but rather a collection of little stories. Thus

> For dalits the transformation is not outside of their daily existence; rather it is there in their life world. Dalit identity ... is not 'given' but [a] 'constructed one'. As far as

dalits are concerned the question is why they adopt a particular discursive position in casteistic social relations and how their subjectivity is being constructed and represented. This is the task of dalit theology. The contemporary resistances of dalits and tribals are to re-define themselves as the 'active agencies' in a civil society, and search for a new subjectivity through self-reflexivity rather than reciprocity of 'the other'. Dalit theology is thus to be a doing theology and a people's theology.[87]

Such perceptions of the role and potential effect of Dalit theology find an echo in the perception of Susan Billington Harper that caste is not to be seen as the monolithic social groupings described by the ethnographers and British legislators, but rather as a complex social hierarchy in which the social groupings are 'fluid, changing and dynamic'.[88] Furthermore, these peoples' stories may be discovered in what Jacob Theckanath calls 'visual theology':

> sacred space in Christian and in many other traditions is not the result of sacralising the secular. Instead what is attempted is to locate the sacred in the very heart of the world. People all over the world have developed and given expression in visual forms to the vision of God active in the world and history. Theology and Church architecture are inter-related. Every effort of symbolising through architectural forms has its theological foundation. Visual theology is as important, if not more, as written theology. The visual theology is thus a key to understanding the symbolic and architectural forms of the sacred space and its underlying meaning for believers.[89]

Notes

1. 'Dalit' is the self-designation now used by those known for centuries as outcastes, i.e. those below the four major castes of Indian tradition. 'Dalit' is a Sanskrit word denoting the oppressed or broken. Gandhi referred to these peoples, who constitute somewhere in the region of 20 per cent of India's population, as 'Harijans', children of God.
2. Kaj Baago, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity* (Bangalore: Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, and Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1969).
3. M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1970, 1991).
4. P. C. Mozoomdar, a member of the Brahmo Samaj, was a participant in the World Parliament of Religions in 1893.
5. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) is a missionary society of the Church of England, rooted in the Evangelical movement.
6. Kaj Baago, *Pioneers* p. 1.
7. Ibid., p. 2.
8. Ibid., p. 5.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 6.
11. *Essays and Reviews* 1st publ. (London: John W. Parker, 1860).
12. Baago, *Pioneers*, p. 9. See *A Collection of Papers Connected with the Movement of the National Church of India (Madras).* (Madras; n.p., 1893), the first six annual reports of the 'National Church' of Madras, pp. 93–4.
13. Converts to Christianity were generally referred to as *Paranghis* by caste Indians. *Paranghis* were those without caste status, and foreigners. To become a Christian was deemed to have ceased to be Indian, and to have become an outcaste and/or foreigner.
14. See Roberto de Nobili, *Responsio* (1610), 2.1.

15. *Sannyasin* is a Sanskrit term denoting a renunciate or monk. It is the last of the four stages of life (*asramas*) of classical Indian tradition.

16. Vincent Cronin, *A Pearl to India: The Life of Roberto de Nobili* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959). ch. 5.

17. See e.g. de Nobili, *Responsio*, 2.3.

18. See Cronin, *A Pearl to India*, p. 115.

19. See e.g. de Nobili, *Responsio*, 2.6, 3.1.

20. Cronin, *A Pearl to India*, p. 185.

21. de Nobili, *Responsio*, 4.1.5. See also Pierre Dahmen, *Robert de Nobili, l'Apôtre des Brahmes, Première Apologie* (Paris: Éditions Speç, 1931), p. 156; and S. Rajamanickam, 'Roberto de Nobili and Adaptation', *Indian Church History Review* 1 (1967), 89.

22. Francis X. Clooney, 'Roberto de Nobili: Adaptation and the Reasonable Interpretation of Religion', *Missiology: An International Review*, 18 (1990) 26–7.

23. See Andrew D. Webb, 'The Origins, Aims and Development of the Christa Seva Sangha Ashram 1922–1943', (unpublished MA disscertation, University of Southampton, 1977), p. 7; also Catherine Cornille, *The Guru in Indian Catholicism: Ambiguity or Opportunity of Inculturation* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1991), p. 130.

24. A. Saulière, 'Fr. Roberto de Nobili S.J.: The First European Indologist', in B. G. Gokhale (ed.), *Indica: The Indian Historical Research Institute Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume* (Bombay: St Xavier's College, 1953), pp. 372–6.

25. Clooney, 'Roberto de Nobili', 26.

26. Michel Foucault, *The Ordering of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1970), esp. pp. 65–73.

27. Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, 'Conversion of India – An Appeal', *Sophia*, October 1894; quoted in Julius Lipner, *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 206.

28. A. Saulière, 'Father Robert de Nobili 1577–1657', *Clergy Monthly Supplement* 1 (March 1956), 7; Paul Pattathu, *Ashram Spirituality* (Indore: Satprakashan, 1997), pp. 168–9.

29. Appasamy Pillai, *Fifty Years' Pilgrimage of a Convert* (London: Christian Missionary Society, 1924), p. 53. See also B. H. Streeter and A. J. Appasamy, *The Sadhu: A Study in Mysticism and Practical Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1922), pp. 6–7.

30. Pillai, *Fifty Years' Pilgrimage of a Convert*, p. 70.

31. *Kurisumala* means 'Hill of the Cross'; *Saccidananda* (Sanskrit) – Being (*Sat*), Knowledge (*Chit*), Bliss (*Ananda*) – is understood to refer to the Holy Trinity; *Shantivanam* means 'Forest of Peace'.

32. Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1994), p. 218.

33. Abhishiktananda (Henri Le Saux), *Swami Parama Arubi Aanandam (Father J. Monchanin) 1895–1957: A Memorial* (Tiruchirapalli: Trichinopoly United Printers, 1959), p. 78.

34. Abhishiktananda, *Towards a Renewal of the Indian Church* (Ernakulam: KCM Press, 1970), p. 75, quoted by Cornille, *The Guru in Indian Catholicism*, p. 174.

35. D. S. Amalorpavadass, *NBCLC Campus: Milieu of God-Experience. An Artistic Synthesis of Spirituality* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1982).

36. Paul Puthanangady (ed.), *Sharing Worship: Communicatio in Sacris* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1988), p. 362

37. Ibid., p. 363.

38. Bryan D. Spinks, 'The Anaphora for India: Some Theological Objections to an Attempt at Inculturation' *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 95 (1981), 529–49.

39. K. Virginia Kennerley, 'The Use of Indigenous Sacred Literature and Theological Concepts in Christian Eucharistic Liturgy in India', *Studia Liturgica* 19 (1989), 143–161.

40. Spinks, 'The Anaphora for India', 533–4.

41. Ibid., 543.

42. Kennerley, 'The Use of Indigenous Sacred Literature', 147.

43. Ibid., 152.

44. *Saccidananda Ashram* (Tannirpalli, Kulitalai: Saccidananda Ashram, n.d.).

45. Ibid., pp. 4–5.
46. Ibid., p. 7.
47. Ibid., pp. 7–8.
48. See e.g. Bede Griffiths, *The New Creation in Christ: Christian Meditation and Community*, ed. Robert Kiely and Laurence Freeman (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992).
49. Selva J. Raj, 'Adapting Hindu Imagery: A Critical Look at Ritual Experiments in an Indian Catholic Ashram', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* 37 (2000), 333–53.
50. Ibid., 344–5.
51. Ibid., 345.
52. K. V. Ramakrishna Rao, *New Indian Express*, 13February 1989.
53. Raj, 'Adapting Hindu Imagery', 346, 347.
54. T. S. Garrett, *Worship in the Church of South India* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), p. 6.
55. Ibid., pp. 7–8.
56. See Samson Prahbakar, 'Authenticity and Relevance of the Liturgy of the Eucharist' in Samson Pabbakar (ed.) *Liturgical Renewal in the Indian Church* (Bangalore: United Theological College and Masihiserak, 1998), pp. 38–9.
57. Sundar Clarke, *Let the Indian Church be Indian* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1980), p. 69.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., pp. 75–6.
60. For example, Eric Lott, *Worship in an Indian Context* (Bangalore: United Theological College, 1987); Prahbakar (ed.), *Liturgical Renewal in the Indian Church.*
61. Kennerley, 'The Use of Indigenous Sacred Literature', 147.
62. Ibid., 154.
63. See e.g. A. P. Nirmal, *Towards a Common Dalit Ideology* (Madras: Gurukul LTC, 1989); M. E. Prabhakar (ed.), *Towards a Dalit Theology* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1989).
64. See D. Manohar Chandra Prasad, *Dalit Christian Consciousness* (Bangalore: Rachana Publications, 1994), p. 1; also Prahbakar (ed.), *Liturgical Renewal in the Indian Church*; Sathianathan Clarke, *Dalits and Christianity: Subaltern Religion and Liberation Theology in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 176, n. 67; and Dhyandchand Carr, 'God and People in Liturgies', in *Vazhipaduvom: Dalit Liturgies* (Madurai: Dalit Resource Centre, 2000), pp. ix–xiv.
65. Webb, 'The Origins, Aims and Development of the Christa Seva Sangha Ashram', p. 7.
66. Jyoti Sahi, *Holy Ground: A New Approach to the Mission of the Church in India* (Auckland: Pace Publishing, 1998), p. 163.
67. Ibid., p. 163.
68. Ibid., pp. 164–6.
69. Ibid., p. 176.
70. A. Alfred Stephen, 'Culture and Worship: A Dalit Perspective', in Prahbakar (ed.), *Liturgical Renewal in the Indian Church*, p. 114.
71. Ibid., pp. 115–16.
72. *Bhakthi Pancha Pushpanjali: 5 Orders of Worship* (Madras: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, 1992).
73. *Vazhipaduvom: Dalit Liturgies* (Madurai: Dalit Resource Centre, 2000).
74. Ibid., p. vii.
75. Carr, 'God and People in Liturgies'.
76. Ibid., pp. x–xi.
77. Bede Griffiths, 'New Human Community', (1984), a talk reproduced in the *Bede Griffiths Sangha Newsletter*, December 2004.
78. Michael Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation: Can the Many Be One?* (Delhi: Vidyajyoti Education and Welfare Society and ISPCK, 1998), p. xiv.
79. Clarke, *Dalits and Christianity*.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Jyoti Sahi, 'Dance in the Wilderness', in Yeow Choo Lak (ed.), *Doing Theology with Asian Resources*, vol. 2 (Singapore: ATESEA, 1995), p. 113.
85. Clarke, *Dalits and Christianity*, p. 22.
86. Clarke appeals here to Richard R. Niebuhr, 'The Tent of Heaven: Theographia I', *Alumnae Bulletin, Bangor Theological Seminary* 52.2 (Fall–Winter 1977/8), 9–22.
87. Y. T. Vinayaraj, 'Methodological Issues in Dalit Theology', paper presented at a seminar at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, July 2005.
88. Susan Billington Harper, 'Ironies of Indigenization: Some Cultural Repercussions of Mission in South India', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 1995, 13–20.
89. Jacob Theckanath, 'Preface', in Jyoti Sahi and Paul Middleton (eds), *Adisthan. Sacred Space: Indian Christian Ventures* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1993), pp. 5–6.

Chapter 4

The Quest for Pakistani Christian Identity: A Narrative of Religious Other as Liberative Comparative Ecclesiology

John O'Brien

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to indicate the narrative structure of ecclesiology by narrating how a minority church emerged in what is now Pakistan. The narrative will of itself, as it were, pose important questions as to what 'church' is and about the structure of an ecclesiology that would seek to answer that question. In doing so it will implicitly address how the attentiveness of ecclesiology to the mediation of the 'otherness' or holiness of God, through the 'otherness' of the silenced and oppressed, is an inner defining moment in the structure of ecclesiology itself.

One such narrative, albeit in abbreviated form, may be found in the Catholic directory for that country.[1] Here we find ten pages in small print about this church, dealing almost exclusively with hierarchical and institutional elements. The actual process of the people themselves becoming church and developing their ecclesial identity is summarily dealt with in a two-line paragraph as follows: 'The conversions in most parts of the country came almost exclusively from the lower classes of the population. The growth of Christianity was steady and gradual through slow evolution.'[2] Here the concrete praxis of the People of God is totally absorbed in an institutionalist narrative. The implied – and applied – ecclesiology is constructed as if no input were to be expected from the people themselves.

Background

Christians in Pakistan, almost anonymous in the international conversation about that country, comprise about 1.5 per cent of the population of 140 million. The overwhelming majority of these Christians are the descendants of one tribe-caste of oppressed and excluded people, who found in Christianity a new identity which offered them the human dignity and the emancipation that had been denied them for millennia.

The very name of these people is hugely problematic. In their pre-Christian history, the published material available calls them 'Chuhra'. The present writer is well aware of the extremely negative connotations of this word in contemporary

speech, and would have preferred to avoid it.[3] The widespread use of this term in the sources as a general ethnographic designation of the people, especially in the Census Reports (1881–1931), means that it cannot be easily avoided in discussing their history. The movement into Christianity, in fact, was the key factor in bringing the term into disuse. With that movement began a new freedom and an enhanced self-conception which was progressively accepted by some of their neighbours. Pickett's research showed that at that time (*c.* 1930), many people of other religions were no longer referring to Christians by this name.[4] The negative resonance of this designation,[5] even in an era when it was possible to use it in ordinary conversation, is borne out by the fact that 'Chuhra' was sometimes given as a name to a boy of a 'higher' social group as a way of warding off the evil eye.[6] It was also invoked as a way of punishing Rajput children.[7] There is no scholarly unanimity as to the original meaning of the expression, although there was a general consensus that it meant someone who lives off the leftovers of others.[8] This would be consistent with the discriminatory laws set out in Manu.[9]

The people conquered by the successive waves of the Aryan invasions of Indo-Pakistan were themselves the confluence of earlier streams of migration-invasion.[10] Hutton[11] wrote of three waves: a Negrito wave similar to the Andaman Islanders, typified by veneration of the pipal tree and a phallic fertility cult; the proto-Australoids, who perpetuated these trends within a totemistic system, and an Indo-Mediterranean strain with a megalithic culture that gave rise to occupational stratification.[12] Aryan society possessed a class structure but not a caste system. The basic division was between the Ksatra (cf. Kshatriya) or noble, and the Vis (cf. Vaisya) or tribesman. After the conquest, one may add the Dasas, who found a place on the fringes of Aryan society together with the offspring of Aryans who had intermarried with them and adopted their ways. Conquerors, usually numerically inferior but politically and militarily superior,[13] also usually contain a gender imbalance. Together with the priests[14] who transmitted the Rig Vedas and other sacred lore, these constituted the four classes denoted by the term Varna, the Sanskrit word for colour, indicative of the racial basis of the division: Brahmana (priest), Kshatriya (warrior), Vaisiya (peasant) and Shudra (serf).[15] The term Varna has never meant 'caste' (*jati* or *zat*) and so, despite common usage, speaking of 'the four castes' is incorrect.[16]

Around the middle of the second millennium AD the process of fissure, a typical trend among Indian castes,[17] led to the emergence from among the Chandala – those who had remained outside this four-fold class division – of three principal sub-groups differentiated by occupation. These three, who would become known as the Dom, the Chamar and the Chuhra,[18] acquired relatively distinct areas of specialization: the removal of dead bodies for cremation; the removal, flaying and tanning of the carcasses of dead animals; and sweeping itself, became, respectively, their occupational specialities. These descriptions are of course, something of an over-simplification: they were more true to the extent that these sub-groups, whose division was also if not primarily patrilineal, were occupying the same territory, where there would then have been stricter occupational demarcation.

The origin myths of these three groups are virtually identical. We meet the caste progenitor arriving late at a feast and being cursed either for inadvertently eating a

piece of meat or for handling a dead cow, and then punished by being required to deal for ever in dead cows, with all the opprobrium implied. We see him being pressurized into burying a dead cow, then outcasted and condemned to skinning and burying dead animals.[19] The central figure of Balmik in the legends of all three sub-groups indicates a common legendary and folklore inheritance, and argues for a generic relationship between these sub-castes.[20]

Their legendary lore hinges on the outcasting of one of a number of putatively Brahmin brothers. The 'fall' of Nekbal, the youngest brother, occurs because of his gullibility and trustfulness and through the dishonesty of his elder brothers. His very name states that he is the one who is *nek* i.e. good, while the others are, by implication, treacherous. The same may thus be inferred of their respective descendants. It is noteworthy that in the story, the 'fall' does not happen either because of the plan of God or because of some bad deed on his part in a previous existence. There are many versions of this myth but they agree in the essentials.

Religion

The 'god' of these oppressed groups was Balmik, also named Bala Shah in areas of Islamic hegemony. In their religion, which can be distinguished from Hinduism, Bala Shah is confessed as the one true name; here he is the true generous or bountiful Lord (*swami*). This is clearly a 'high theology' of Bala Shah; he is the first and the last, without equal: 'awwal akhar jahir bati; Tera nehi koi sani'. He has known pre-existence – when there was no heaven and no earth but just a formless water: 'Na asman na alam aha; Tad hai si dal pani.' Here the qualities of the primal man Prajpati are ascribed to Bala Shah.[21] He is the *pir* of the Shahis (var. *Pir of pirs*), even before creation began: 'Shah Bala hai pir shahian da; Kul khalqat de agge.' Historicising his existence does not mean that both high and low will not do his *puja*, lighting lamps, honouring his name and fearing nothing: 'Batti tel chiragi pawan; Teri jot jagawan. Nikke Wadde ho jamatan; . . . Jehre nam tere nu mannan; Hargiz khauf na khawan.' His standard is red and therefore disputes Rajput power, and flies triumphantly in both heaven and earth: 'Vich bihishti jhanda tera; Jhulda lal nishana; Ethe othe doe jahana; Rakhe e nal imana.'

Throughout their history and even into their Christian era there has been a phenomenal eclecticism in their religious world. This may be illustrated by the following verse – still quoted[22] – where an extraordinary amalgam of religious creeds is jumbled together:

Ram, Ram, Ram!	Oh! God, God, God!
Bale Shah de Chele An.	Come disciples of Bala Shah.
Iesu Masih vi apni jaga chenga eh.	Jesus Christ too is good in his place.
La 'la illa Mohammed rasul Allah.	No god but God, Mohammed the prophet of God.
Jalal Bap aur Bete aur Ruh-ul' Qudds ka ho.	Glory be to the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Beginnings of Change

Before the Chuhras made contact with modern Christianity, there had been contacts between them and the Sikhs from early on[23] – Rai Das tells of his family engaged in carrying animal carcasses round about Benares.[24] Something of a formalization of the relationships between Sikhs from the Chuhra caste and the rest of the Sikh fraternity occurred under the guruship of Guru Gobindh Singh, during the events that followed the execution of his father, the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadar, because of his refusal to be forcibly converted to Islam.[25] Two Untouchables, one a Lobaba or water-carrier, and one a Rangreta, under cover of darkness, carried off the severed head to Anandpur.[26] One tradition gives the date as 12–16 November 1675.[27] There it was received by the young son of Tegh Bahader, now the tenth Guru Gobind Singh, who is said to have welcomed the sweepers with the oft-quoted words 'Rangreta, Guru ka beta' – 'The lowborn is the son of the Guru' – thus signalling the acceptance of the Untouchables into the Sikh brotherhood. There are, it must be said, many accounts of the return of the severed head to the Sikhs, which while not always agreeing in the details, do agree in the broad outline.[28] In speaking of the ending of caste distinctions among Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh is recorded as saying in an address on Baisakhi Day in 1699 that 'The four castes are to be dissolved henceforth.'[29] The degree to which the 'Panchwas' – the fifth or outcaste *varna* – were to be part of this new inclusiveness is a central issue in seeking to evaluate the effect of converting to Sikhism on the identity of former Chuhras.

No one event crystallised the socio-economic aspirations of our people and the other oppressed classes in the Punjab as much as the colonization of the Chenab Canal Colony.[30] Here, although still designated as sweepers, they effectively became agricultural labourers[31] and in the case of many Mazhabis – Untouchables converted to Sikhism – tenants and even landowners. This defined the aspiration of the tribe, who numbered 115,525 in the Chenab colony by 1904.[32] It says much about the hidden assumptions of much scholarship that Darling could write a detailed and engaging history, topography and economics of the Canal Colonies without even mentioning them.[33] A remarkable Punjabi ballad of 43 stanzas composed in 1899 gives some idea of the impression made by the construction of the canal and its consequences on those who came to make their life in these newly arable lands.[34]

The attraction was land: if not ownership, then tenancy and if not tenancy, then agricultural labour freed from the taint of scavenging.[35] The *cri de cœur* of the oppressed classes was for the government 'to help us by recognizing us as statutory agriculturalists'.[36] Initially, it seemed, their aspirations were to be realized. The fact that in the early years, many of the capitalist and yeomen grantees of land for whom they were tenants were as often as not absentee landlords, was a source of considerable advantage. But this could not be expected to last. The grantees would gradually eliminate this element in their tenancies and substitute their own relations. Nevertheless, something new had happened and expectations had been raised.

Some Chuhras did no scavenging and were employed as farm labourers pure and simple. Those so employed and not doing housework were free to serve more than one householder as, for example, a ploughman. But in all cases, actual income was directly dependent on a willingness to run errands and make oneself generally useful as a *begari*; as one commentator put it: 'he could always keep want from the door but could not be said to do much more'.[37] The sweeper received a payment of 10 per cent, $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent or 5 per cent of the total produce according to the nature of the services provided: 10 per cent when he was a full-time servant ready to perform any service required; $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent when he performed ploughing, supplied the winnows and did the winnowing; 5 per cent when he did only the winnowing.

Christian Villages

In January 1892 the then Bishop of Lahore, Mgr Van Den Bosch, toured the villages of Sialkot district and reported that the condition of the people was lamentable, plunged in misery and exploited by Muslim proprietors.[38] He settled on the idea of starting an agricultural colony for what were, in effect, liberated serfs. The desire to do something about this, coming from both religious and humanitarian, even liberationist, motives,[39] was hampered by lack of funds and in the event, only 126 acres were purchased by a Fr Lieven for 6,000 rupees.[40] Later Van Den Bosch's successor, Mgr Pelckmans, bought a contiguous plot of around 500 acres for 25,000 rupees.[41]

The trek to the new lands was of heroic proportions. Starting on 8 January some 35 families[42] – from a village called Nikki Daoki – led by the Capuchin Fr Englebert, walked 110 miles for six days in atrocious weather, which had made the roads all but impassable. They spent two nights out in the open and a third in a stable, keeping warm by huddling together, often going without cooked food, due to a shortage of wood for firing. When they reached their destination all they saw before them was jungle. The first dwellings were crude *jhaumpras* – cleared branches fixed into the ground and covered over with full branches reaching to the ground. The conditions under which the missionaries lived were equally primitive. The locals initially refused to sell them food. They had just a single room in which there was just one bedstead, and this room was used for everything, including the celebration of Mass.[43]

Creating Christian villages became the classic strategy of the missionaries. The more numerous Protestant villages often bear the name of some great patriarch of Protestant proselytism in the Punjab such as Youngson, Martin, Bateman, Clarke, Ranson or James. Most of the Catholic villages bear the name of a saint of the Church: Mariabad, Francisabad, Antoniabad, Loreto, Josephabad. One of the most famous Catholic villages, Khushpur, is however clearly called after its founder, Fr Felix.[44]

In general, the land granted to those neophyte Christians was poor and relatively infertile. The British administration was never favourable to Christianity in any systematic way,[45] and in developing Canal Colonies, the settlement of neophyte

Christians was very far from being a priority. The canals were developed to ensure the higher production and cheaper export of raw materials, especially cotton, for factories in England. Maintaining the status quo, the first plots of land, near the headwater, were given to the higher castes. Consequently, the land allotted to Christians was invariably at the 'tail end' of the canal system, where the land was least fertile. When irrigation water was required, there was always an acute shortage, since it was siphoned off en route, and when less was needed, they were inundated, since little was being drawn off lower down the line.

With a small number of exceptions, the land was quasi-desert, poorly irrigated and prone to salination. Initially, the holdings were either 12.5 or 25 acres, giving an average of 18 acres per family. By myopically clinging to the traditional pattern of division of wealth, the land being divided among all the sons, and then subdivided in the following generation and so on,[46] the average holding by the 1990s was hardly three acres[47] and by now, in the villages of which the present writer has first-hand knowledge, it is demonstrably less. Within these villages an internal class system has emerged. A very small number of landowners have substantially increased their holding, while a roughly equal number have held onto something comparable to the original allotment, but the clear majority have been reduced to owning tiny parcels of land, anything from half an acre to one and a half acres, and there is every indication that if they are still in possession of it at life's end, they will again subdivide it among their sons.

Conversions

The first recorded baptism person of a member of our people – who continued to live as a Christian – was of a man called Ditt in 1873. His conversion was resented by his *biradheri* (kinship group)[48] and he suffered abuse and exclusion. Two months after his baptism, he returned to the mission with his wife, daughter and two neighbours whom he had instructed in the Christian faith.[49] Six months later, he brought four other men. Within eleven years, more than 500 Chuhras from that locality had become Christians. From 1881 to 1891 the membership of the United Presbyterian mission increased from 660 to 10,165.[50] By 1900 more than half of our people in the Sialkot district had been baptized by different missionary groups; by 1915, the overwhelming majority had been. The number of Protestants in undivided Punjab rose from 3,823 in 1881 to 493,081 in 1947.

The early missionaries in general, especially Protestants, held a very individualistic understanding of the Christian life and of salvation. They had little grasp of the communal nature of the *gotra* or *zat* to which the prospective Christians belonged and hence of the understanding of religious change which the people shared. They failed to take account of the fact that in a matter of any consequence, the villager had from infancy been socialised into subordinating personal preference to the guidance of the *biradheri*.[51] People converted in groups rather than as individuals. By 1892, the term 'Mass Movement' had come into vogue to describe this movement of groups rather than individuals into the Christian religion. Conversion to Islam, Sikhism and Hinduism itself had of course

proceeded for centuries, in precisely the same way. Important decisions affected the whole *biradheri* and would be taken by the *biradheri*. Given the rigidity of the caste system and the virtual absence of personal autonomy, social change would always be a collective movement.[52]

Historical experience had taught the oppressed that traditional possibilities of upward mobility within the caste system were effectively closed to Untouchables. Sanskritization, whether under the influence of the Arya Samaj or otherwise, might lead to positional change in the system, but not to structural change.[53] By contrast, the experience of the landed Mazhabi Sikhs was a glowing example of what could happen to people who sought and created for themselves a new identity. Since the internalization of overwhelming religious inferiority operated to legitimate exclusion and oppression, the exploited, in effect, could change their status and identity only by changing their religion.[54] This was not always a sufficient condition, but it was nearly always a necessary one. Mission programmes sensitised depressed caste people to their disinherited position and provided them with a means to escape it.[55]

Kanjamala's 'repulsion–attraction' model[56] attempts to map out a sociologically credible structure to explain why these movements occurred. According to this construction, the oppressed have a choice between dependency on the dominant social groups and the hope proposed by the missionaries. Experientially, the former option is characterized by 'domination', the latter by 'service'; the former are agents of 'oppression'; the latter of 'liberation'; linkage to the former results in 'exploitation', to the latter, in 'liberation'; the one results in 'inhumanity', the other in 'human dignity' the first is institutionalized 'injustice' the second, 'social justice'; in the first matrix the oppressed are 'social rejects'; in the second they are 'socially accepted'. In as much as the 'new religion' was not only a message, but a concrete linkage to a dynamic of social emancipation and dignity, the people felt empowered to move from one matrix to the other.

Strategies

Having entered the Christian church in their own way, our people soon began to put their own stamp on their new identity. One notable development which has had an enduring effect was the translation of the Psalms into versified Punjabi for communal singing, often using popular local melodies,[57] a work undertaken by I. H. Shabaz.[58] Originally, the goal was to translate the Psalms into Urdu verse. The project was completed by 1891, but the result, to the disappointment of all concerned, proved unpopular. Four years later the decision was made to work towards a Punjabi Psalter. Missionaries with a musical bent first collected popular tunes – an option that did not always meet with approval, since some of the Presbyterian missionaries considered that too 'worldly'.[59] Shabaz then paraphrased all the Psalms into versified Punjabi to fit the selected tunes, strenuously attempting not to miss the import of a single verse. It was a stunning feat. The tunes were catchy and the words spoke powerfully to Punjabi experience, as they still do even today. Christians of all denominations love to sing them and there is

undoubtedly something in them that touches their innermost sensibilities, desires and expectations. However, one can only wonder if an unarticulated prejudice is at work in the failure to include any excerpts from them in anthologies of Punjabi poetry.[60]

Apart from the huge numbers, the overall and dominant impression given by the Protestant mission reports from this period is that the veritable flood of converts made serious in-depth preparation and instruction almost impossible.[61] To some extent this was due to the open competition with Muslims, Sikhs and Arya Samajists for the allegiance of the oppressed. These other groups demanded only a declaration of loyalty, followed by a ritual of adherence. Initially, the Presbyterian missionaries insisted on a screening process to ensure the converts understood their teaching, but slowly the realization dawned that this would limit their impact to the educated classes, who in any case were not responding. They modified their approach, demanding only a declaration of faith in Christ and repentance from 'sin', intending to continue the catechesis after baptism.[62] Their understanding of 'sin' was in all likelihood, entirely different to that of the people! Speedy baptisms became the norm, considerable numbers being baptized 'with no other qualification than an apparently sincere desire to become Christian'.[63]

Realizing the difficulties this was causing, the Presbyterian missionaries returned to a more systematic approach, but after a short interval reverted again to a policy of 'speedy baptism'.[64] Later it was acknowledged that many baptisms were hasty, with neophytes giving little evidence of any understanding of the step taken.[65] This persistence with high numbers of baptisms under such conditions was to have long-standing consequences. Even today, few see the need for adult catechesis. Traditionally, for Evangelical Protestants, the high point in the process of conversion was seen to be the personal declaration for Christ culminating in baptism, for which adequate preparation – almost impossible under these conditions – was made.

This would be one reason – among others – why some groups of converts, baptised but not really catechized, would eventually find their way to the Catholic Church with its developed institutional life structured through sacramental rites of passage. Evangelicals had traditionally stressed the element of personal conversion. Important as that remained, what the research showed was that it was the organizational and administrative structures of the Church which would determine whether or not the groups of converts grew or even remained in their new convictions.[66] Spectacular instances of initially warm response to their preaching often blinded Evangelical missionaries to the need for an organized and structured follow-up.[67]

At the conscious level, the new Christians were certainly fascinated by the character and personality of Jesus, especially his healing miracles and his preferential option for the poor – something that has scarcely been given its due weight in searching out their motives. But their imagination and memory were filled with images that reflected their aboriginal beliefs and the heroes from sources such as the *Ramayana*.[68] It was those images and symbols that formed their religious sensibilities and the criteria for evaluating the religious dimension of their lives. In the Catholic Church, where, in addition to catechesis and sacramental

worship, there was a popular religiosity and a process of Christian osmosis through medals, pictures and devotions like the Corpus Christi or Christ the King processions, the Mysteries of the Rosary, and the Stations of the Cross, this problem was being addressed. The Protestant Evangelical missionaries, however, did not feel free to go down that road.[69]

The Capuchin Mission

Waidyasekara suggests that there were four periods in the pre-partition work of the Flemish Capuchins: (1) the initial apostolate: 1889–94; (2) the organization of the diocese: 1894–1910; (3) the period of many conversions: 1910–20; and (4) the deepening of religious life: 1920–38.[70] The organizational phase may be said to have begun with a diocesan synod convened on 6–8 January 1890. A plan was devised whose aims now seem far-reaching: education, the training of catechists, and preparations for the training of indigenous clergy.[71] The principal methods for the implementation of this plan were the creation of four centres from which the missionaries should work, and the creation of Catholic agricultural colonies for converts and catechumens. The number of centres was soon reduced to two – Adha and Sahawala, both in Sialkot district.

The work was exceedingly slow, with obstacles at every turn.[72] As recorded in their diaries, the experience of the missionaries was that by and large the adults were not interested in religious instruction, being more preoccupied with material considerations, and that children were attracted to catechetical sessions by free meals. From the catechetical viewpoint, the Christian villages represented a more effective use of resources and finance and one result was to contain, if not arrest, the phenomenon of people constantly going back and forth between Catholic and Protestant missions, or between different Protestant missions, without committing themselves to either.[73]

Many adults wanted to become Christians, but not in the way the Fathers wanted. These people wanted to declare a Christian allegiance, to become part of the 'Masihi qom' (Christian people), but could not really see the need for all the preparation, and did not really subscribe to the view that they needed to know Christian doctrine, participate regularly in the liturgy and change some aspects of their lifestyle. Many of these people were happy to have their children instructed, but as for themselves, it was enough just to be 'Isai' – nominal followers of Jesus. Several indeed had simply declared themselves such. At the time of the Mass Movement, their religious convictions seem to have been at a low ebb. As one source puts it: 'They . . . tell us plainly that they have no religion.'[74] This is borne out by the information given to the present writer by several senior Flemish Capuchins now retired or deceased, who reported many people as saying to them that 'we have no religion, we are *be-din*' (without religion). Even into the 1960s, people would come with their child for baptism, saying, 'Father, baptize this child. He is not yet a Christian, only a Chuhra.'[75] What is also clear is that the people saw becoming a Christian as taking on a new identity, even if not in exactly the same way as the missionaries understood it. They wanted to accept the faith but

selectively so: one might even say creatively.[76] The Fathers, for their part, kept them on the books as catechumens, while concentrating their efforts on the rising generation.[77]

Urbanization

In the main, the Muslims who had struggled most for the creation of Pakistan were not those who lived in the territory that today is known by that name, who had always been a clear majority and had long felt secure in their position. The Punjab itself remained Unionist into the 1940s.[78] It was the Muslims of the United Provinces who were most vociferous about the creation of Pakistan. Many of them moved west at partition, in some cases prepared to sacrifice land and livelihood for the new Muslim state. Along with the landowning Muhajirs migrated countless others, to be numbered in six figures, who came both for the sake of a Muslim homeland and in the expectation of a better life. Contrary to common assumptions, 81 per cent of the 5.3 million. Muhajirs settled in Punjab,[79] increasing the population of West Punjab by about one million.[80] This meant that many allotments of land were divided into sizes varying from five to twelve and a half acres, becoming, in effect, family farms.[81] One result was sudden but massive unemployment among rural Christian Punjabi peasants.

Many of these people went to the towns and cities in search of employment and for most, the only avenue open to them was sweeping. The religion of the city sweepers, who had migrated before the mostly rural mass movement – the Shehri Banghi – had by and large remained the cult of Bala Shah. Not all of these became Christians. Ranchore Lines, in the heart of Karachi, contains a Catholic church, a Balmiki *mandar* and a Mazhabi Sikh *gurduwara*, a vignette of the many avenues trodden in the religious search of our people.[82] Nevertheless, the numbers of Christian sweepers in the cities began to swell.[83] There were already established Catholic parishes, as well as those of some other denominations, in these cities, especially the ones along the railway line, and so from the ecclesiastical point of view there were structures in place to receive the migrants. Before long, urban sweepers began moving towards Christianity and towards the Catholic Church in particular.

The Turn to Catholicism

In 1911 there was a total of 8,002 Catholics in the Punjab relative to 121,452 Protestants. Thus only 6 per cent of the Christians of the Punjab were Catholics, and even that figure included about 3,000 Catholics, mostly British soldiers and Goans – almost 40 per cent of the total – who were not of the Chuhra tribe. By 1921, the Census gave Catholics as 31,649 or 12.4 per cent of the Christian population. The returns in 1931 showed 45,641 or 11.5 per cent – proportionately speaking, a drop. In 1949 they were estimated as 123,164 or 25 per cent, though these figures were for West Pakistan as a whole. East Punjab and its

Christians were now part of India. As late as 1978, one writer on East Punjab could say that 'Even today the number of Punjabi Catholics is so small that one may safely say that Punjabi Christianity is Protestant Christianity.'[84] In 1931, Protestants in the Punjab numbered 349,659 and by 1949, in the whole of West Pakistan, 351,205. This slender difference may be largely accounted for by the number of Protestants who were now in East Punjab.[85] Gurdaspur, where 6.5 per cent of the population was Christian and mostly Protestant, and which contained the only land route to Kashmir from partitioned India, had been given to India.[86] By 1972, the number of Catholics in West Pakistan had nearly tripled and was then 341,231 or 38.5 per cent.

Most commentators would say that in Pakistan today, Catholics form at least 50 per cent of the Christian population, if indeed not more. One may tentatively propose the hypothesis that the mixture of motives which led to so many becoming Catholics was the same mixture of motives for which they had joined the Christian religion in the first place.

Some Protestant groups had rather courageously gone over to a system of self-support, even if sometimes more nominally than really. Given the background, the expectations and the economic situation of many of the communities, this move, notwithstanding the heroic examples lauded in some mission reports, gave rise to serious problems for many local pastors.[87] In many cases, these men were in effect forced to give their time and attention almost exclusively to those who contributed to their support. An unintended consequence was that significant numbers of unpastored poor Christians, who began to be looked after by the Catholic Father resident in the locality, and over time, moved towards the Catholic Church.

The migrations following partition also led to growth in Catholic membership. These cities already had operative Catholic parishes – in some cases, long established, though usually catering for very small numbers of local people – ready and able to receive the newcomers. The Balmikis, who became interested in Christianity under the influence of the increased presence of Christian sweepers, were attracted in the main towards the Catholic Church, as were many Mazhabi Sikhs, who for the most part were interested in protection. Another aspect of the social reality that attracted sweepers to Catholicism was the less than warm reception they received in some Protestant Churches, where the upwardly mobile element in the congregations was not anxious for their Muslim peers to associate them with that occupation. Those stemming from 'higher', 'clean' castes exercised a dominant influence in Protestant church affairs and unrealistically expected the poor to renounce their occupation and the affiliations that went with it – a process that takes generations.[88] Today, most Christian urban sweepers are Catholics and probably account for about half of all urban Catholics in Pakistan.

The turn to Catholicism was therefore a result of the cumulative effect of all these reasons – to which at least one more may be added. Punjabis are relational people and often they wanted to become Catholics not because of the doctrine the priest proposed, but because of the kind of man he was. Culturally, the early missionaries looked like 'holy men' – and in some cases, they actually were. The people were attracted by the singer as much as by the song. They saw someone who visited them, who prayed in their homes, who spent nights in their villages, who

responded to their poverty, who was tolerant of the ambiguity of their response, who was with them in times of need. They encountered a man who administered a system of human uplift, educational, social and developmental. In some cases, as previously they had seen in some larger-than-life Protestant missionaries, they saw someone whose initiatives in acquiring land could lead to massive changes for the better in people's prospects. It would have seemed perfectly natural to them that this man was also passionately committed to building up the community and institution to which he was giving his life and energy. Indeed it made them more likely to admire him and to wish to be a part of what he was building.

Inculturation

Christianity among our people has been characterized less by distinctive theological or liturgical developments than by the very nature of the people themselves.[89] Just as they jealously guarded their own character and uniqueness in periods of Brahmanic and later Islamic hegemony, so also they would not forsake that unique character in seeking to move out of such domination into a new sense of identity.[90] Only in extremely rare cases do people wish to give up their ethnic identity. They seek rather to be relieved of the oppression they experience in the prevailing social order[91] and the manner in which that oppression co-defines their identity.

Against a succession of hostile social forces through the course of history, that ethnic identity had been guarded by the *biradheri*,[92] and within the *biradheri*, people found shelter from this hostility. Allegiance was paramount: the *biradheri* defined duties, rights, loyalties, priorities and behaviour. All other duties and responsibilities, including, as the early missionaries soon realized, religious ones, were, as to a considerable extent they still are, subject to the interests of the *biradheri*. The *biradheri*'s – or at the wider level, the *zat*'s – beliefs, prejudices, orientations and priorities, including its constructions and distortions of reality, become part of the individual's psyche, as the content of the ideologies of his conscience. The internalization of these norms defines, corrects and governs acceptable action. Individuals feel good when they live up to them and extremely anxious and fearful when they do not.[93] The *biradheri*, in fact, is the concrete norm of good and evil, of virtue and sin. The people would not so easily 'give up structures which had grown over the centuries and had proven effective'.[94] While the missionaries stressed many values and goals which had a profoundly emancipative effect, with which the people resonated deeply and to which they responded eagerly, nonetheless their perspective remained individualist. This was especially so among the Protestants.

In stressing the corporate nature of Christian existence, the Catholics proposed a slightly more communitarian vision, but for all that, especially in their notion of 'salvation', they too had an individualistic perspective. The exegetical models both Protestants and Catholics employed did not allow them to give sufficient weight to the contemporary world of the New Testament, itself, ironically, one of honour and shame, defining the intersections of the societal boundaries of power, respect

for status and sexual role. This, in fact, was a world where 'conscience' – *syneidesis* – was precisely sensitivity to what others think about and expect of an individual.[95]

From the beginning, many missionaries saw the *biradheri* as a sort of competitor with the church.[96] This implied individualistic perspective was hopelessly unrealistic, for the *biradheri* is, in fact, a quasi-total culture, both secular and sacred. The only sins are deviation and disloyalty. Added to this was the fundamental fact that the process of conversion had left the social cohesion of the group intact. In fact, that was what had facilitated the process in the first place. Important decisions were still taken – and in effect would always be taken – by the *biradheri*. Some missionaries believed that the *biradheri* had been Christianized – as it had been in the minimalist sense that the members were now Christians. Observation, as well as the overwhelming burden of anecdotal evidence, suggest, however, that *biradheri*s still made decisions on the basis of what would win them more *izzat* (honour, respect, 'face'). Moreover, the understanding of *izzat*, then as now, continued to remain socio-culturally, rather than theologically, defined and understood; consequently, the pursuit of that *izzat* continued to exacerbate the agonistic tendencies in society, resulting in a carry-over of these same factionalisms into the Church itself and all its institutions. Within a given *biradheri*, be it Muslim or Christian, or even more so, between *biradheri*s, religion is seldom, if ever, such an influential force that it overcomes such divisions.

Sharma seems correct in arguing that most of our people who became Christians had a dual membership is both *biradheri* and church. An important distinction at the time of the Mass Movement was that these *biradheri*s, unlike those among the 'higher' castes, drew the line not at baptism, but at participation in the ceremonial life of the community.[97] Some missionary groups wanted to establish Christian *biradheri*s. At one stage, Methodist strategists wanted to install *chowdri*s (*biradheri* leaders or bosses) as officers in the church. The Presbyterians in Sialkot selected their trainee elders from the ranks of the *chowdri*s.

The *biradheri*, rather than the church, continued to be the tangible formulation and concrete embodiment of the belief system of the people. It sought to retain a virtually total control over its members and did not allow the church to impinge upon its powers. By and large, its members subscribed to this agenda, since most of them either themselves aspired to leadership within the *biradheri*s, or to a client relationship with those who did.[98] In Forrester's view, this made a thorough Christianisation impossible.[99] Yussaf saw the other side of the problem in that 'the new local leaders, the priests, are trained outside the biradheri, which has no voice in their selection and training, and on their return, are placed in locations where they have no link with the local community and its leadership'.[100]

In recent years, the subject is receiving more nuanced study in Catholic pastoral theology.[101] The proposed models of interaction, however, while theoretically coherent, still await practical expression. Slowly, the missionaries came to realize that the people viewed their conversion, not at all as the suppression of their caste loyalties in favour of some higher religious synthesis, but as a religiously endorsed and facilitated social promotion, making possible a higher social identity which they greatly valued, while maintaining intact their own authority structures.[102]

Leaders of all kinds of Christian institutions in Pakistan are subject to all the pressures that membership of and loyalty to a *biradheri* entail and they, in turn, are expected to use their position in the church to provide socio-economic support to family and *biradheri*. Failure to do so, even for high-sounding theological reasons, which are generally not understood as relevant, gives rise to strained relations. Doing so, on the other hand, gives rise to nepotism and a lack of transparency and accountability. This nepotism, as well as the privileges that flow from it, are loudly criticized; but what is at issue is not the practice, but the beneficiaries. Experience shows that if the opportunity arose, the critics would invariably behave in the same way.[103]

Five-fold Class Structure

Sociologically, it has been argued that the main difference religious conversion – to whatever religion – makes to an oppressed people is that 'it enables them to make a transition into a new era without having to conform themselves to a socio-religious system in which a degraded position would be assigned to them'.[104] What degree of social mobility was achieved in this transition? In the absence of a comprehensive scientific study, extrapolation from particular cases risks depicting only part of the picture. But this new identity certainly energized this people into a remarkable degree of transformation. Anecdotal as well as statistical evidence quoted from various censuses demonstrate, that for them, becoming 'Masih' meant leaving for ever their abhorred designation as untouchable 'Chuhras'. The negative contemporary resonance of the latter term is itself a measure of just how much the meaning of the term has actually changed. That change was not only terminological: within two decades, they had largely given up eating *mardar* (the flesh of animals who had died without being slaughtered), leading to a new self-respect.

Even if the stories preserved in various missionary accounts are selective, if not self-serving, they still vividly communicate this sense of a new identity and dignity, as well as the creative energy it released. One summed up his new situation by declaring: 'Christ gave me a pugri [turban, a symbol of respect] in place of dust'.[105] He was no longer just a *khakrob*, someone whose occupation forces him to eat dust, but an *insan* (human person), entitled to express this sense of dignity in his dress and comportment. Another, when asked by a chief of police at a railway station, 'What good has it been for you to become Christian?', replied: 'I am not afraid of you now and I can go around the villages with freedom and people do not take me as a thief or a rascal as they used to do when we were heathen Chuhras. They take me for a man [*insan*] now.'[106] On this issue, the present writer remembers hearing many of the older generation express this sense of newness by quoting with evident sincerity: 'Once you were no people and now you are the people of God.'[107] This would be said with real feeling. It was no mere sloganizing.

A 'who's who' of ethnographers could be summoned to argue the case that religious mobility does not produce social mobility. In this case, however, the facts

would at the very least demand that such a sweeping dismissal be modified. The landowners, farmers, doctors, lawyers, businesspeople, parliamentarians, clergy, teachers and nurses, as well as other professionals and skilled tradespeople, are there to see. The Punjabi Christians are more urbanized than the general population, and are more likely to migrate to the Middle East in search of remunerative employment and consequent social mobility. Observation over a long period, even if not scientifically confirmed, suggests that abstracting from the privileged and the governing elite, the literacy rate among Punjabi Christians is equal to and probably higher than that of the general population, and quite markedly so relative to groups with a comparable history. This is clearly the case, for example, among women, who among our people continue to surpass males in educational achievement. The level of education among Christian Punjabi women probably compares more than favourably to that of women in the general population.

Perhaps the supreme irony of the development process that accompanied the move into the Christian religion is that it has uncannily reproduced the ancient five-fold class structure of classical Hinduism. Here, too, may be found the structural equivalents of Brahmins, Ksatriya, Vaisha, Shudra and Outcaste. Because minority status effectively excludes Christians from public office and because the church itself was the vehicle of development, and to a large extent remains such, access to church office, especially through ordination, is co-extensively access to privilege and power. The clergy have security of tenure; few financial obligations, outside the expectations of the immediate family; relatively speaking, a high level of educational achievement, including a highly prized fluency in the English language; numerous perquisites such as motorized transport, foreign travel and the contacts this affords; and above all, patronage and brokerage with regard to church-dispensed employment opportunities. This is especially the case among those heading educational and development institutions. With the passage of time, a trend has emerged whereby a considerable proportion of clergy and professed religious Sisters are the nephews and nieces of others, if not the sons and daughters of catechists or other church employees, almost as if among our people, a new Brahmin-like sub-caste were emerging.

A second group is composed of another minority who are propertied and moneyed. This, in turn, has enabled them to settle their children's future more securely. In the rural sector this is the minority which has increased its holding. In the urban sector, a minority, often engaged in either construction or transport contracting, or as officials in church-related development agencies, strongly supported by foreign funding, have acquired noticeable wealth and with it the capacity to acquire more. Because of the hypergamous nature of marriage, they tend to marry their daughters within this group, or sometimes look for highly educated girls from people of more modest means. Gradually, this group is becoming more self-contained, as is easily observable on their festive occasions.[108]

If these may be said to represent a new Ksatriya-like sub-caste, the neo-Vaisha are composed of a very considerable section of urban and rural workers and tradespersons, who have left for ever what earlier ethnography described as their 'traditional occupation'. Taken together, the number of teachers, nurses, drivers,

cooks, gardeners and different kinds of skilled workers such as carpenters, plumbers, electricians and technicians of various sorts, as well as a growing number of young people seeking to become qualified in information technology systems, there is, especially in the bigger cities, a new skilled class of Punjabi Christians, confident in its abilities and ambitious for a new future.

Yet about half of all waged, urban-dwelling Christians are still involved in sweeping. Their attitudes to this occupation, as to the educational opportunities that might lift their children out of it, are ambivalent. They hate their work and their despised social status, but cling to the relative financial stability it guarantees, in an urban situation made uneasy by underdevelopment and unemployment. Many begrudge even a modest outlay on their children's schooling, all the more so since, from a relatively early age, they can accompany their parents in private sweeping – in the mother's case, often providing a shield against sexual harassment.

For many of them, schooling is no longer a passport to a different profession. The writer has come across many examples of young men who have completed secondary school, and even some university students, who are still forced to earn their bread in this occupation.[109] The social gap between these and other Christians, widens with each generation. It manifests itself in the terminology the others employ in speaking of this group, often using the same derogatory terms once used of our people as a whole, as if this group were the new Shudra of the Christian *qom*.

Outside this ranking are the descendants of their common forbears who did not embrace Christianity or Sikhism and who, as Hinduised Balmikis or Muslim Masallis, continue to live a ghettoised existence, while following the 'traditional occupation'. Both the Industrial Revolution, as well as the movement for the rights of labour to which it gave rise, have passed them by.[110] They are still a kinship-based underclass, working under serf-like conditions. Increasingly, these people are spoken of and considered to be an entirely different ethnic group, indicating yet again not only the fissiparous tendency among ethnic groups in Indo-Pakistan, but also illustrating what is virtually an ethnological principle: that upwardly mobile groups almost never work in solidarity with marginalized groups for their socio-political uplift. Given that this mobility came about principally through adopting the Christian religion, it may appear remarkable that Christians in general, show little interest in the evangelization or catechesis, much less the socio-economic uplift, of these groups.

Islamisation

In modern times the growing Islamisation of the country, especially under the dictatorship of General Zia ul-Haq, has undermined the security of the Christian minority through repressive legislation.[111] By declaring a separate electorate for minorities, he created an apartheid system which represented a double disenfranchisement for many Christians. They were barred from participating in the mainstream elections and in the election of Christian MNAs (Members of the

National Assembly) the whole of Pakistan was one single constituency. With a majority of Christians living in one belt of central Punjab, the votes of Christians outside these areas effectively count for nothing. Little wonder that only a third bother to vote.[112]

The laws of evidence were changed to make the testimony of one Muslim equal to that of two non-Muslims in a court of law and the testimony of one male equal to the testimony of two females. Thus in a case involving the alleged violation of a woman from a minority community by a Muslim male, his testimony would equal the testimony of four female witnesses. When it was proposed to introduce a separate religious column in the Identity Card, the minorities erupted in spontaneous anger, and launched a successful non-violent campaign which resulted in the suggestion being withdrawn by the Sherif government in October 1992. This campaign was a great victory for the ordinary people.[113] Their leaders, whether political or episcopal, joined in only when the people themselves had shown the way. It can only be hoped that the promised reintroduction of the Joint Electorate will undo some of these injustices.

During the Nawaz Sherif regime, the Objectives Resolution was reintroduced (Presidential Order no. 14, 1985) with what some see as an ominous omission. Originally the relevant paragraph had read: 'Adequate provision shall be made for the minorities freely to profess and practise their religions and develop their culture.' In the constitutional amendment, as analysts have observed, the word 'freely' was omitted.[114]

In search of a category with which to classify the increasingly isolated minorities, Islamic ideologues began to write of non-Muslims in Pakistan as *dhimmis* or *mu'ahats*. According to Islamic tradition, however, *dhimmis* are in fact people who have been defeated militarily and have agreed to live in an Islamic state on the payment of a tax, so as to be excused military service.[115] *Mu'ahats* are people who have entered into a contract with an Islamic state. Clearly, neither term, nor the second-class status they imply, are properly applicable to the minorities in Pakistan. They lived in this territory long before the creation of Pakistan, were never defeated militarily – in fact many have served with distinction in the army[116] – and have entered into no such contract.

Christians may well wonder if the statement in the Objectives Resolution passed by the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 12 March 1949 describing a state 'wherein shall be guaranteed fundamental rights including equality of status and opportunity'[117] was meant to apply to them. The famous Lahore Resolution of the All-India Muslim League of 23 March 1940, which provided the basis of the future existence of Pakistan, also had much to say about the situation of minorities. It resolved 'That adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards should be specifically provided in the Constitution for minorities ... for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests, in consultation with them'.[118] Together with the members of other minority communities, the Christians of Pakistan still await the implementation of these worthy aspirations.[119]

An Open-ended Conclusion

While reflecting on this story of church can help to illustrate the narrative structure of ecclesiology, doing so raises important questions. Seeking to answer them may shed light not only on future pathways for the church outlined here but for other local churches and for ecclesiology itself. Here are some of these questions.

1. Can ecclesiology ever be developed other than within a praxis of liberation?

2. Since the outreach to the 'other', especially when silenced and oppressed, is not merely one among other apostolates of the church, but a constitutive element of what the church is, can there be a truly catholic ecclesiology which is not open to refining itself constantly in creative and receptive dialogue with the marginalized 'other'?

3. In ecclesial discourse, whose voice is heard and whose is not? What does this imply for our constructing of ecclesiology?

4. The ecclesial narrative outlined above shows a remarkable practical ecumenism in the lives of the Christian people. They instinctively realized that denominational differences were secondary to more fundamental realities. How can ecclesiology build on this while searching all the time for a vision, praxis and doctrinal construction pointing to the highest common factor rather than the lowest common denominator?

5. Is it true that those less interested in a cognitively aware ecclesiology are more likely to engage in actual evangelization, while those more committed to serious ecclesiology are less likely to do so, and if that is the case, what are the implications for the guild of ecclesiologists?

6. To what extent is the ethical dimension of church life defined by the preoccupations of professionals and not by a psycho-social analysis of the ethical dimension of the social reality of the people who constitute the church?

7. What is the precise contribution of ecclesiology to the dialectic of gospel-based and purely culturally based value systems, and in the process of evangelisation, when does this debate begin?

8. What kind of rootedness in a contemplative lifestyle will furnish ecclesiology with the capacity to facilitate vertical and not merely horizontal conversion?

9. What is the task of ecclesiology in facilitating not only social mobility but also a willingness on the part of the socially mobile to join in the struggles of the oppressed?

10. How does ecclesiology enable the church to balance the vocation to be socially influential with the call to facilitate authenticity in ecclesial identity even at the cost of being small?

11. What can ecclesiology contribute to the debate about numbers: too few and no visible church; too many and no Christian identity?

12. What measure of real assent is there to the notion of a creative reception by the people of the message of the gospel?[120]

This chapter has sought to remember and celebrate the still-unfinished journey to liberation of an oppressed people as facilitated though communion with the church. By the same token, it seeks to exemplify how a preferential engagement

with the otherness of the oppressed is constitutive of the very nature of the church. Consequently, attentiveness to the mediation of the 'otherness' or holiness of God, through the 'otherness' of the silenced and oppressed, is an inner defining moment in the structure of ecclesiology itself. Such attentiveness may not only enhance the capacity of ecclesiology to deal with denominational differences, but can also provide a hermeneutical principle for a more adequately catholic ecclesiology which is constantly refining itself in dialogue with the oppressed and silenced 'other'.

Notes

1. See Arooj-i-Maryam Renewal Centre (ed.), *The Catholic Church in Pakistan* (Lahore, 2006).
2. Ibid., p. 2.
3. Today it is primarily a term of abuse. It is hardly an ethnic designation any more, though when a Muslim mob came to burn down the village of Shantinagarnear near Khanewal in February 1997, they marched in to shouts of 'Chuhran nikal do!' (Drive out the Chuhra!). While this was certainly abusive it was also racial. Although primarily abusive in modern usage, the term continues to have an occupational implication. Ironically, it is now employed as a term of abuse by some socially mobile members of this ethnic group about those who still work as sweepers. The writer has come across innumerable examples of this.
4. J. W. Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India* (Lucknow, 1933), p. 146.
5. The negative resonance of comparable terms may be illustrated by the ascending scale of pollution in the naming of menstruating women in Oudh and elsewhere. On the first day, they were termed 'Mehterani', on the second, 'Chamran', on the third, 'Dhoban', and on the fourth 'pure'. K. Mall, 'Treatment of Menstruating Hindu Women: Oudh', *Punjab Notes and Queries* (hereafter *PNQ*) ed. W. Crooke (London, 1884–92), vol. 3, no. 36 (1886), n. 841.
6. J. M. Douie, 'Opprobrious Names: Evil Eye', in *PNQ*, vol. 1, no. 3, (1883), n. 219. Chuhra children themselves were also given insulting nicknames, not out of cruelty but to ward off the evil eye: Fr Emmerich, *In het Lande van de Viff Rivieren* (Antwerp, 1936), p. 157.
7. A common form of punishing or scolding in bringing up Rajput children is to call the child by 'a derogatory but not obscene name ... either of the lowest Jats, the leatherworkers or the sweepers': L. Minturn, 'Child Training', in B. B. Whiting (ed.), *Six Cultures: Studies of Child-Rearing* (New York, 1963), p. 327. The term 'Chuhrachamar' was widely used in the Punjab in that sense, and has entered the dictionary with that meaning: B. A. Qureshi, *Kitabistan's 20th-Century Standard Urdu Dictionary* (Lahore, 1987), s.v. For the sake of consistency, I have followed Qureshi's Urdu spelling of the term (Ibid., p. 262) – though not his transliteration, which is *choohra.*
8. See, among others, H. A. Rose: 'Once Balmik, the founder of the caste, arrived late at a feast given by a bhagat and found only fragments of it left. These he devoured and earned the name of Chuhra or "the one who eats leavings" ': *A Glossary of the Tribes of the Punjab and Northwest Frontier Province* (Lahore, 1919), vol. 1, p.182. *Chor* has the dictionary meaning of 'broken to pieces': Qureshi, *Kitabistan's Urdu* Dictionary, p. 260.
9. G. Bühler, (tr.), *The Laws of Manu*, Sacred Books of the East 25 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1886), p. 119, iii 239.
10. W. Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh* (Calcutta, 1896), vol. 3, p. 59.
11. J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India* (Cambridge, 1931), p. 223.
12. A. Gaur, *A History of Writing* (London, 1984), p. 146. Herodotus wrote of Indians who were neither Aryan nor Dravidian. He called them 'autrasiatic'; cf. J. Przyluski, 'Un ancien peuple du Punjab: les Udumbara', *Journal Asiatique* 208 (1926), 42.

13. H. A. Gould, 'Castes, Outcasts and the Sociology of Stratification', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 1 (1960), 226.

14. Some Brahmins may have been recruited from among the Shaman class of various aboriginal groups. G. S.Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India* (Bombay, 1957) has sought to show that Brahmins of a given linguistic area show greater physical affinity with other castes of that region than with Brahmins of other areas. This may explain certain anthropometric findings as well as the gradual convergence of the 'great' and the 'little' traditions, but it scarcely explains the existence of a class of men who composed, transmitted and safeguarded the Vedas.

15. A similar division was found in ancient Iran: Atharvas, Rathesta, Vastria Fshouyanta and Huit: D. N. Majumdar, *Races and Cultures of India* (London, 1961), p. 290.

16. This observation is of course not new. Among others, S. V. Ketkar made the same point long ago in *An Essay on Hinduism*, vol. 2 (London, 1911), pp. xxi–xxii. All the same, it has not yet percolated into the popular discussion of the subject. Megastenes, despite his erroneous seven-fold rather than four-fold division of society, seems to have understood this. He translated *varna* by *meros* and *jati* by *genos*: J. Wilson, *Indian Caste* (Edinburgh, 1877), vol. 1, p. 347. *Meros* (= 'thigh') is an intriguing usage and seems to imply familiarity with the Prajpati myth.

    In reality, *zat* or *jati* refers primarily to a clan or *gotra* claiming real or mythological common ancestry – in fact, a fictive patrilineage. In a secondary sense, it has an occupational meaning, but only because certain clans or *gotras* took up a traditional skill or role – its socio-economic status was usually a function of their political power or lack of it. Thus a given *zat* could be Brahmins or Veishas or so on. But the Brahmins, or for that matter any one of the four *varna*, were not a caste (*zat*) as such. They were a class.

17. M. E. Opler, 'North Indian Themes – Caste and Untouchability', in J. M. Mahar (ed.), *The Untouchables in Contemporary India* (Tucson, Ariz., 1972) p. 4.

18. Many sources place Doms and Chuhras together as offshoots of the same group, or as occupationally equivalent, or as sub-groups of each other, or even as Hinduized and Islamized terms for the same group. Cf. G. W. Briggs, *The Doms and their Near Relations* (Mysore, 1935), pp. 52, 60, 97, 100; also E. Thurston and K. Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), vol. 2, p. 174; W. Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, vol. 3, p. 273; R. V. Russell and R. B. Hir Lal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), vol. 4, p. 217.

19. Briggs, *The Doms and their Near Relations*, pp. 39–51.

20. Ibid., p. 52.

21. 'Then neither being nor non-being; Nor atmosphere, nor firmament, nor what is beyond; What did it encompass? Where? In whose protection?; What was the water, the deep, unfathomable?', *Rig Veda* 10.229; cf. R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu Scriptures* (London, 1966).

22. Obtained from Babu Imram in Rawalpindi, February 2000.

23. Certainly some Chuhra 'Bhagats' were members of the Udasi sect of 'heretical' Sikhism – followers of Sri Chand, the eldest son of Guru Nanak: H. D. Griswold, *Insights into Modern Hinduism* (New York, 1934), p. 212. It is however difficult to ascertain precise dates.

24. *Adi Granth*, as cited by M. Singh in *Kabir: His Biography*, vol. 1 (Lahore, 1934), p. 60. Not surprisingly, the poems of Ravi Das in the *Adi Granth* make reference to Untouchables: ibid., p. 7.

25. V. A. Smith, *Oxford History of India*, (4th edn London, 1981), p. 409. Muslim historians would wish to suggest there were a number of different reasons for his execution: see M. Akbar, *Punjab Under the Mughal Raj* (Lahore, 1985), p. 203.

26. Other versions give 'Amritsar'.

27. H. Singh Dilgier, *The Sikh Reference Book* (Edmonton, 1997), p. 528.

28. J. S. Grewal, *Guru Tegh Bahadur and the Persian Chroniclers* (Amritsar, 1976), pp. 81–2. Even though fictionalized, the best account is that of Kushwant Singh, *Delhi* (London and New Delhi, 1991), pp. 122–36.

29. W. L. McGregor, *A History of the Sikhs* (London, 1846), vol. 1, pp. 73–4.

30. Originally called the Jang Bar, it covered an area of 3,454 square miles between the Chenab and Ravi rivers and includes portions of the present Jhang, Gujeranwala and Lahore districts. The terms Doab and Bar frequently appear in the literature. Doab literally means two rivers. Bar seems to be an abbreviation of Beas and Ravi.

The use of 'our people' by those who do not belong to an oppressed class in the Punjab is an accepted way of avoiding the excessive use of insulting and derogatory terms like 'Chuhra' or 'Baughi'.

31. 'Despite the "traditional" designation, the majority of the oppressed classes worked not in scavenging, but in agricultural labour': Russell and Hir Lal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, vol. 1, p. 73 and vol. 4, p. 215.

32. Punjab Government, *Gazetteer of the Chenab Colony, 1904* (Lahore, 1905), pp. 34–5.

33. M. Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt* (Lahore, 1927), pp. 111–44.

34. The first stanza, in translation, reads as follows: I will tell a new tale to-day

How of old the Bar was the prey of thieves,
The shelter of deer, jackals and rats,
Now no barren jungle is left,
Young Sahib has peopled the land

This last line, 'Young Sahib dia mulk vasan' is a refrain forming the final line of each stanza. The full text may be found in the *Gazetteer of the Chenab Colony, 1904*, pp. 34–5.

35. H. Whitehead, 'The Mass Movement towards Christianity in the Punjab', *International Review of Missions* 2 (1913), p. 446.

36. E. D. Lucas and F. T. Das, *The Rural Church in the Punjab* (London, 1939), p. 53.

37. Ibid., p. 100.

38. *Dix Années d'Apostolat au Punjab* (Bruges, 1900), pp. 77–92.

39. Contrary to some analyses of this movement, e.g. that in *Changing Realities* Rawalpindi, 1992), *passim*, it is clear from the accounts written at the time or shortly afterwards that despite the somewhat paternalistic and pietistic tone, in addition to religious considerations there was a very strong humanitarian and even liberationist element in the development of these agricultural colonies. Then as now, the work of the Catholic missionaries was never mere proselytism.

40. Fr Leo, *The Capuchin Mission in the Punjab* (Mangalore, 1910), p. 155.

41. Ibid., p. 160. It bears repeating that contrary to common assumptions, the land was purchased at the commercial rate. It was not granted by the government.

42. It is not perfectly clear whether or not these people were formally Christians. On 4 October 1896, 28 adults from among them were baptized in a ceremony that included the confirmation of 16 others and the first Holy Communion of 12 young people: ibid., p. 87.

43. Fr Leo, *The Capuchin Mission in the Punjab*, p. 156.

44. 'Khush' translates 'Felix', the Latin word for 'happy'.

45. Amazingly, even modern authors persist in the long-discredited notion that the British administration supported the missionaries.

46. The British had foreseen this development throughout the newly colonized lands: 'With the ever-recurring partitions of Indian law, it is only a matter of time before the original 25 acres holding shrinks to the 5 or 6 acres characteristic of the central Punjab, and as the holding shrinks the peasant's mind may shrink as well': Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, p. 121; see also pp. 127–8. Attempts to deal with it were difficult: 'In the Shahpur colony which is based upon the horse-breeding grant [a double holding], the grantees have been tied down to a system of primogeniture, which is entirely foreign to the Punjab and sometimes leads to the murder of the eldest son': ibid., p. 117.

47. *Changing Realities*, p. 54.

48. It is not a straightforward task to translate the term *biradheri*: while 'brotherhood' is cognate, it is rarely employed; 'kindred' seems inaccurate since it is ego-focused; 'kinship group' is more accurate but increasingly inapplicable to urban life, and our people are now a majority urbanized group. Most writers, as I do here, simply use the word *biradheri* itself.

49. A similar chain of events occurred in South Travacorne: cf. S. Cave, 'A Typical Mass Movement Church: 1806–1918', *International Review of Mission* 7 (1918), 470–80. This time an individual, disappointed with observing temple prostitution at a shrine, brought back to his village, not ashes from the shrine, but the Gospels in Tamil. Here too the Pariah group were seeking not money, but opportunity in life (ibid., 472–4).

50. F. Stock and M. Stock, *People Movements in the Punjab* (Pasadena, Calif., 1978), p. 68. 'Ditt had been baptized by Rev. Martin of the Presbyterian Church' (ibid.). The strength of this valuable book – but also perhaps its shortcoming – is its concentration on the statistics of growth in church membership.

51. By contrast, Fr Constant Lievens, in his extraordinary work among another ethnic group, the Adivasis in Chota Nagpur, would *only* accept whole families or villages. Lievens died in Belgium of tuberculosis at the age of 38 in 1893. Over 73,000 Adivasis had become Catholics: A. Kanjamla; *Religion and Modernization of India* (Indore, 1981), p. 64.

52. T. K. Oomen, 'Sources of Deprivation and Styles of Protest: The Case of the Dalits in India', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, n.s.18.1 (1984), 50.

53. M. N. Srinivas, *Structural Change in Modern India* (Bombay, 1966), p. 7.

54. M. N. Srinivas, 'Some Reflections on the Nature of Caste Hierarchy', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, n.s. 18.2 (1984), 164.

55. P. Wiebe, 'Protestant Missions in India: A Sociological Review', *Religion and Society* 5 (1970), 295.

56. Kanjamala, *Religion and Modernization of India*, pp. 183–4.

57. F. Stock and M. Stock, *People Movements in the Punjab*, pp. 119–21.

58. F. Stock states that Shabaz was later honoured with a D.D. for this achievement (ibid., 120), but this seems to be disputed by F. M. Carey, 'Dalit, Dhimmi or Disciple' (unpublished thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1999), p. 16 n. 91,who states that 'This is not the same person as Imad-ud-Din the first Punjabi Christian to receive a Lambeth DD.'

59. H. D. Griswold observed that songs to the same tunes were sung during Chuhra *jugs* (a traditional religious celebration): *The Chuhras: An Ethnological Problem* (New York, 1934), p. 234 n. 19. The present writer has heard the same tunes used in Muslim popular devotion. When he pointed this out to Christian leaders he was told that 'They took them from us!'

60. There is not even any mention of them in S. S. Sekhon and K. S. Duggal, *A History of Punjabi Literature* (New Delhi, 1992), or in other comparable works.

61. Earlier, H. F. Lachmere Taylor had written: 'Nor can it be said that many, even of those who are sincere in their desire for spiritual knowledge, have any clear concept of the purity of Christian teaching … But who among us can sit in judgment on them?': *In the Land of the Five Rivers* (Edinburgh, 1906), pp. 86–7.

62. W. Fernandes, *Caste and Conversion Movements in India* (New Delhi, 1981), p. 26.

63. H. W.Griswold, 'The Mass Movement in the Punjab', *East and West*, January 1915, 35–6.

64. F. Stock and M. Stock, *People Movements in the Punjab*, p. 119.

65. E. Y. Campell, 'Aspects of the Life and Work of the Church in the Punjab', in V. E. W. Hayword (ed.), *The Church as Christian Community: Studies in North Indian Churches* (London, 1966), p. 151.

66. Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India*, 230–9.

67. The same pattern of initial spectacular success followed by poor follow-up work was also evident in the reconversion (*shuddi*) movements organized by the Arya Samaj: J. T. F. Jandan, 'Reconverting to Hinduism: The Shuddi of the Arya Samaj', in G. A. Oddie (ed.), *Religion in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1977), p. 156.

68. The late Bishop Patras Yussaf has written that 'in their world-view which was monistic and pantheistic in character [*sic*], Jesus became one of, or one next to many others … the people were happy to give Jesus a place, though not a unique or exclusive place within their world-view': 'Community: The Place where Theology is Made', *Focus* 4 (1984), 23.

69. Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India*, pp. 235, 236. Pickett found the Catholic pictures – presumably representations of the Virgin Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus – 'objectionable from the standpoint of all the churches represented in this study'.

70. C. A. Waidyasekera, 'Encounter of Meanings: The Biradhari in Punjabi Culture as compared with Brotherly Love in the Gospel Message' (unpublished thesis, Gregorian University, Rome, 1988), p. 116.

71. E. D'Izegem, 'La Mission du Panjab', *Collecteanea Francescana* 8 (1938), 522.

72. They had to acquire land and property for their clinics, schools and churches. From the beginning, there were attempts to defraud them of some or all of what they purchased. In 1895 Bishop Pelckmans had to institute a case against one Iman Din because land purchased by the mission five years earlier had still not been handed over.

73. Fr Roger, 'Khushpur District Mission 1910–1935', *Collectanea Lahorensis* 1 (1935), 145–9.

74. A. Gordon, *Our Indian Mission* (Philadelphia, 1886), p. 175; cf. F. Stock and M. Stock, *People Movements in the Punjab*, p. 61. Briggs makes a similar point in relation to the Chamars: *The Doms and their Near Relations*, p. 236.

75. Interview with the late Fr Henri van den Brouke OFMCap, July 1991.

76. L. Caplan, *Class and Culture in Urban India: Fundamentalism in a Christian Community* (London, 1987), pp. 246–7.

77. Fr Leo, *The Capuchin Mission in the Punjab*, p. 132.

78. S. Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (London, 1984), pp. 229–30; cf. p. 390 n. 41. After the dismal performance of the Muslim League in Punjab in 1937, when they won just one seat, Jinnah complained: 'I will never come to the Punjab again. It is such a hopeless place': O. Nooman, *Pakistan: Political and Economic History* (London, 1988), p. 22 n. 13. When Punjab went over to the Muslim League it was only by the ideologically contradictory device of allowing the previously sitting Unionist Party *zamindar*-politicians to stand as members of the League: I. Talbot, 'Muslim Political Mobilization in Rural Punjab: 1937–1946', in P. Robb (ed.), *Rural India: Land Power and Society under British Rule*, (London, 1983), pp. 259–60.

79. *Karachi Herald*, 15 June 2001, p. 20.

80. R. Symonds, *The Making of Pakistan* (London, 1951), p. 82.

81. This is one of the reasons why Punjab today has a less feudal structure than the Sindh.

82. See *Dawn Review*, 8 May 2002 for an account of this *bastie* (urban slum area).

83. Streefland, *The Christian Punjabi Sweepers* (Rawalpindi, 1973), holds that 'until 1947 there were very few Christianized Punjabis in the towns' (p. 7). He modifies this later, saying that there was migration of Christianized Punjabis to the towns before 1947 but that the numbers were negligible compared with what came after (p. 40 n. 20). That is closer to the facts. The migration pattern had started a long time before. Many years earlier, A. McLeish had noted the large numbers of sweeper Christians in the towns of the Frontier Province: *The Frontier People of India* (London, 1931), p. 33. Indeed there were as many as 2,000 there by 1925.

    Baptismal records in the Catholic parishes in the cities, especially those along the main railway line, show the pattern of migration well established before 1947. But it accelerated massively after that. There were already established Catholic parishes in these places, something that facilitated the absorption of the migrants. In August 1933 the spiritual joy experienced by a Ms Bridget Sequira at the sight of some seventy Punjabis from Drigh Road being baptized into the church eventually led her to found a religious community of Sisters whose Pakistan branch is now composed of a majority of Punjabis. See B. Sequira, *History of the Franciscan Missionaries of Christ the King* (Karachi, 1968), part 1, pp. 1–2, and also Sr Ursula, *Footprints on the Sands of Time* (Karachi, 1988), p. 22, which also speaks of two communities of Catholic Punjabis in Karachi from before 1932. On the work of the Franciscans and the Jesuits in Karachi during the 1930s, see Sr Ursula, *Man of Peace: Life of Mon. Salesius Lemens* (Karachi, 1989). The conversion movement among Punjabis in Karachi in 1933, and the foundation of an Urdu-language school for their children in 1936, is discussed in A. Van Miltenberg (ed.), *In the Land of the Sindhi and the Baluchi* (Karachi, 1947), pp. 53–60, 42.

84. J. C. B. Webster, 'Christianity in the Punjab', *Missiology: An International Review* 6 (1978), 469.

85. The majority of Presbyterians, Anglicans and Methodists, and of their headquarters, were then in India according to W. G. Young, *Presbyterian Bishop* (London, 1995), p. 20.

86. A. S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity* (London, 1997), pp. 137–8. See also Carey, 'Dalit, Dhimmi or Disciple', p. 18 n. 112; and Symonds, *The making of Pakistan*, p. 85.

87. 'The self-support pastors testified that at the beginning of their ministries they invariably had a struggle to keep from getting under the thumbs of their parishioners. The effort was made to make the pastor a tool and to force him to become an accomplice in the performance of unlawful weddings and in shady devices of all kinds': J. C. Heinrich, *On Depressed Class Psychology* (Lahore, 1935), p. 6; the following pages of that work illustrate the ends that members went to in avoiding contributions, and the consequent frustrations of the pastors.

88. This was just one example of a more general trend. See L. Caplan, *Class and Conflict in Urban India; Fundamentalism in a Christian Community*, (Oxford, 1987), p. 153, 160; and also J. Mossy, 'Christianity among the Dalits of North India', in F. Hrangkhuma, *Christianity in India. Search for Liberation and Identity* (Delhi, 1998), p. 1. The Catholic Church in Lahore in the early days was not without an element of class distinction. The cathedral tended to be for the Europeans, Empress Road for the Anglo-Indians, and Anarkali for the Punjabis. This class distinction was strongly challenged by some of the Fathers, notably Fr Emmerich. What changed everything was the speed with which the Punjabi Christians quickly became the overwhelming majority and put their stamp on the Church as a whole.

89. J. C. B. Webster, 'Christianity in the Punjab', *Missiology: An International Review* 6 (1978), 468.

90. A. Beteille, *Castes, Old and New: Essays in Social Structure and Social Stratification* (Bombay, 1969), p. 33.

91. D. Gupta, 'Continuous Hierarchies and Discrete Castes', *Economic and Social Weekly*, December 1984, 2049.

92. V. Das, 'Masks and Faces: An Essay on Punjabi Kinship', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, n.s. 5 (1971), 9 n. 10.

93. S. Kakar, *The Indian Psyche* (London, 1981), p. 123.

94. Yussaf, 'Community: The Place where Theology is Made', *FOCUS* vol. 4, no. 1 (1984) 24.

95. B. J. Malina, *The New Testament: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (London, 1981), pp. 42, 67. Needless to say, the gospel sought to elevate people beyond this. The point at issue here, though, is that in the New Testament, it is the starting-point for socio-ethical discourse – even if not the goal.

96. 'The Biradheri takes cognisance of everything that happens, completely controls the life of each individual sweeper, thus taking away all independence and initiative': *Mass Movement Commission Report*, quoted in E. Y. Campbell, 'Aspects of the Life and Work of the Church in the Punjab, p. 165.

97. R. Sharma, *Bhangi: Scavenger in Indian Society* (New Delhi, 1995), p. 134.

98. To some extent this is less so in an urban situation and among the minority of educated professionals, who tend to seek to form social alliances parallel to their fictive kinship *biradheri*. As these develop, they in turn – and not the church – become the loyalty-defining association.

99. D. Forrester, 'The Depressed Classes and Conversion to Christianity', in Oddie (ed.), *Religion in South Asia*, p. 58.

100. Yussaf, 'Community: The Place where Theology is Made', 25.

101. See. Waidyasekera, 'Encounter of Meanings'. Arguing, on the one hand, for a recognition that any transformation of Punjabi society may only be achieved through specific *biradheri* symbols (p. 219), and on the other for the *biradheri* to extend its horizons beyond itself (pp. 222–3), he proposes a fusion of horizons between the demands of the *biradheri* and those of brotherly love (pp. 223, 227).

102. W. Fernandes, *Caste and Conversion Movements in India* (Delhi, 1981), p. 26.

103. W. McClintock, 'A Sociological Profile of the Christian Minority in Pakistan', *Missiology: An International Review* 20 (1992), 350.

104. J. Boel, *Christian Mission in India: A Sociological Analysis* (Amsterdam, 1975), p. 104.

105. First quoted by J. P. Alter, *In the Doab and Kohilkand: North Indian Christianity 1815–1915* (Delhi, 1986) and cited by Webster, *The Dalit Christians*, p. 56.

106. G .E. Phillips, *The Outcasts' Hope* (London, 1912), p. 83.

107. 1 Pet. 2.10.

108. Up until recently, Protestants were materially more well-to-do than Catholics. As indicated above, in embarking on a self-support system, the mainline Protestant churches effectively, even if unwittingly, abandoned those unwilling or unable to pay and these came into the ambit of the Catholic Church. The Calvinist theology of the Presbyterian Churches also saw worldly prosperity as a sign of predestined election. Upward mobility in the Protestant Churches made them less willing to accommodate sweepers, who are overwhelmingly Catholic – at least nominally.

109. The situation in India may well be worse: R. Ramesh writes of Ahmedabad in Gujarat: 'Nearly 100 of its council sanitation workers have degrees in subjects ranging from computing to law, but cannot get better jobs because they are Dalits': *Dawn*, 7 October 2004, 14.

110. See the comments in D. Reid, *Paris: Sewers and Sewermen* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), pp. 113–20, H. A. Gould, 'Occupational Categories and Stratification in the Achievement of Urban Society', in R. G. Fox (ed.), *Urban India* (Durham, NC, 1970), p. 55.

111. For a full description see C. Amjad Ali and C. Amjad Ali, *The Legislative History of the Shariah Act* (Rawalpindi, 1992), pp. 19–20.

112. A. A. Mughul, 'The Present Electoral Reforms Proposed and their effects on Religious Minorities', in D. Moghal, and J. Jiran (eds), *Religious Minorities in Pakistan*, (Rawalpindi: Christian Study Centre, 1996), pp. 73–84, says that 75 per cent of the Christians in Pakistan are living in three districts of Punjab. McClintock, nearly 30 years earlier, wrote that two-thirds live in eight districts of central Punjab: 'A Sociological Profile of the Christian Minority in Pakistan', 346. The writer can state that for those living outside this belt, the election of minority MNAs is a non-event. The decision to abolish the separate electorate has now been taken, but not before the system of local government had been set up on an apartheid basis.

113. F. G. M. Amratsani, *Shanakhti ya Mazhabi Card* (Karachi, 1992), *passim*. Many Islamic fundamentalist leaders understood that the Christians were being manipulated by Ahmedians (ibid., p. 25). They were most certainly campaigning in their own right.

114. J. William, 'What Role have the Political Parties Played Regarding the Identity of Religious Minorities in Pakistan?', in Moghal and Jiran (eds), *Religious Minorities in Pakistan*, p. 69.

115. D. P. Macdonald, 'Dhimmi', in H. A. R. Gibb and J. K. Kramers (eds), *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden, 1953), 75–6.

116. It is now generally recognized that Christians fought with great bravery for Pakistan in the 1965 war; indeed some were decorated. At the time it was different; pastors and other church leaders were viewed with suspicion, detained and harassed: L. S. Walbridge, *The Christians of Pakistan: The Passion of Bishop John Joseph* (London: 2003), p. 56.

117. 'Report of the Basic Principles Committee', 21 September 1954, p. 1. The Muslim League did not hesitate to invoke the rights of Christians to make their own case: 'Whereas . . . the exclusive nature of Hindu Dharma philosophy . . . threatens to reduce Muslims, Christians and other minorities to the status of irredeemable helots': 'The Delhi Resolution', in 'Muslim League Legislators' Convention, Delhi, April 1946', quoted in S. S. Pirzada, *Foundation of Pakistan*, vol. 2 (Karachi, 1970), p. 512.

118. Quoted in C. M. Naim (ed.), *Iqbal, Jinnah and Pakistan: The Vision and the Reality* (Syracuse, NY, 1984), p. 202.

119. There is the beginning of an aspiration towards change. The speech of General Musharraf on 12 January 2002 has been hailed as a historic turn to an Islamic modernism with no place for violent *jihad*. He has continued to steer that course: 'Do we want Pakistan to

become a theocratic state? Do we believe that religious education alone is enough for governance? Or do we want Pakistan to emerge as a progressive and dynamic Islamic welfare state?': address to the nation, 13 January 2002, p. 4, as quoted the following day in *The News* (Karachi). Apart from modifying some aspects of the apartheid Separate Electorate laws as well as the Haddood Ordinences Against Women, little else was achieved.

120. I explore the structure and method of an ecclesiology which picks up on these questions in 'Ecclesiology as Narrative', in *Ecclesiology* 4.2 (2008).

CHRISTIANITY, FEMINISM AND THE RELIGIOUS OTHER: BEYOND EUROCENTRISM

Jenny Daggers

What was really common to mankind, and universally valid for it, seemed, in spite of a general kinship and capacity for mutual understanding to be at bottom exceedingly little, and to belong more to the province of material goods than to the ideal values of civilization.

(Ernst Troeltsch, 1923)[1]

Traditional liberal intellectuals pride themselves on acknowledging heterogeneity and plurality, but this acknowledgement is always fatally compromised by a deployment of homogeneous logic ... which irons out the heterogeneous precisely by subsuming it under the categories of comprehensive and totalizing global and world theologies. ... I am convinced that the time of this modernist general intellectual is over, even in the philosophy and theology of the religions.

(Kenneth Surin, 1990)[2]

For European Christians born into the twentieth-century heyday of confident secularism, the shape of the brave new twenty-first-century world can be hard to discern. The end of empire, ushering in a repositioning of Europe within a post-colonial world; the rise of the 'age of migration'[3] and with it the *de facto* multiculturalism of European cities, with their inter-religious diversity; the accelerating decline of Christian churchgoing within traditional denominations – but not within their black congregations or black Pentecostal churches – together with the expansion of 'world Christianity'; all these changes were well advanced during the twentieth century, but their implications require further clarification. In particular, the Eurocentrism which is heir to the 'white supremacist' views that found articulation during colonialization, and which continues to assume not only the value but the superiority and global remit of the European cultural heritage, is subject to forceful challenge. This landscape is the backdrop for relations between Christianity, including its feminist expressions, and the religious 'other'.

Where Ernst Troeltsch both sums up a modern European Christian comparative theology which assumed the superiority of Christianity and anticipates the pluralist theologies of the twentieth century, Kenneth Surin sits on a different watershed.

Surin recognizes the impact of post-colonial and postmodern perspectives upon Christian theology of the religions, and indicates that the time is ripe for a further shift in European/Western theology of the religions. The task of this essay is to assess the tradition of 'primitive' Christian comparative theology[4] summed up in the quote from Troeltsch, and problems in latter-twentieth-century pluralist approaches indicated by the quote from Surin, with the purpose of establishing the context in which more fruitful approaches to Christian theology of the religions have emerged over the last two decades. This recent body of work may be characterized as inter-religious Christian theologies. As a feminist theologian, I then assess the resources which feminist theology may bring to bear in contemporary inter-religious feminist theologies of religions. The work of this essay is thus a preparation for a larger project. My aim is to establish a post-colonial perspective as a necessary orientation for the contemporary task. The growing body of inter-religious Christian theology is beyond the scope of my discussion here.[5]

   This chapter is in three parts. The first concerns the modern trajectory in primitive comparative theology which culminates in Troeltsch, with a view to highlighting the assumed universal superiority of both European culture and Christian religion. The second considers twentieth-century developments, where European universals take a seemingly more benign form in Christian theology of the religions, through the fashioning of egalitarian criteria by which world religions can meet on apparently neutral ground. My discussion highlights the subsequent emergence of a focus on incommensurate particularity as fruitful in contemporary inter-religious Christian theology, following the watershed represented by the quote from Surin. The final part assembles some specifically feminist theological resources for this project.

Europe as Global Destiny and Christian Comparative Theology

Cosmopolitanism, European travellers' tales and the religious 'Other'

In that crucible of the French Revolution, Diderot's *Encyclopédie,* the cosmopolitan is defined as 'a man who has no fixed abode or a man who is nowhere a foreigner'.[6] From Greek times, cosmopolitanism has been linked with travel. From the dawn of early modernity in the Renaissance, tales of European travellers and explorers have fed the European imaginary. Texts produced by the explorers of the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries have their source in the European world, in European dreams and political conflicts.[7] As Michel de Certeau puts it, such texts are like legends which 'symbolise the changes brought about in a culture through its encounter with the other'. To read them is akin to the interpretation of dreams: to a *hermeneutics of the other*.[8]

   Kristeva sees cosmopolitanism as the extension of the ancient Greek city-state to a world scale so that 'the entire world finds its place in it'.[9] However, this extrapolation from the (European) local to the global context assumes the superiority of all things European, and for this reason it is deeply problematic. This problem is writ large in Kant's 'Idea for a Universal History with a

Cosmopolitan Purpose', where he describes a natural movement of human progress from barbarism to civilization – from the 'purposeless state of savagery' towards a 'universal *cosmopolitan* existence'.[10] It is clear that Europe is at the centre of Kant's narrative of progress, wherein a 'germ of enlightenment' develops through the turbulence of history, in a – somewhat ominous – 'regular process of improvement in the political constitutions of our continent (which will probably legislate eventually for all other continents)'.[11] Kant's view of past history and future international polity seems to equate civilization with white Europe. If the rest of the world is to enter into the order of perpetual peace, this will happen through its incorporation into the European narrative of the history of civilization. This is clearly a founding tale of what Stuart Hall would call 'the West and the Rest',[12] written at a historical moment before the new world colonies expanded European identity to the boundaries of 'the West'.

Jacques Derrida argues that metaphysics is a 'white mythology', reassembling and reflecting the culture of the West as a universal form, and given the name of Reason.[13] Clearly Kant's notions of cosmopolitanism embody just such a white mythology. We have therefore identified a double movement. On the one hand, travellers' tales of the 'global' world reflect the dreams and political conflicts of the European 'local'; on the other, solutions to local, that is, European, concerns and conflicts are extrapolated unthinkingly beyond their context in a universalizing move that attempts to bring the global within its compass.

As I will seek to show, Christian comparative theology in modernity was firmly embedded in the 'white mythology' which mistakes its own metaphysics for a universal form. Comparative theologians thus considered themselves entitled to sit in judgement upon the religions of the extra-European world, which are made known to them at first in the reflective mirror of European travellers' tales. Religion was a common ingredient in these tales. And Certeau's 'hermeneutics of the other' is evident as references to religion are deployed in heated debates within Christianity. Thus Samuel Purchas, in his nine-volume *Purchas His Pilgrimage*, published in 1613, consolidated testimonies concerning the 'Irreligious Religions' of the known historical world and of Asia, Africa and America.[14] From his pilgrimage, he distils 'two lessons fitting for these times, the unnaturalness of FACTION and ATHEISM',[15] intending 'to show the Paganism of AntiChristian Poperie, and other Pseudo-Christian heresies, and the Truth of Christianity as it is now professed and established in our Church' (namely, the Church of England).[16]

Purchas is clearly an author with an axe to grind: his pilgrimage hardly provides a positive framework for respectful understanding between Christians of different persuasions, or of religious traditions outside Christianity. The wealth of modern information, added to ancient classical sources, is given a simple categorization: on the one hand, the Church of England as repository of the light of God's truth, and on the other, paganism, which includes Catholicism, other pseudo-Christian heresies, atheism – and then the remaining 'Irreligious Religions'. Purchas is an exemplar of a wider range of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature, where reference to other religions is deployed against Enlightenment scepticism to adjudicate between positions within post-Reformation Christian diversity, or to

articulate a growing rationalist universalizing tendency towards theories of universal or absolute religion.[17]

Thus Herbert of Cherbury, in his metaphysical treatise *De Veritate* (1624), and his later *De Religione Gentilium*, eventually published in 1663, argues that there is a universal providence recognizable by and offering salvation to all peoples.[18] In *De Religione Gentilium* Herbert interprets extensive data on theologies of the religions.[19] But, as Pailin demonstrates, Herbert's intentions in *De Veritate* are to invoke universal providence in an attack upon Christian positions other than his own, whereas the study of other religions in *De Religione Gentilium* is used to justify anti-clericalism.[20] My contention is that this new attention to universal religion is more a careless extrapolation from local European concerns than a considered engagement with the religions of the wider world. It is also significant that this universalising logic arises at the same time as Europe is expanding its boundaries across the globe.

Christianity as Absolute Religion

By the nineteenth century, orientalist scholarship had made available weightier sources about other religions than the earlier travellers' accounts. There is a notable change in tone in the representation of the religions, but universals and absolutes continue to be deployed to assert the superiority of the particular form of Christianity favoured by the author in question. Christian freethought is evident in two significant American sources.

Theodore Parker, a Massachusetts Congregationalist minister, produced texts which were widely read on both sides of the Atlantic. In a series of lectures given in 1841, Parker develops a discourse of Absolute Religion. 'There is but one Religion',[21] which is a 'permanent substance':[22] our 'sense of dependence' – Parker cites Schleiermacher here – is proof of the existence of the Absolute.[23] Parker seeks 'to remove the rubbish of human inventions from the fair temple of Divine Truth':[24] theology, Bible, Church and creed are all to be swept away. Parker advocates the excellence of a Christianity refashioned to satisfy Reason and Conscience.[25] The days of the Christianity of the churches are numbered, 'But Absolute Religion, Absolute Morality', Parker assures us, 'cannot perish'.[26] Parker's 'philosophical spiritualism'[27] combines rationalism and pietism. Clearly, Parker expects his refashioned Christianity to be the vehicle of Absolute Religion for his readers. So how do the other religions appear in his text?

Parker asserts: 'There is but one Religion, and it can never die out',[28] and that

> He that worships truly, by whatever form, worships the Only God; He hears the prayer, whether called Brhma [*sic*], Jehovah, Pan or Lord ... and many a swarthy Indian, who bowed down to wood and stone ... yes, many a savage with his hands smeared all over with human sacrifice, shall come from the East and the West, and sit down in the kingdom of god [*sic*], with Moses and Zoroaster, with Socrates and Jesus, – while men, who call daily on the living God, who pay their tribute and bowed at the name of Christ, shall be cast out, because they did no more.[29]

The other religions receive no more respect than the Christianity which Parker debunks. They are located within a system of Absolute Religion of his devising, wherein a higher will marshals the race of men towards the harmonious development of Man. Parker's Absolute Religion better reflects the universalizing tendencies of modernity than the particular religions of the world.

A second American author, the Unitarian James Freeman Clarke, drew on a range of German, French and English sources to produce a scholarly, analytical and synthetic account of ten religions.[30] Clark claims that comparative theology is a positive science, interpreting a wealth of new data and departing from the disparaging of religions found in eighteenth-century writers, who had insisted that Judaism and Christianity alone were revealed, whereas all other religions were invented.[31] Like Parker, Clarke asserts a universal and absolute religion, the reliance of religion on feelings of dependence, and the universal urge to worship some higher, unseen power.[32] Unlike Parker, his careful engagement with orientalist scholarship has a clear agenda, aiming to refute its recent tendency to rehabilitate 'heathenism' by placing it on a level with, or even above, Christianity.

Rather, Clarke distinguishes Christianity as the only catholic and universal religion from all other ethnic and local religions.[33] Christianity as 'universal religion must root itself in the decaying soil of partial religions'.[34] Each great religion prepares the way for something better: 'Comparative Theology becomes the science of missions.'[35] The nine religions are in a state of arrested development: 'Like great vessels anchored in a stream, the current of time flows past them, and each year they are further behind the spirit of the age and less in harmony with its demands … Christianity blossoms out into modern science, literature, art … Christianity, the spirit of faith, hope and love, is the deep fountain of modern civilization.'[36]

Kant's anticipated cosmopolitan future, in which the rest of the world is to enter the European narrative of the progress of civilization, reappears in Clarke's missionary vision. By incorporation of the ethnic religions into Christianity, the cultures to which they belong will enter the only history there is: the history of Western civilization.

British academic theologians, who were frequently ordained within the Church of England, argued from their positions in Anglican orthodoxy that Christianity is the one revealed religion, over against the 'natural' religions of the world. In this respect their views diverged from those of the Unitarian Freeman Clarke, who maintained that universal Christianity and ethnic religions alike contain truth and are thus revelations: the distinctiveness of Christianity lies in its pleroma – it has come to fulfil other religions.[37] The tone of these theologians is conciliatory and respectful, compared to that of their British forebears, but the assumed superiority and universality of Christianity remains.

A single example will suffice. Charles Hardwick, Christian Advocate in the University of Cambridge and divinity lecturer of King's College, produced *Christ and Other Masters*, a scholarly work in three volumes showing a detailed knowledge of scholarship in religions.[38] Hardwick is concerned to check the growing interest in the spiritualism exemplified by Theodore Parker and his 'Absolute Religion', which Hardwick sees as 'carrying men afresh to paganism'.[39]

Hardwick is prepared to engage closely with 'heathen' religions so that they may testify in Christianity's favour.[40] In robust fashion, he resists the elevation side by side of 'Confucius, Moses and Pythagoras; of Socrates and Zoroaster; of Buddha, Christ and Apollonius; of Mani and Mohammed ... in the Walhalla of spiritualism'.[41]

Rather, in terms which will now be familiar, he contrasts the local religions of the ancient world with Christianity, which 'came afresh from God; it rested on a series of objective revelations ... [and] never faltered in its claim to be regarded as a veritable "world-religion"'.[42] Christianity was ever 'one beacon planted on a hill', capable of making humanity at large 'one again in Christ'.[43] The purpose of his scholarly discussion of the religions of the world is to show how they exemplify 'the independent workings of the natural heart of man'.[44] Hardwick writes at length on the religions in order to recall Christians to their orthodox faith, in full confidence that 'Christianity will tolerate no rival'.[45]

In sum, universalising tendencies within Christian theology assume a new impetus during the colonial project of modernity, where they become hopelessly entangled with global European expansion. The Kantian assumption that European history is Universal History undergirds the colonial project; the desired incorporation of the religions of the world into a universal Christianity mirrors the incorporation of extra-European cultures into colonial European empires. The supposedly universal Enlightenment values betray variations on an unacknowledged local, that is, European, theme. The rootless cosmopolitan is revealed as a *de facto* European; the world is his oyster, due to the expanding boundaries of empire. Despite frequent conciliatory references to other religions, nineteenth-century Christian comparative theology showed no desire to engage seriously with other religious traditions, but used these to counter the corrosive effects of rationalism upon Christian belief. Religions of the wider world were thus used as ammunition in a peculiarly European battle.[46]

Twentieth-century Theology and the Religions

Troeltsch: the terminus of Absolute Religion

Troeltsch sums up modern comparative theology in his 'evolutionary apologetic', wherein he harnesses two scholarly currents: philosophy – Absolute Christianity as the goal of Hegelian dialectic – with history – the 'history of religions' that is continued in the contemporary discipline of religious studies.[47] The 'absoluteness of Christianity'[48] signifies 'the self-realization of God in the human consciousness',[49] within a single history of mankind: only partially recognized in other religions, it is fully recognized in Christianity alone.

But there is a tension between the philosophical universal, with its imposed single history of mankind in which Christianity appears as absolute and superior, and the diversity of the history of religions, wherein Christianity appears as one religion among others. Troeltsch's evolutionary apologetic defines an 'idea of religion' as the metaphysical transcendent 'goal towards which mankind is

directed':[50] the idea of religion is the permanent element informing the 'various eruptions, breakthroughs, and manifestations of the higher spiritual life' within the historical religions.[51]

Like orthodox Anglican theologians such as Hardwick, Troeltsch aims to justify orthodox belief, though, like the freethinking Parker and Clarke, he repudiates arguments asserting supernatural revelation in favour of a turn to generic religion. Troeltsch's claim that Christianity is a 'focal synthesis of all religious tendencies' disclosing 'a new way of life', both 'culmination point' and 'convergence point of all developmental tendencies that can be discerned in religion',[52] is reminiscent of Clarke's pleroma. Until the eleventh hour, Troeltsch resists the logic of his location of Christianity among the religions, with its challenge to assumed Christian superiority. But, writing in the final year of his life, he significantly shifts his argument to claim that while Christianity is absolute for Christians, other religions are likewise absolute for their adherents.[53] Here he points the way for later, pluralist twentieth-century developments.

However, even in this final decisive gesture, Troeltsch acts as mouthpiece of 'white mythology'. Even as he relinquishes the claim to Christian absoluteness, he reiterates white supremacy by asserting 'hellenized and westernised … deorientalized Christianity' as the foundation of European culture, and by then identifying Christianity with Europe alone.[54] He also reasserts European superiority in his reference to Christianity as 'the religion of such a highly developed group'.[55]

Primitive comparative theology and universals in comparative religion

In *The Invention of World Religions*, Tomoko Masuzawa argues that absolutism is transferred from the context of Christian comparative theology to world-religions pluralism.[56] She writes, 'There is no ideological disjuncture between the theological discourse of traditional Christendom and the world religions discourse of today's multicultural world'.[57] While Masuzawa may be criticized for ignoring recent developments in religious studies,[58] her thesis usefully highlights the dominant place of European, now Western, universals in the discipline of comparative religion over much of the twentieth century.

Thus universal, generic religion was the operative framework in the work of leading twentieth-century scholars, notably Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade.[59] We will examine two instances of the significance of this for the twentieth-century 'theology of religions' which emerged following the demise of primitive comparative theology.

First, mirroring Troeltsch's turn at the final hour, the systematic theologian Paul Tillich outlined a 'theology of religions' in the last year of his life, 1963.[60] Collaborative work with Mircea Eliade was important in shaping Tillich's new approach, articulated in his final public lecture, 'The Significance of the History of Religions for the Comparative Theologian'. Following a life work concerned with the thoroughly European issue of the engagement of theology with secular culture, Tillich paralleled Troeltsch's historical concern by advocating an 'interpenetration

of systematic theological study and religious historical studies'.[61] His first move – reminiscent of the long-standing deployment of the religions in intra-Christian debates – is to reconceive secularism as a religion, thus repositioning his hallmark correlation between theology and secular culture as a 'theology of religions'.

His second move is to repudiate rejection of the religions in orthodox exclusivism, including its Barthian expression. He stands against those who reject history of religions 'in the name of a new or of an old absolutism'.[62] However, Tillich's schema relies on 'a central event which unites the positive results of … critical developments in the history of religions … an event which … makes possible a concrete theology that has universalistic significance'.[63] Thus, as Krieger puts it – and reminiscent of Troeltsch's abandoned single history of mankind – in order for different religions to be thought together, they must be thought within a common history,[64] where universal revelatory experiences are given to all, and mutual critique transcends the borders of any particular tradition, aiming at absolute truth.[65]

In *Towards a World Theology*, the scholar of religion Wilfred Cantwell Smith perpetuates the notion of a single history of universal and generic religion, in which the diversity of religious traditions is unified: to participate through faith in one tradition is thus to participate in all.[66] Smith argues that the task of world theology is to make this generic truth explicit.[67]

Tillich and Cantwell Smith alike, both Western scholars, construct their own versions of a universal arena in which the religions may meet and be drawn into a greater harmony. Unlike the work of earlier generations of comparative theologians, who made Christianity the only possible terminus for all religion, this arena is situated outside any specific tradition. But a problem remains in that the supposed universal is of European manufacture; it is a local artefact posing as a global one.

Twentieth-century Christian Theology of the Religions

Pluralism as yet one more Western universal

Writing in 1966 as a university professor of theology in the multicultural city of Birmingham, UK, John Hick described relations between Christianity and other religions as 'the most disturbing theological problem that Christianity is likely to have to face corporately during the next hundred years'.[68] He undertook leading roles in several interfaith organizations in the city, and his related theological project shows the same commitment to building harmonious relations between the faith communities represented in post-colonial British ethnic diversity.[69]

Perceiving orthodox Christology to be an obstacle to interfaith dialogue, Hick's hospitality towards those of other faiths drove his move away from Evangelical soteriological exclusivism[70] towards his philosophically grounded theology of religions:[71] all religions can then be judged by their effects on the transformation of believers. Because a Christology that asserts Christ as the unique, final and unrepeatable revelation of God has been at the core of Christianity perceived as

absolute and universal religion, Hick is prepared to excise the uniqueness of Christ by offering a phenomenological interpretation, in order to create a neutral arena for interfaith conversation.[72]

Hick locates himself as a pluralist – that is, he adopts a pluralist *methodology* for engaging with the empirical *fact* of the plurality of world religions. His work gave rise to an expanded heuristic typology, where a pluralist approach was added to exclusivist and inclusivist perspectives for mapping Christian theologies of the religions.[73] At its simplest, the exclusivist position is that there is no salvation outside Christianity, therefore evangelization is the only aim of relationship with other religions. Inclusivists see other religions as vehicles for salvation in Christ, and are therefore more open to dialogue with those of other faiths. Pluralists establish a variety of level playing fields where the terms of engagement are common to all religions, and distinct from the distinctive doctrines or practices of any participant traditions.[74]

Dissatisfaction with claims to Christian superiority associated with exclusivist and inclusivist options leads to the pluralist position.[75] John Hick and Paul Knitter's landmark collection, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, demonstrates the breadth of this project, and the growing importance of liberationist perspectives within it.[76] Pluralist approaches deploy some notion of universal religion for the benign purpose of repudiating the legacy of Christian superiority. But, as with the schemas of both Hick and Cantwell Smith, where universals are of Western construction, they cannot achieve the neutrality their makers intend.

Contributors to Gavin D'Costa's collection, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*,[77] recognize and welcome religious plurality, but make stringent criticisms of Hick and Knitter's pluralistic theology. As D'Costa puts it, 'the particularity of Christian criteria' is replaced with the particularity of other equally triumphalist, imperialist and exclusive criteria.[78] Where Hick and Knitter set out to cross a theological Rubicon,[79] their critics value the terrain of the integral religious traditions that are left behind in this passage.

Kenneth Surin and John Milbank highlight perpetuated universals and absolutes within the pluralist project. Thus Milbank detects as subtext a 'myth of Western universalism', which, he argues, is present in the varieties of pluralism manifested in the collection:[80] rather than providing common norms for a shared discourse between the religions, the varied terms of argument are 'embedded in a wider Western discourse become globally dominant'.[81] Surin too points to Hick's thoroughly Eurocentric and First World perspective, seeing him as missionary of a European 'global gaze'.[82] Surin cites McGrane's contention that the non-European is perceived by the twentieth-century European in terms of cultural difference. The outcome is a democratization of difference, by which the non-European other 'is inserted into the present, *our present*, and is thus now our contemporary'.[83] In this post-colonial moment, Surin portrays Western global conceptions as mapping the non-European 'other', including the religious 'other', within universalizing Western schemas. His rendering is reminiscent of the colonial expansion of the European local to encompass the global, which found expression in Kant's European cosmopolitanism.

Surin and Milbank agree that we need to pause and ponder the incommensurability of different religious traditions, rather than rush to construct purportedly universal common norms which are actually of European origin and whose purpose is to transform the incommensurate into the commensurate. From this perspective, the liberal pluralist attempt to move beyond Christian absolutism in its exclusivist or inclusivist forms, no less than the pre-twentieth-century assertion of Christian absolutism and superiority, is a form of imperialistic universalism, wherein Western values are mistaken for universals.

Even the liberation theology of the religions offered by Ruether, Suchoki, Pieris and Knitter shares this problematic.[84] The struggle for justice is an imperative within traditions wherein it arises, but is as deadly as any other universal if it is imposed upon other traditions, rather than their adherents being interpellated into agency within the struggle.[85]

What is needed, then, is a change in the terms of engagement, but one which takes forward the laudable pluralist aim of moving beyond Euro-ethnocentrism.[86] Liberation theologies, including feminist theologies which foreground the struggle for justice, constitute one resource offered by Christian theology, and available to faith communities and scholars within other religious traditions. It is more appropriate, in this post-colonial moment, to offer this resource as a creature of the Western tradition of Christianity, in its close engagement with secularism – the religion which emerged from the womb of modern European Christianity. It is an inappropriate form of liberal imperialism to make available this resource under the name of universal justice and freedom, founded in the 'white mythology' of reason.[87]

From pluralism to particularity

As reflected in recent inter-religious Christian theologies, a change in the terms of engagement reopens the door to Christian particularities.[88] Christianity is perceived as one religion among others, each having its own long and specific history of particular cultural embeddedness, each religion having its own worldview and seeking to express this view in universal terms. The issue taken with pluralist approaches concerns the value placed on the incommensurability of these discrete universals. Rather than seeking either to construct some abstract universal beyond these discrete and incommensurate universals, or to extract empirically discovered commonalities between the religions and elevate these to supreme importance, the recent focus on religious particularity allows for the continued articulation, revision and transformation of each religion's particular core beliefs and practices.

Following the long European-dominated history of religious contact, conflict and conquest down the ages, inter-religious Christian theologians of European/ Western heritage work towards peace in the world when we are prepared to reduce the scope of our claims from assumed global universals to the boundaries of our own post-colonial precariousness, in full acknowledgement of the colonial past, and cognizant of the likely decline of the West over the coming half-century. The usable resources accumulated over two millennia of Western Christian and secular

culture might then be offered in a humble spirit to the peoples of the wider world, rather than imposed through the imperialist colonising of minds.

More important, for the legacy of assumed white and Christian superiority to be overcome, Christianity must be ready to receive resources, so putting both Christian theology and practice and secular values under judgement. The implications of the proposed terms of engagement for Christianity are unpredictable. As D'Costa puts it, Christian openness to the world religions 'looks forward to hearing the voice of God through the Spirit, in the testimonies of peoples from other religions' which may also be 'vehicles of judgment upon Christian theology and practice'.[89]

The return to particularity in dialogue has not reinstated the 'debilitating insular spaces' of relativism,[90] but rather has fostered creative re-visioning of Christian theology in relation to religious plurality. As we are reminded, through the insights of both Troeltsch and Surin cited at the head of this chapter: no longer may either the 'ideal values of [Western] civilization' or the future of Christian theology of the religions depend on the constructions of the [Western] 'modernist general intellectual'. Western intellectual theologians are fashioning, and being fashioned towards, a different *modus operandi*: one reflected in S. Mark Heim's concept of 'orientational pluralism',[91] where inter-religious engagement beyond and within established Western cultural and geographical borders becomes paramount.

This project has a wide scope: to repudiate pluralist liberation *methodology* is not to exclude from it more self-critical feminist and other liberation theologies. As a feminist theologian, I am interested in the distinct contribution of feminist theologies to this inter-religious theological remaking. My purpose in the final section of this chapter is to identify some usable resources for this project from the feminist theological tradition.

Feminist Theology and the Religions

Feminist theology is a rich tradition on which to draw for a theology of the religions that is attentive to the particularity of Christianity but open to other religions.[92] Four resourceful aspects are discussed here: feminist theology as both Western particular and global network; as modern, postmodern and post-colonial; as dialogical; and in relation to other religions.

Feminist theology: from Western origins to a global network

First, feminist theology as the struggle for gender justice has strong Western roots in a particular time and place, but it has expanded through the wider participation of Christian women of the global South to form a network within world Christianity. Existing exchanges within this network provide a broad base for the articulation of Christian particularity within a theology of the religions.

Feminist theology does not belong to Western feminist theologians. Yet its particular time and place of origin was the Western 'second-wave' feminist

movement, emergent in the 1960s with precursors in 'first-wave' feminism; its major impetus was a powerful assertion of the equality of women. In the changed contemporary landscape, this principle of women's equality has become firmly embedded in the aspirational rhetoric of Western social institutions. By the mid-1970s, the feminist theology of Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Letty Russell and Phyllis Trible was making an impact on the North American scene.[93] Mary Daly articulated her scathing attack on Christianity and led a feminist exodus into the secular women's movement. Christian feminist theologians thereafter articulated their position over against Daly's critique. Feminist theology emerged later in Britain, with influential publications such as Mary Grey's *Redeeming the Dream* in 1989, while, a year later, Daphne Hampson published her controversial book *Theology and Feminism*, where she, like Daly, forsakes 'irredeemably patriarchal' Christianity.[94]

Latin American liberation theology and American feminist theology preceded the emergence of 'Third World' theologies, including feminist theologies. The structures of the World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), the latter founded as an all-male organization in Tanzania in 1976, as well as the Conference of Asia, provided fora where first men and then women Third World theologians found their voices. If EATWOT facilitated an 'irruption' of the Third World into theology, the African woman theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye spoke of the growing presence of women theologians as 'the irruption within the irruption'.[95] Membership of EATWOT was extended to include theologians from minority groups in the US, and this was reflected in extensive collaboration between Third World feminist theologians, Afro-American womanist theologians, American feminist theologians from minority groups and white American feminist theologians. One example is the 1988 collection *Inheriting our Mothers' Gardens: Feminist Theology in Third World Perspective*, with its four editors representing these different constituencies.[96] In the three organizations mentioned, women expanded feminist theology by articulating their particular demands for inclusion and for attention to women's perspectives and issues. Feminist theology is thus, as Kwok Pui-Lan puts it, an 'intercultural discourse' between women of the global South and Western women.[97] This is significant for a feminist theology of the religions.

An important development is the emergence of post-colonial feminist theologies within what Homi Bhabha has named the 'Third Space', inhabited by communities of immigration from the global South into Western locations. For example, Wonhee Anne Joh's *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology*[98] inhabits a Korean-American Third Space, formed through hybrid transformation of the American 'first space' and Korean 'second space'. While white Western feminist theologians need to avoid colonizing third spaces, engaging with work emerging within them will encourage the necessary excision of Eurocentrism in the first spaces of immigration.

Feminist theology: from modern to postmodern and post-colonial

Second, in its Western particularity, secular and religious feminism has emerged as a modern movement, which has responded to postmodern and post-colonial challenges. As a modern movement it embraces universal values of equality, liberty and sisterhood. Postmodern feminisms, in contrast, are feminisms of difference, whether arising from the diversity within the Western feminist constituency – diversity of race and sexuality[99] – or from engagement with French postmodern philosophies, with their attention to sexual difference.[100] Where equality feminism minimizes the importance of sexual difference, Luce Irigaray and other 'difference' feminists maximize its importance.

These two themes of differences among women, and of women's specificity in relation to men, inform feminist theories, and feminist theologies. Attention to difference fragments unifying universals. Post-colonial perspectives pose the same challenge to feminism as to other forms of Western thought and practice, making visible the boundaries of the Eurocentric local with its totalizing global tendencies. Negotiation of these shifts equips religious feminism, in the form of Christian feminist theology, to work with particularities.

In negotiating modernity and postmodernity, feminist epistemologies have reconceived women's experience from notions of a single common experience, foundational for the production of feminist knowledge, to conceptions of unstable 'ontologically fractured' experiences.[101] Donna Haraway conceptualizes knowledge as 'situated knowledges', arguing the impossibility of a 'God's-eye view' giving access to a single universal truth.[102] Sandra Harding followed Marxist theory by valorizing women's standpoints as productive of privileged subjugated knowledge, in comparison with knowledge produced from the oppressor standpoint.[103] Feminist epistemology does not claim that feminism speaks a single universal truth, but rather that it articulates partial truths arising from a diversity of situated knowledges.[104] Debates have become sophisticated, ranging from intervention over methodologies of 'good' and 'bad' science on the one hand, to philosophical epistemologies on the other.[105] They constitute a long tradition of working with particularities in the face of diversity, while resisting fragmentation into incoherence. Thus feminist epistemology is resourceful for the privileging of the particularity of Christian theology over universalizing strategies that place Christianity within generic religion.

Feminist theology as dialogical

Third, feminist theology has a strong impetus towards dialogue, given the need to negotiate differences among different, sometimes conflicting, situated feminist knowledges.[106] One area of dialogue is between religious and secular feminisms. Secular presuppositions have predominated in feminist theory; thus, while feminist theologians have engaged with feminist theory, feminist theorists have tended to ignore religious feminism. Ruether helpfully identified three 'moments' in feminist theology, namely critique, recovery and reconstruction.[107] For many

secular feminists, critique of patriarchal religion indicated that a move beyond religion is imperative, rendering recovery or reconstruction redundant. For feminist theologians, feminist theory is a valuable source of feminist theological methodology: thus feminist theology reflects the wider negotiation with postmodern and post-colonial diversity in its epistemologies and practices. The seepage of religion across the modernist boundary separating the sacred and the secular, manifest in the work of feminist philosophers such as Irigaray and Kristeva, has expanded the borders of feminist liberation theologies by generating a new era in feminist theological thinking. The unidirectional nature of the 'dialogue' between feminist theology and feminist theory highlights another strategy for a feminist theology of the religions: it is sometimes fruitful to learn from partners who see no value in reciprocal engagement. At this stage in post-colonial history, this may be relevant for a Christian theology of the religions.

Another strategy for dialogue arises from the relation between Christianity and feminist theology. Feminist theology does not belong to Christianity. From its inception it has been the work of women who assume post-Christian, sometimes Womanspirit or Goddess, as well as Christian and Jewish positions. Thus Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow, editors of the landmark 1979 collection *Womanspirit Rising*, are leading figures, respectively, in Goddess religion and Jewish scholarship. Their categorization of authors as either 'revolutionary' or 'reformist' has been criticized as unhelpful, but it testifies to a spectrum which persists within feminist theology. It also demonstrates that, even in feminist theology, Christian feminist theologians may be viewed with suspicion as being complicit with patriarchal religion. Thus to be a feminist theologian is to rub shoulders with thinkers who work beyond the bounds of Christian orthodoxy, and whose work provides a stimulus for Christian feminist theology, for example in encouraging Christian feminist exploration of a female divine.[108] This recent tradition of dialogue between women scholars across the boundaries between Christianity and other religious traditions is pertinent for feminist contributions to emerging inter-religious Christian theology.

Kwok Pui-Lan's portrayal of feminist theology as 'intercultural discourse' between feminist theologians from the global South and those of European heritage in the North is relevant here. This is an intercultural discourse within Christianity, rather than between Christian theology and other religions, but Asian women theologians write feminist theologies which engage Christianity with the well-established majority religious traditions of the Eastern religions, and Asian and African women theologians are immersed in cultures shaped by indigenous religion. This established intercultural discourse is highly relevant to any feminist theology of the religions. In addition, a feminist theology of the religions is well placed to participate in dialogue between Western post-colonial theory and post-colonial perspectives arising in the global South.

Finally, a feminist theology of the religions works within an existing tradition of dialogue in the discipline of 'theology and religious studies', as feminist theology has a long association with feminist studies in religion.[109] The *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, founded in 1985, has from its inception had feminist theologians and feminist scholars in religious studies working alongside each other.

A second recent example is the 2005 collection edited by Ursula King and Tina Beattie, *Gender, Diversity and Religion*, which invites cross-cultural perspectives from both feminist theology and religious studies.[110] As argued above, with reference to the work of Cantwell Smith and Masuzawa, religious studies is in a similar predicament to that of theology in relation to the Eurocentric universalizing tendency. Although my primary concern is with inter-religious Christian theology, this project necessarily both draws from and has an impact on religious studies. A feminist theology of the religions is equipped to continue its existing dialogue with feminist scholars of religion in seeking creative ways forward.

Feminist theology in relation to the religions

Fourth, there is a tradition of feminist involvement in inter-religious dialogue. A useful evaluation of this tradition is made by Maura O'Neill in her *Women Speaking Women Listening: Women in Interreligious Dialogue*. O'Neill's study is valuable for its careful presentation of a wealth of data concerning issues arising in specific cross-cultural encounters between women. She criticizes the absence of women from pluralist inter-religious dialogue as expressive of its androcentric philosophical underpinnings.[111] Basing her argument on the feminist epistemologies I referred to above, O'Neill advocates what Sharon Welch calls 'truth as conversation' between women of different faiths sharing their experiences.

The issue of Western feminist imperialism emerges within this inter-religious dialogue. Alert to this danger, O'Neill cites Mary Hunt's proposal that 'in order to ... convert our imperialistic sharing into empowerment, we adopt a position of creative listening'.[112] O'Neill presents ample evidence of women in contexts of the global South interpreting cultural practices by standards different to those of Western feminism, advocating attention to women's agency in shaping society, in its diverse global forms, rather than to Western feminist ideals. She reports on cross-cultural conversations where global networks are created in which common issues as well as differences can be identified.[113] Where O'Neill emphasizes the possibility of a new form of universal feminism emerging from commonalities, I suggest that learning Adrienne Rich's 'wild patience' with the diversity among women may be as valuable a response. Cross-cultural encounter, then, becomes an end in itself, rather than solely a means to the end of action for Western-conceived notions of justice. Combating feminist 'imperialism' is a more urgent task than addressing an agenda set by Western feminism. Issues concerning cross-cultural dialogue among Western feminists and women of different faiths mirror wider issues arising in inter-religious Christian theology.

Conclusion

My aim in this essay has been to join those who push further the laudable pluralist objective of challenging notions of Christian superiority by contextualizing the complicity of Christian theology of the religions with the history of European

domination and colonialism, and highlighting the significance of the current post-colonial moment for recognizing, then taking, necessary small steps towards countering Eurocentrism. My conviction is that a turn to particularity, and a moratorium for a time on white Western discourse of universals, will provide a 'decontamination space' which may facilitate constructive ways forward. Core resources from particular forms and understandings of feminist theology of the religions can offer much to attempts to articulate particular Christian perspectives, extending its long-term project of the transformation of Christianity towards gender justice, and expanding its dialogical tradition.

Notes

1. Ernst Troeltsch, 'The Place of Christianity among the World Religions', in John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite (eds), *Christianity and the Other Religions: Selected Readings* (Glasgow: Collins Fount, 1980), pp. 23–4.
2. Kenneth Surin, 'A "Politics of Speech"', in Gavin D'Costa (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), p. 196.
3. Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 3rd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
4. I use this term to distinguish the nineteenth-century tradition of comparative theology from recent scholarship.
5. This includes the regeneration of an inter-religious comparative theology, notably Keith Ward, *Religion and Revelation: A Theology of Revelation in the World's Religions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); *Religion and Creation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); *Religion and Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); and *Religion and Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); and Francis X. Clooney SJ, for example in *Divine Mother, Blessed Mother: Hindu Goddesses and the Virgin Mary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); *Hindu God, Christian God: How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); *Seeing Through Texts: Doing Theology among the Srivaisnavas of South India* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996). In addition, the work of S. Mark Heim – *A Depth of Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001) and *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997) – is a significant contribution to a wider debate, while Peter C. Phan's work, for example *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004) is testament to the rich vein of Asian inter-religious Christian theology of the religions.
6. Cited in Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, tr. Leon S. Roudiez (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 140. Kristeva's book is an erudite study of this cosmopolitan European tradition from the classical cultures of Greek and Rome to the present day.
7. Ibid., p. 114.
8. Cited ibid., p. 114 n.11; p. 203.
9. Ibid., p. 60.
10. Immanuel Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose', in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, tr. H. B. Nisbet, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 49, 51. As Gerard Mannion commented on reading this essay, Kant never in his life travelled further than 60 miles beyond his home city of Königsberg. The contrast between the European context in which Kant wrote and the contemporary European context, as sketched in my opening paragraph, is striking and significant for my argument here.
11. Ibid., p. 52.

12. Stuart Hall, 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power', in Stuart Hall and Brian Gieben (eds), *Formations of Modernity* (London: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 276–319.

13. Jacques Derrida, 'White Mythology' (1971), in *Margins – in Philosophy*, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p. 213.

14. Samuel Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimage*, 3rd edn (London: 1617), p. 2.

15. Ibid., p. 2a.

16. Ibid., p. 3a.

17. See David Pailin, *Attitudes to Other Religions: Comparative Religion in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) for an extensive study of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources. He argues that most discussion of other religions in these sources arises from questions about the truth of Christianity in the context of intra-Christian debates, or from 'secularist prejudices', rather than from any quest for information or enlightenment about the religions themselves (pp. 5, 3). See also Bernard Picart's seven volumes produced in the 1730s, which include pictorial representations with text of past and present religious practices across the known religious traditions of the world: Bernard Picart, *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Known World*, available at http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO. These volumes document the diversity within religious traditions, including Christianity.

18. Pailin, *Attitudes to Other Religions*, p. 3.

19. Ibid. The data were collected by Vossius, who published *De Religione Gentilium* in 1663, 18 years after it was written.

20. Pailin, *Attitudes to Other Religions*, pp. 122–3. Similarly, Roman Catholic counter-arguments equated Protestants with Muslims, on the grounds that both oppose the worship of images and maintain that all things are infallibly decreed by God (ibid., p. 127).

21. Theodore Parker, *A Discourse on Matters Pertaining to Religion* (1842), 4th edn (London: Trübner & Co., 1875), p. xiv.

22. Ibid., p. v.

23. Ibid., p. 7.

24. Ibid., p. v. Parker, of course, shares a wider desire current in his time: to distil the 'essence' of Christianity.

25. Ibid., pp. 187, 191, 243.

26. Ibid., p. 207.

27. Ibid., pp. 320, 150.

28. Ibid., p. 52.

29. Ibid., p. 70.

30. James Freeman Clarke, *Ten Great Religions: An Essay in Comparative Theology* (London: Trübner & Co., 1871).

31. Ibid., pp. 3–4.

32. Ibid., pp. 1, 7.

33. Ibid., p. 14. While Judaism and Islam have catholic tendencies, only Christianity seeks converts; Judaism seeks proselytes and Islam seeks subjects (ibid., p. 18).

34. Ibid., p. 1.

35. Ibid., pp. 9, 1.

36. Ibid., pp. 29–30.

37. Ibid., pp. 505, 31.

38. Charles Hardwick, *Christ and Other Masters: An Historical Enquiry into Some of the Chief Parallelisms and Contrasts between Christianity and the Religious Systems of the Ancient World, with Special Reference to Prevailing Difficulties and Objections* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1855).

39. Hardwick, *Christ and Other Masters*, vol. 1, pp. 21, 23.

40. Ibid., vol 1, p. 40. See also the published Boyle Lectures by F. D. Maurice, *The Religions of the World and their Relations to Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1846); and John Wordsworth, *The One Religion: Truth, Holiness, and Peace Desired by the Nations and Revealed by Jesus Christ* (Oxford: Parker & Co., 1881), which demonstrate a similar intention on the part of these authors, and also show the public appetite for this kind of academic and clerical address.

41. Hardwick, *Christ and Other Masters*, vol. 1, p. 20.

42. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 55.

43. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 75.

44. Ibid., vol. 3, p. 2. Further, 'There are still, indeed, sufficient indications in the deepest depths of heathendom, that man is everywhere the self-same being, open to the same appeals, and giving utterance to the same emotions … lifting up his heart to heaven [in] yearning … Hence it is that in all creeds whatever certain points emerge where natural and revealed religion seem to touch and embrace each other.' Yet they differ over the meaning and method of redemption (vol. 3, p. 3).

45. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 37. We are reminded of the close connection between intra-Christian controversy and the challenge posed by other faiths when Maurice argues that, in this time of trade and colonial conquest, the heathen abroad, rather than the heathen at home, should be our first priority. See Maurice, *The Religions of the World*, pp. 239–40, where he prioritises foreign over home missions, and states that he considers it a misconception on the part of those recipients of mission to construe that we 'wish to make [them] Europeans, to bring [them] over to [our] modes and habits of thinking'. Rather, 'there is One who has taken the nature, not of Englishmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards, but of Man'. But 'Man' is a universal of European manufacture, which is justified in Maurice's logic. There is no other destiny for Man than incorporation within the culture and Christianity of the colonizers.

46. My summary of this section reflects the concern of this chapter with the tradition of (primitive) Christian comparative theology, hence my focus upon *Christian* appropriation of developing notions of universal religion. The next section clarifies the contradiction which eventually emerges in the work of Troeltsch, and so signals the way for notions of universal religion which invite (Christian) pluralist approaches to other religions, in place of Christian supremacist assumptions.

47. Ernst Troeltsch, *Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religion* (1901), tr. David Reid (London: SCM Press, 1972). See p. 50 re Hegel and p. 51 re his apologetic.

48. Ibid., p. 51.

49. Ibid., p. 55.

50. Ibid., p. 100.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., p. 114.

53. Troeltsch, 'The Place of Christianity'. See Brian Hebblethwaite, 'Introduction', in Hick and Hebblethwaite (eds), *Christianity and the Other Religions*, p. 8, where Hebblethwaite considers that Troeltsch 'represents the most radical viewpoint of all' contributors.

54. Troeltsch, 'The Place of Christianity', p. 24. True, as Bernhardt argues, Troeltsch acts as advocate of a '*relative* absoluteness' of Christianity: Reinhold Bernhardt, *Christianity without Absolutes*, tr. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1994), p. 99 (my emphasis) and usefully analyses 'natural' and 'artificial' claims to absoluteness: see ibid., pp. 97–106 for helpful clarification. However, my point is that, despite creating a terminus for unexamined assumptions of Christian superiority, Troeltsch's terminology betrays the lingering influence of 'white mythology'.

55. Troeltsch, 'The Place of Christianity', p. 25. Troeltsch assumes discrete geographical locations for each of the religious traditions, thus effectively returning Europe to its geographical local, and Christianity to a local West European identity. This strategy is untenable following the subsequent flux of post-colonial and post-Soviet migrations, with its juxtaposition of religious traditions within many geographical locations, and the expansion of world Christianity, despite its decline in Europe.

56. Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). The discourse of world religions came into being as 'a covert way out of the profound conceptual difficulty confronting Europe and its imperial subject-position' (p. 327). The comparative theology at issue is the tradition I have dubbed 'primitive', as opposed to the reconstructed recent tradition referred to in n. 5 above.

57. Ibid., p. 327.

58. See, as examples drawn from a wide field: Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas (eds), *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'The Mystic East'* (London: Routledge, 1999); and Mary Keller, *The Hammer and the Flute: Women, Power and Spirit Possession* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

59. Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, pp. 315–16.

60. David J. Krieger, *The New Universalism: Foundations for a Global Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), pp. 37–44.

61. Cited ibid., p. 37.

62. Cited ibid., p. 42.

63. Cited ibid., p. 40.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., p. 44. Tillich's contribution is made in the context of ongoing and vital debate between inclusivist and exclusivist approaches, involving theologians and comparative religionists alike. There was also a burgeoning social-scientific literature on religion. Detailed consideration of these broader exchanges is beyond the scope of this chapter.

66. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Towards a World Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1981).

67. See S. Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), pp. 44–70 for an instructive presentation and critique of Smith's thesis.

68. John Hick, 'Christology at the Crossroads', quoted in Paul Rhodes Eddy, *John Hick's Pluralist Philosophy of Religions* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 27.

69. One reminder of the political sensitivity of his context is that it was in 1968, in nearby Wolverhampton, that Enoch Powell gave his notorious 'rivers of blood' speech, predicting a violent outcome of this multicultural challenge to an exclusively white British identity.

70. Eddy, *John Hick's Pluralist Philosophy*, p. 33.

71. Hick reduced the divine incarnation in Jesus Christ first to 'myth', in his edited collection *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1977), then 'metaphor', in his 1993 work *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 2nd edn 2005), so clearing the way for his Kantian accommodation of all religious truths as differing phenomenal manifestations of a single noumenal Real (Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate*, pp. 140–1).

72. See Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate*, p. 10.

73. First articulated in Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983). As the debate develops, the considerable variety within each category has led to such a degree of seepage to and fro across the boundaries that the typology has outgrown its usefulness for promoting new thinking. However, as D'Costa suggests, it can still be a helpful heuristic device for analysing past debates: Gavin D'Costa, 'Theology of Religions' in David Ford and Rachel Muers (eds), *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 637.

74. The slipperiness of these categories is illustrated in the criticisms directed at noted Catholic 'inclusivists'. The inclusivist shift in Catholic thinking towards a positive assessment of other religions is evident in the Vatican II document *Nostra aetate*. See Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in our Time* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007), pp. 75–101 for a critical appraisal of more recent developments, including the more 'exclusivist' interpretation of the 2000 document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*. Karl Rahner argues for a universal offer of divine self-communication, his 'supernatural existential', whereby adherents to other religions might be perceived as being 'anonymous Christians': see Maurice Wiles, *Christian Theology and Inter-Religious Dialogue* (London: SCM Press, 1992), pp. 49, 53.) In the event, Rahner's attempt at a benign universalism fails, being assailed from without by pluralists who find the notion of 'anonymous Christian' offensive to non-Christians, and from within by arguments that Rahner's endorsement of salvation in Christ as unique, final and unrepeatable effectively returns him to an exclusivist position. Similar problems emerge in Hans Küng's inclusivist approach to other religions in his influential tome *On Being a Christian*. As Marjorie

Suchocki argues, Küng finds positive attributes in other religions and the possibility of their offering salvation outside the Christian church, while insisting that the value of these attributes lies in their '[fruitfulness] for Christian proclamation and theology'; Christ, the 'ultimate decisive, definitive, archetypal' man, provides a universal criterion of judgment by which other religions will be found wanting: Marjorie Suchocki, 'In Search of Justice', in John Hick and Paul Knitter (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (London: SCM Press, 1987) and Gavin D'Costa (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (New York: Orbis, 1990), pp. 152, 153. Despite Küng's long-standing involvement in inter-religious dialogue, the subtext of his inclusivism is an exclusivist assertion of the continuing and universal superiority of Christianity.

75. Thus Paul Knitter describes pluralism as 'a move away from ... insistence on the superiority and finality of Christ and Christianity toward recognition of the independent validity of other ways': 'Preface', in Hick and Knitter (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* p. viii.

76. See n. 74 above.

77. See n. 74 above.

78. D'Costa (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, p. ix.

79. Knitter, 'Preface', p. viii.

80. John Milbank, 'The End of Dialogue', in D'Costa (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, pp. 174–91 (174). In contrast to Surin, Milbank's purpose is resolutely exclusivist. But his critique of pluralist approaches is nevertheless pertinent to my argument.

81. Ibid., p. 175.

82. Kenneth Surin, 'A "Politics of Speech"', in D'Costa (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, pp. 192–212 (196).

83. Ibid., p. 198, emphasis mine.

84. While I wish to repudiate Milbank's exclusivist commitments, his critique is pertinent here: it is 'sheerly illusory to associate Western concerns with social justice, social equality, and the freedom of the Other ... with a tradition-transcending pluralism', and dangerous to imply that justice and freedom can be founded in now-discredited notions of universal human reason: the pluralist attempt to do so 'will tend to ossify them into their liberal imperialist versions, which stem from the Enlightenment': Milbank, 'The End of Dialogue', p. 187.

85. Here I assume a neo-Althusserian meaning of 'interpellation', in which a commitment to the struggle for justice may arise in response to being 'hailed' (*interpellé*) from a foreign, possibly – but not necessarily – Western tradition. See Louis Althusser, 'Ideology Interpellates Individuals as Subjects', in Pauz du Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman (eds), *Identity: A Reader* (London: Sage, 2000), pp. 31–8.

86. This is in the spirit of Surin's critique, since, while criticizing Hick's 'global gaze', Surin affirms deep and powerful liberation from the constraining ethnocentrism of previous understandings of the relationships between the religions which it affects: Surin, 'A "Politics of Speech"', p. 196.

87. Of course, white feminism, including white feminist theology, stands in an ambiguous relationship to the Western Enlightenment tradition, which on the one hand provided the conditions under which a feminist project might be articulated, and on the other is the means by which 'white mythology' finds expression within white feminism. The latter tendency has been the subject of resolute and sustained criticism from women of colour, among them *Mujerista* and womanist theologians.

88. In a sense, this is to continue a form of Christian inclusivism, but one that is – like pluralist approaches – decoupled from any notion of Christian superiority and conducted in the expectation that other religions will make similarly inclusive moves. Abandonment of the term 'inclusivist' might avoid confusion. Energetic twentieth-century debates between inclusivist and exclusivist, and then – following Hick's intervention – pluralist positions have given way to a focus on Christian particularity in dialogue with other religions (see n. 5 above).

89. Gavin D'Costa, 'Christ, the Trinity and Religious Plurality', in Gavin D'Costa (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, pp. 16–29 (27).

90. S. P. Mohanty, cited in Surin, 'A "Politics of Speech"', p. 209.

91. See Heim, *Salvations*, pp. 129–57 for explication of this concept.

92. I assume an understanding of feminist theology which exceeds, but does not succeed, feminist liberation theology. See my 'The Prodigal Daughter: Orthodoxy Revisited', *Feminist Theology* 15 (2007), 186–201 for a fuller discussion of this point.

93. As examples, see Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973); Rosemary Radford Ruether (ed.), *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon, 1974); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 'Feminist Theology as a Critical Theology of Liberation', *Theological Studies* 36 (1975), 605–26; Letty M. Russell, *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective: A Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974); Phyllis Trible, 'Depatriarchalising in Biblical Interpretation', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41 (1973), 30–48.

94. Mary Grey, *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism, Redemption and the Christian Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1989); Daphne Hampson, *Theology and Feminism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990). The pioneering work of Ursula King in introducing feminist approaches and concerns in British religious studies is also noteworthy: see, for example, *Women and Spirituality: Voices of Protest and Promise*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993) and 'Women in Dialogue: A New Vision of Ecumenism', the Seventh Cardinal Heenan Memorial Lecture, *Heythrop Journal* 26 (1985), 125–42. Other British women theologians who developed feminist themes in their work around the turn of the 1990s were Janet Martin Soskice (ed), *After Eve: Women, Theology and the Christian Tradition* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990); Ann Loades, *Searching for Lost Coins: Explorations in Christianity and Feminism* (London: SPCK, 1990); and Sarah Coakley, for example 'Creaturehood before God: Male and Female', *Theology* 93 (1990), 343–54.

95. Cited by Ursula King in 'Introduction', in Ursula King (ed.), *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader* (London: SPCK, 1994), pp. 1–20 (12). See chs 1, 15 and 36 of that volume for writings by Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and the editorial introductions to each of these chapters for detailed discussion of the significance of her work.

96. Letty M. Russell, Kwok Pui-Lan, Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Katie G. Cannon, *Inheriting our Mothers' Gardens: Feminist Theology in Third World Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988).

97. Kwok Pui-Lan, 'Feminist Theology as Intercultural Discourse', in Susan Parsons (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 22–39.

98. Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

99. Thus the modernist logic of early 'second-wave' feminist theories, which in fact arose from the standpoint of white, Western, middle-class, educated and heterosexual women, were at first assumed to have universal validity. Hence Western Eurocentrism found expression in feminism too. One early slogan of the Women's Liberation Movement, 'Sisterhood is powerful', expresses this view of womanhood united across boundaries of history, culture, class and creed. This view was duly challenged, first by Afro-American women such as Audre Lorde and lesbian women such as Adrienne Rich, and then by a growing chorus of post-colonial voices, including those of Hazel Carby and Chandra Mohanty, who criticize the first generation of feminist theory as imperialist or as homogenizing Third World woman as a single entity. See, for example, Audre Lord, *Sister Outsider* (New York: Crossing Press, 1984); Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', *Signs* 3 (1980), 631–60; Hazel Carby, 'White Women Listen: Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood', in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (eds), *The Empire Strikes Back* (London: Routledge, 1982); Chandra T. Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Feminist Review* 30 (Autumn 1988), pp. 61–88.

100. From the late 1980s, an alternative French philosophical tradition emerges, from the formidable post-1968 French intellectual milieu, with a focus on difference: in the words of

Luce Irigaray, writing in 1984, 'sexual difference is … *the* question to be thought in our age': 'Sexual Difference', cited in Margaret Whitford, 'Introduction', in Margaret Whitford (ed.), *The Irigaray Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 9.

101. Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, 'Method, Methodology and Epistemology in Feminist Research Processes', in Liz Stanley (ed.), *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 20–59 (22).

102. Donna Haraway, *Symians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association, 1991), pp. 183–201.

103. Sandra Harding, 'The Instability of the Analytical Categories of Feminist Theory', *Signs* 11 (1986), 645–64.

104. Some feminists, such as Nancy Hartsock, were highly suspicious of the decentring of the modern subject, just at the moment when Western women were assuming an autonomous subjectivity on Enlightenment grounds of rationality and freedom. Others wanted to assert the universal experience of women's oppression as a truth that needs to be recognized and addressed. There are two contradictory strands in feminist philosophy, both of which are necessary: on the one hand, truth claims are seen as limited by the relativism of different standpoints; on the other a normative claim is advanced, as Sharon Welch suggests, to identify values and structures that can transform society and end oppression: see her *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985). But the centre of gravity in the debate has moved to affirming the importance of women's agency amid the fractures of diverse women's experience, through researching women's lives, women's textual writings and readings and feminist philosophies that attend to gender difference.

105. See Kathleen Lennon and Margaret Whitford (eds), *Knowing the Difference: Feminist Perspectives in Epistemology* (London: Routledge, 1994) for an excellent representative collection.

106. There are, of course, those who resist this impetus, notably Mary Daly in following her distinctive post-Christian trajectory, and in her notorious refusal to engage with Audre Lorde's criticism of Daly's white Eurocentrism. See Audre Lorde, 'An Open Letter to Mary Daly', in Maggie Humm (ed.), *Feminisms: A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 137–9.

107. Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Theology as Critique of and Emancipation from Sexism', in T. W. Jennings Jr (ed.), *The Vocation of the Theologian* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 25–36.

108. In the UK, Asphodel Long, founder member of the British Womanspirit movement and author of *In a Chariot Drawn by Lions: The Search for the Female in the Deity* (London: Women's Press, 1992), has acted as a bridging figure between Christian feminist theology and the Goddess movement. The Jewish scholar Melissa Raphael has authored *Thealogy and Embodiment: The Post-patriarchal Reconstruction of Female Sacrality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

109. The significance of my point here is that emerging inter-religious Christian theology necessarily works by engagement with religious studies, and that feminist theology is well placed to contribute to this theological direction. See, for example, David Ford, Ben Quash and Janet Martin Soskice (eds), *Fields of Faith: Theology and Religious Studies for the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), and Ford's advocacy of this dialogue (p. xv), in which Christian theology is done in the formative presence of another faith (p. xiv).

110. Ursula King and Tina Beattie (eds), *Gender, Diversity and Religion: Crosscultural Perspectives* (London: Continuum, 2005).

111. Maura O'Neill, *Women Speaking Women Listening: Women in Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), p. ix.

112. Quoted ibid., p. 56.

113. Ibid., pp. 59–65.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM AND ITS RELIGIOUS 'OTHERS': CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

Gerard Mannion

When is a Church Not a Church (and Who Says So)? Ecclesial Boundary Markers Return

The Second Vatican Council witnessed a marked transformation in the tone and character of Catholic understanding of and relations with other Christian churches and other faiths. Perhaps this shift can best be illustrated by the words of Eugene D'Souza, the Archbishop of Bhopal, who addressed the Council floor during the debates on ecumenism with the following words:

> It is true that we Catholics need not cultivate an inferiority complex. But the time is long overdue for us to get rid of any superiority complex. And we must certainly do our best to root out that oversimplification: 'We possess the truth; the others say the same things as we do or they are in error; therefore we need not listen to them except to refute them'. Horace said 'To learn from the enemy is legitimate' – *a fortiori* from brothers in Christ. For 'catholic' means 'universal'. Just as Christ took to himself everything human, sin alone excepted, so Catholicism which is true to its name should take to itself everything which is Christian, leaving out negations. In actual fact, for the principal first fruits of renewal we are heavily indebted to others – for the biblical movement to the Protestants, and for the liturgical movement to the Orthodox. Relying on their help, let us abandon those traditions which belong only to a particular school of theology or national character or religious order and which we have repeatedly confused with Tradition with a capital T. Or let us make certain superficial and peripheral devotions give way to what is deep and central. All this can help us to grasp more perfectly the mystery of Christ and the Church.[1]

But, in more recent times, it would appear that the character and tone of 'official' Catholic documents are distinct from the prevailing character, tone and ecclesiology of the documents of Vatican II. Thus the ecclesiology that informs and is reflected in more recent documents is also, it would appear, something rather different.[2]

For example, the document released by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in July 2007 – 'Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church'[2] – was deemed to be

offensive to millions of other Christians. Of course, much sensationalist reporting and comment followed in its wake, much of it erroneously blaming Pope Benedict for the document, for he neither wrote nor issued the document (although he did *approve* it). But perhaps it is of significance that the document *does* represent, in a very concise fashion, Pope Benedict's views about the church and about other churches and about what he would term those 'Christian communities' that are somehow not fully churches or are deficient in one form or another.

Hence this CDF document must also be set in the wider context of two particular documents previously released by the CDF. These are *Communionis notio* (1992)[3] and *Dominus Iesus* (2000)[4], which also reflected prevailing views concerning the Catholic Church *vis-à-vis* other churches and faiths. With regard to intra-Christian relations, one might also wish to add the 'Note on the Expression "Sister Churches"' that the CDF also released in 2000.[5] For in these documents, just as in the 'Responses' released in July 2007, one finds a prescriptive understanding of the church, an 'official' and 'blueprint' ecclesiology with which all Roman Catholics are supposed to agree.

And there is another 'real story' that is of greater significance still. The Roman Catholic Church's truly historic Second Vatican Council was a watershed when the church flung its doors open to the world. 'We are not the curators of a museum', Pope John XXIII, who called and opened the Council, famously declared. It seems counter-intuitive that anyone could try to deny that the council radically changed the church and radically changed the way in which its teachings are shaped, updated, reinterpreted and understood. At that Council, the church altered and indeed in some cases, such as in relation to religious freedom, enacted an about-turn on previously held Catholic positions. And yet many today seek to deny all this. What the July 2007 document represents is a further underlining of the 'official' status of a historically and contextually determined *interpretation* of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and of its true legacy – one which, it can be argued, stands in marked contrast to the above; one which proclaims that the church's teaching did *not* change at Vatican II at all.

But the insensitive reiteration of the understanding of the communities in which other Christians live and worship is perhaps the story of most wide-reaching and lamentable relevance of all. As indicated, those sentiments were also set forth in the year 2000 in *Dominus Iesus*, a document that caused much pain and anger amongst not simply other Christians, but people of other faiths as well, who found their religions denounced as 'gravely deficient' paths to salvation. Even if the Roman Catholic Church officially believes and teaches all this, and much ink has been spilled since then to refute this notion, many questioned the wisdom of giving so prominent a public airing to such 'exclusivistic' beliefs that the Roman Catholic Church was the only full and so true path to salvation.

Concerns about the tone, method of composition, and style of argument used in *Dominus Iesus* must also be echoed with regard to the new 'Responses', as I shall seek to illustrate.

Perhaps the issues of greatest concern that this July 2007 CDF document gives rise to are the following: first, the implied church-world dichotomy inherent in such an understanding of the church. Second, its apparent embracing of the 'neo-

exclusivism' that has emerged across many churches in recent years and, indeed, in many faiths, whereby their own way is seen to be superior to all others. This, in itself, is part of a reaction to the flux and change of postmodernity, a retreat into certitudes as prevalent amongst politicians and scientists as with prelates, popes and mullahs. Such is a third and wider issue.

A fourth, for the theological anoraks but of no less genuine interest and significance, is the method of composition of the 'Responses'. The document is indicative of a forced view of continuity between Vatican II and church teaching both before that council and since, by mixing and matching ecclesial documents that contain differing perspectives on the nature and mission of the church, from different contexts and decades (ecclesiologically *and* historically different) and presenting them, almost as proof-texts, as somehow cumulatively constituting the case for the *present-day historically* and *contextually shaped* and *influenced* 'official' *interpretation* of the understanding of the church.

Hence it is no surprise that the CDF document has been controversial in no small measure. The Deputy General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) released a dignified response, which simply reiterated aspects of the WCC's response to *Dominus Iesus*, but further added, in particular, the common affirmation agreed by the Ninth Assembly of the WCC in Porto Alegre in February 2006: 'Each church is the Church catholic and not simply a part of it. Each church is the Church catholic, but not the whole of it. Each church fulfils its catholicity when it is in communion with the other churches'.[6] Numerous Protestant churches reacted with dismay, hurt and indeed anger to the 'Responses'. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches said, 'It makes us question … [not only] whether we are indeed praying together for Christian unity [but also] the seriousness with which the Roman Catholic Church takes its dialogues with the reformed family and other families of the church'.[7] Cardinal Walter Kasper was moved to go so far as to reassure Protestants openly of the Catholic Church's sincere commitment to ecumenism. He was reported to have stated that the CDF 'Responses' did not actually deny that Protestant communities were churches at all; rather the document simply reiterated the Vatican's own definition of church as being linked to apostolic succession.[8]

The Religious Other: Shifting Catholic Perspectives?

That earlier declaration from the CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, caused a great deal of controversy at the dawn of the third millennium. The resulting debate ranged over relations between the church universal and individual churches, not least other Christian communions, matters of interfaith relations, questions concerning the realities of pluralism, and matters of ecclesial authority and governance.

Dominus Iesus, in effect, represented a definitive expression of a campaign to 'restore' an emphasis on the centrality of certain Christian interpretations of divine revelation in the salvific economy.

Released on 6 August 2000, this text led to many disagreements about the interpretation of the Roman Catholic Church's relationship with other faiths and

with other Christian churches. Indeed, the document appeared to set further explicit and definitive limits to what actually enables a community to be called a church. At the very least, the document removed the ambiguity surrounding that question which appeared to characterize aspects of previous church teaching. Here I seek to highlight some of the fundamental issues that featured in many of the debates surrounding the text. Among the more prominent were questions concerning the nature and function of the CDF, the implications of the document for Catholic theology and theologians, and its implications for the movement toward greater Christian unity as well as for relations and dialogue with other faiths. More specific questions concerned how the document affects those actually *working* in contexts where interaction with other faiths and Christian denominations is a fact of daily life.[9] Many also asked how the document relates to the vision of Vatican II on ecclesiology and on inter-church and interfaith dialogue. All such questions lead us into a further realm of enquiry, namely the nature and scope of the magisterium today and the role and contribution of the laity, bishops and theologians.

The Purpose and Message of Dominus Iesus

Dominus Iesus itself was intended to be a resource for theologians and bishops charged with teaching and interpreting the Catholic faith. However, while many have pointed to this fact to suggest that it has been misunderstood when examined by audiences for whom it was not intended, it should be noted that the text itself also states that it is aimed at 'all the Catholic faithful'.[10] As such it concerns itself with certain aspects central to the faith that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith deemed to be in need of reiteration. These relate to the uniqueness of salvation brought about through God's incarnation in Christ, the place of the Catholic Church in God's plan of salvation, and particular questions relating to religious and ecclesiological pluralism (hence, once again, postmodern issues and perceived challenges). The threats of relativism and pluralism are closely linked by the document: 'The Church's constant proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism not only *de facto* but also *de jure* (or "in principle")'.[11] Of course, the relevant issues of pluralism move beyond purely ecclesiological or even exclusively religious concerns.

The text acknowledges that the tone of its language is intended to be 'expository'. Here I will be specifically concerned, for the most part, with the ecclesiological aspects and implications of the document, although naturally doctrinal factors will need to be attended to along the way. Thus the prime target of this declaration was religious 'relativism', which the CDF believed to be a standpoint that tends to perceive all religions as equally valid paths toward salvation. Thus the declaration sought to remind its readers of the importance of the 'Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church'. The document begins in a seemingly positive tone, *à la* Vatican II, but it soon becomes clear that the emphasis is otherwise. This is illustrated quite clearly by the closing paragraphs of the document. Thus, in §22, it is said:

> In inter-religious dialogue as well, the mission *ad gentes* 'today as always retains its full force and necessity'.[12] Indeed, God 'desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2:4); that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the promptings of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, *to whom this truth has been entrusted*, must go out to meet their desire, *so as to bring them the truth.* Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary.[13] Inter-religious dialogue, therefore, *as part of her evangelizing mission*, is just one of the actions of the Church in her mission *ad gentes*.[14]

And this shift in focus – from dialogue back to evangelization (as opposed to the understanding of dialogue *as* evangelization that would emerge in numerous Catholic contexts following Vatican II) – was further marked by additional qualifications of the hitherto seemingly more open understanding of the Church's position *vis-à-vis* other faiths:

> Equality, which is a presupposition of inter-religious dialogue, refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue, not to doctrinal content, nor even less to the position of Jesus Christ – who is God himself made man – in relation to the founders of the other religions. Indeed, the Church, guided by charity and respect for freedom,[15] must be primarily committed to proclaiming to all people the truth definitively revealed by the Lord, and to announcing the necessity of conversion to Jesus Christ and of adherence to the Church through Baptism and the other sacraments, in order to participate fully in communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[16]

At a press conference to mark the document's release, then-Cardinal Ratzinger stated that it sought to challenge a 'false concept of tolerance' in the field of religious pluralism. He further added that nothing contained in the document was actually new teaching. However, many have since commented that its *interpretation* of fundamental Catholic teachings, in a post-Vatican II context, was indeed something novel (or even nostalgic – i.e. reminiscent of pre-conciliar ecclesial documents). Against relativistic tendencies that perceive all paths to salvation (even those calling themselves 'Christian') as equally valid and beneficial for their adherents, *Dominus Iesus* asserted that the church's 'missionary proclamation' was under threat from such theories of religious pluralism, suggesting that 'As a consequence, it is held that certain [doctrinal] truths have been superseded', including elements of Christology, the nature and character of revelation, Scripture, eschatology and salvation itself, and also the nature and role of the church itself, including 'the universal salvific mediation of the Church, the inseparability – while recognizing the distinction – of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church, and the subsistence of the one Church of Christ in the Catholic Church'.[17]

The text goes on to locate the source of the difficulties facing the church today in 'relativistic attitudes towards truth itself', those who attempt to supplement 'western' epistemological categories with those from the 'east', overt 'subjectivism', problematic interpretations of history that limit the universal significance of events

at the core of Christian faith, and eclecticism in theological method. Finally, those who dare to interpret Scripture 'outside the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church' are also blamed. In short, many typically postmodern trends and theories are seen to beset the definitive preaching of the gospel in our times.[18] Next, the document sets out the CDF's interpretation of why the Catholic Church holds a privileged position in the soteriological economy, along with those churches in 'full communion' with it. The latter include the Orthodox and Eastern Rite churches and Old Catholics by dint of their holding to a valid episcopacy and celebration of the eucharistic mystery. 'Therefore, there exists a single Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him'.[19] Churches that are not in 'perfect communion' with the Roman Catholic Church none the less 'remain united to her by means of the closest bonds, that is, by apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist' and as such 'are true particular Churches'.[20] Despite the lack of full communion with Rome (as they reject papal primacy) 'the Church of Christ is present and operative also in these Churches'.[21]

On the other hand, the text states that 'ecclesial communities' that do not meet such criteria should therefore not be referred to as 'proper churches'.[22] Obviously the document's meaning here is clear: it is referring to the Protestant denominations and the Anglican Communion. It states that those 'ecclesial communities' that 'have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery[23] are not Churches in the proper sense', although it does acknowledge the validity of baptism in such 'communities' – the members of which are thus 'in a certain communion, albeit imperfect, with the Church'.[24]

The text continues, working toward a now somewhat 'infamous' passage where, through a selective highlighting of the more negative and conservative elements of earlier church teaching documents, other Christian communions are referred to as being 'defective.' And, although more conciliatory parts of those other documents are (somewhat unavoidably) included, the emphasis here nonetheless seems intentionally more negative in tone. The perceived inferiority of other Christian communities is not left in doubt: 'The Christian faithful are therefore not permitted to imagine that the Church of Christ is nothing more than a collection – divided, yet in some way one – of Churches and ecclesial communities', nor should Christians presume 'that today the Church of Christ nowhere really exists, and must be considered only as a goal which all Churches and ecclesial communities must strive to reach'. On the contrary 'the elements of this already-given Church exist, joined together in their fullness in the Catholic Church and, without this fullness, in the other communities'.[25]

The document continues in this manner and, thanks to its method of taking sentences here and there out of their wider documentary and ecclesiological context, it has been taken by many as saying that the mind of the Catholic Church toward other Christians in recent decades has been somewhat different from the way it has been interpreted and understood by numerous Catholics and their ecumenical partners alike. §17 draws the following conclusion:

'Therefore, these separated Churches and communities as such, though we believe they suffer from defects, have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.'[26] The lack of unity among Christians is certainly a wound for the Church; not in the sense that she is deprived of her unity, but 'in that it hinders the complete fulfilment of her universality in history'.[27]

One could, of course, make the case that Vatican II's own documents did, indeed, contain such sentiments. But the protracted debates at the Council over such documents, not to mention the efforts on the part of such figures as Cardinals Bea and Suenens, along with theological advisers such as Yves Congar and the like, in ensuring that a more positive ecumenical vision emerged from the Council, as well as both the words and deeds of Paul VI, suggest that a primary focus on the more negative elements is somewhat misleading, or at least does not constitute the full picture. The language of Vatican II's documents, reflecting the debates that led to their formation, is in general much more nuanced than that of *Dominus Iesus.*

Numerous commentators on the document thus became concerned to ascertain whether this marked a distinct shift away from the ecumenical thinking not simply of the various inter-church discussions of recent decades, but also from the spirit of dialogue at Vatican II that gave rise to them, and that of Paul VI, indeed even – it could be argued – of John Paul II. This case has been well established by, among numerous others, Gregory Baum,[28] who sees *Dominus Iesus* as a reversal not simply of the open dialogical spirit of Vatican II but also of documents such as *Dialogue and Mission* (Secretariat for Non-Christian Missions, 1984) and *Dialogue and Proclamation* (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, 1991), which along with teachings and pronouncements by John Paul II helped to indicate that dialogue is always to be respectful and sensitive and, in the case of the latter document, even hinted that in certain situations the Church must limit its mission to dialogue rather than proclamation (although both are affirmed as fundamental to the churchs' evangelizing mission).[29] Baum's verdict on *Dominus Iesus* is this:

We note that the dialogue blessed by Cardinal Ratzinger is quite different from the dialogue across boundaries fostered by John Paul II. . . . In today's ethical horizon, it would be immoral to engage in ecumenical or interreligious dialogue, based on trust and aimed at mutual understanding, in order to persuade one's partners to change their religion. This seems to me quite basic. Ratzinger's proposal reflects an ethical horizon that the Church has left behind . . . to enter into dialogue for the purpose of proselytizing would instrumentalize dialogue and destroy its profound meaning.[30]

The tone and language under scrutiny here were not reserved solely for fellow Christians. The document goes on to state that non-Christian faiths are thus positioned still further away from the Church in the text's implied hierarchy of paths to salvation,[31] in which that of the Catholic Church is perceived to be the truest and fullest: 'God has willed that the Church . . . be the instrument for the salvation of all humanity' and, despite Catholic respect for other faiths, this also

radically rules out 'that mentality of indifferentism', the relativist presumption that ' "one religion is as good as another" '.[32] For, while the Church does not deny that those of other faiths 'can receive divine grace, it is also certain that *objectively speaking* they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation.[33]

   Note that the documents of Vatican II are less helpful in supporting this shift in soteriological thinking, given the more positive emphasis contained in numerous conciliar documents with regard to other faiths.[34] So what did this declaration represent? Chapter I declares that it sought to offer a 'remedy' for relativism – so should it simply be judged, as many did judge it, as a timely reminder and articulation of certain fundamental tenets of the faith? Does it claim no more, as many commentators have suggested, than any other major religion, in perceiving other paths to salvation as being inferior to the Catholic one? Is it simply a document addressing certain postmodern ills and seeking to combat them with the 'truth' of the Catholic Christian faith? Or does it, subtly or otherwise, actually proceed in a manner that was very untimely? Was the document born of a *fear* of postmodern trends and so perhaps issued in haste and in a form that could prove counterproductive? Does the document simply reiterate aspects of the Roman Catholic tradition with regard to revelation, salvation, Christology, ecclesiology, the kingdom, mission, evangelization, and inter-church and interfaith relations, particularly drawing on scripture, certain patristic texts, and especially Vatican II and the teaching of John Paul II? Or does it actually draw together, in an a-contextual and a-historical fashion, a disparate collection of texts and teachings that fit poorly with the thrust of this declaration? Does it seek to impose on this age a very particular interpretation of the significance of the Catholic faith, of God's plan for human salvation and, of course, of the church itself? Is this a prime example of the 'neo-exclusivistic' tendency that is prevalent across numerous churches today?[35] A consideration of what a variety of commentators made of the document may help us discern possible answers to such questions.

Reactions to Dominus Iesus: *Catholic, Ecumenical and Interfaith*

A wide variety of responses appeared in reaction to the document. Perhaps a useful analogy may be drawn here with a much more monumental (and controversial) turning point in the history of the church and its doctrine. As in the debates that raged over papal infallibility before, during and after Vatican I (1869–70), Roman Catholic interpreters of *Dominus Iesus* fell into many camps. Some felt the document was a 'public relations disaster'[36] and many feared it would do serious damage to the vision of Vatican II, which committed the Church to dialogue with the contemporary world. Others within and outside the Catholic Church described *Dominus Iesus* in terms such as 'offensive', 'insensitive', 'archaic and outdated'. Catholics working in inter-religious contexts conveyed their dismay.

   Other Catholics believed, like the Vatican I 'inopportunists', that while they agreed that the document said nothing new (rather, it reaffirmed fundamental tenets of Christian doctrine, albeit in uncompromising terms), it was uncalled for

and unnecessary to issue such a high-profile document in such a tone at that particular time. There were still other Catholics, however, who shared the fervour for all things Roman of the nineteenth-century Ultramontanists and applauded the firm commitment to Christian fundamentals in the document, commending its unswerving and unambiguous guidance. Even some non-Catholic groups of a 'conservative' persuasion welcomed the issuing of such forthright doctrinal statements. The appeal here was the manner of the document's reaffirmation of Christian 'fundamentals'. And yet this marks a peculiar 'alliance' on certain issues between groups who would otherwise perceive each others' communities to be ecclesially inferior to their own community.

For many the major concern was how the cause of ecumenism might potentially be set back by the fallout from the document's publication. Commentators wrote that many church leaders appeared exasperated by the effect the document had on hitherto harmonious dialogue.[37] Across the Catholic world, leading church figures fervently sought to qualify and/or tone down the document's language or at least to challenge the more negative interpretations of its intentions. Cardinal Edward Cassidy, head of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity at the time of the document's release, went to great lengths to try to repair some of the damage the reaction to the document was believed to have caused ecumenical relations. In a speech at Worth Abbey (Sussex, UK), nearly a year after the release of the declaration, he admitted that *Dominus Iesus* could have been drafted more carefully and lamented that neither he nor Walter Kasper (his successor as head of the Council) had been present during most of the discussions that went into the formation of the document. But such a response does raise further questions with regard to the *modus operandi* of the CDF and the perceived anti-collegial mentality that has prevailed there in recent times.

Members of various other Christian denominations and world faiths responded with a mixture of surprise, hurt and anger. Ecumenical organizations expressed shock at the language used in the document. For example, the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, Dr Ishmael Noko, spoke of his 'dismay and disappointment' that the document ignored the wealth of many years' positive dialogue between Catholics and the Lutheran Church, adding that it also overlooked the language used to describe Lutheran ecclesial communities in the 1999 Catholic–Lutheran 'Joint Declaration on Justification', which refers to them as 'churches'. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches considered withdrawing from scheduled talks with the Catholic Church and protested in the strongest terms to Cardinal Cassidy. Some Jewish groups wanted to cease all interfaith dialogue with the Catholic Church. Muslims pointed to 'double standards' and logical inconsistencies in the document, which saw Islam as somehow defective yet also a means to closer unity with God. Representatives of other faiths expressed concern that their religion had been misunderstood and misrepresented in the document.[38]

Of course, the document was open to much misinterpretation and even misrepresentation. Nonetheless, many commentators, including those in positions of ecclesial authority, suggested that most of the fault for that lay in the language, tone and style used by the document's author (or authors – it is believed, however,

that the Salesian Fr Angelo Amato drafted the document). Much theological analysis suggested that *Dominus Iesus* contradicted or undermined other church documents as well as pastoral and ecumenical ventures. Those who offered such an assessment argued, in particular, that the document appeared to go against the grain of Vatican II's perspective on such relations, as contained in *Dignitatis humanae* (the Declaration on Religious Liberty) and *Nostra aetate* (the Declaration on the Relations of the Church to Non-Christian Religions), not to mention varying somewhat from *Unitatis redintegratio* (the Decree on Ecumenism). But many others of a similar mindset to that portrayed in *Dominus Iesus* – and not simply within the Catholic community – were happy to see such documents undermined.

There were calls for church leaders to take action to try and limit the perceived damage many believed the document had done to ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. One English bishop gathered an enormous collection of negative reactions and presented them to the authorities in Rome. The CDF itself held press conferences and issued further 'clarifications' of the text. Even Pope John Paul II stepped in to reinforce his traditional support for ecumenical ventures and their integral and indispensable place in the life and mission of the church. In a speech given in the presence of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, who visited the Vatican in October of the year *Dominus Iesus* was published, John Paul stated that there could be 'no turning back' from the goal of full unity toward which the Catholic and Anglican churches were working.[39]

Throughout 2000 and 2001 *Dominus Iesus* was a frequent topic of discussion in ecclesiological circles. Among the more prominent and vociferous exchanges to emerge from the period following the release of the document was a protracted debate between Cardinal Ratzinger of the CDF, on the one hand, and (then newly created) Cardinal Kasper, now President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, on the other. In a series of exchanges[40] the latter stated his belief that the CDF's teaching reversed the traditional order of priority between the local and the universal church (in constitutive terms). Cardinal Kasper asserted that 'a local Church is not a province or a department of the universal church: it is rather the Church in that particular place'.[41] The esteemed ecclesiologist Cardinal Avery Dulles joined the debate, supporting the priority of the universal church over the local.[42]

Theological Debate and Analysis

Among the multitude of theological assessments of *Dominus Iesus*, one of the most lucid and pertinent was produced by Thomas Rausch of Loyola Marymount University in California.[43] He acknowledges that *Dominus Iesus* was 'written primarily for theologians',[44] but also believes that it has nonetheless caused a great deal of confusion not only throughout the church, but even among the theologians it was meant to guide. This is particularly true of those engaged in ecumenical discussions and research.

Rausch writes that the document seems to imply that theological debate is closed on matters that the magisterium, particularly Vatican II, had previously left open. Passages that do this include the aforementioned §17, which states that 'ecclesial communities' without both a valid episcopate and eucharistic celebration are not churches 'in the proper sense'. There is also the issue of the status of orders in the churches born of the Reformation. On this issue Vatican II is particularly non-explicit even if, as Rausch's analysis demonstrates, the Council may have sought at least to imply some perceived incompleteness in such orders. Rausch himself believes that something of a consensus exists among scholars that Vatican II suggested such orders were 'illicit but not invalid'[45] or, quoting Cardinal Kasper, they have 'a lack, but not complete absence' of ecclesial form.[46] Yet, as Rausch further illustrates, recent interpretations and ecumenical discussions often tend to interpret this as the absence of full communion throughout Christianity in general rather than as a simple rejection of any claims to validity of such orders in the Protestant churches.

I might add that the *interpretation* of the distinction between 'ecclesial community' and 'church' with which *Dominus Iesus* seems to be operating[47] might appear to be somewhat contrived, given the ethos of much Catholic ecumenical theology in the post-Vatican II period. That the CDF took the rare step of actually issuing a document to explain and justify the line taken in *Dominus Iesus* over a month *before* releasing the declaration itself is most telling.[48]

Francis Sullivan believes that at Vatican II, while the Council fathers employed these two distinctive terms, they did not offer any definition of what was meant by the phrase 'ecclesial community', although the fact that it refers to certain communities separated from the Catholic communion can be inferred from the Council's Decree on Ecumenism, together with other clarifications that appeared during the conciliar proceedings.[49] Numerous commentators, both historical and contemporary, agree that Vatican II did not seek to clarify the distinction between these particular terms.[50] Sullivan himself revisits this very issue in a more recent article, citing the words given by the Secretariat for Christian Unity in response to an objection to aspects of *Unitatis redintegratio* during the Council itself:[51]

'The use of the twofold expression, "Churches and ecclesial (or separated) communities" has been approved by the Council and is altogether legitimate. Certainly there is one universal Church, but there are many local or particular Churches. In the catholic Tradition it is customary to call the separated Eastern Communities Churches – local or particular, to be sure – and in the proper sense. It is not the business of the Council to determine which among the other communities should be called Churches in the theological sense.'[52]

But Sullivan also notes that even *Dominus Iesus* seems to suggest that the church of Christ is actually 'more extensive', and so to be found outside the Catholic Church, as it appears to imply that other communities which preserve the episcopate and a valid understanding of the Eucharist are understood in the document to be 'true particular' churches.[53] So for Sullivan more positive

conclusions might still be drawn, at least for the question of where the church of Christ might be found:

> Vatican II explained that the universal church exists 'in and from' the particular churches.[54] It would seem, therefore, to be the mind of the CDF that the church of Christ consists of all and only those which it calls 'true particular Churches'. While not all of these are 'fully' churches, they all have the essential gifts of episcopate and Eucharist and while not all are in full communion, their actual unity is seen as sufficient to justify speaking of them all together as constituting the one Church of Christ.[55]

To explain the significance of this further: in general, Sullivan notes that *Dominus Iesus* appears to offer a different interpretation of Vatican II to that which the CDF provided fifteen years prior to the release of *Dominus Iesus* in its 1985 notification concerning Leonardo Boff's book *Church, Charism and Power*,[56] particularly with reference to the understanding of the council's famous statement that the church of Christ 'subsists in' the Catholic Church (as opposed to Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis Christi* of 1943, which equated the two) and was thus a significant change from earlier drafts of *Lumen gentium*, which employed the word *est*.

In 1985 the CDF countered Boff's suggestion that the church of Christ might subsist in other churches by firmly stating that *only* 'elements' of that church could be found outside the Catholic Church.[57] Sullivan believes that, in one important respect, *Dominus Iesus* can actually be initially read in a more positive light: *Lumen gentium*, §8 used the term *subsistit in*. Sullivan had long maintained that this is best translated as meaning 'continues to exist in'. Contrary to the interpretation offered by the 1985 condemnation of Boff's work, Sullivan had earlier suggested that Vatican II (particularly the Decree on Ecumenism) should be interpreted as indicating that, while the Council affirmed that the church of Christ continues to exist in the Roman Catholic Church 'with a fullness of the means of grace and of unity that is not found in any other church', it nonetheless implied a 'more extensive' understanding of the church beyond the confines of the Roman Catholic Church alone.[58]

Sullivan thus believes that, in *Dominus Iesus*, the CDF has come to interpret *subsistit in* in a similar fashion, as meaning 'continues to exist', appending the word 'fully' in §16 to indicate that the church of Christ continues to exist fully *only* in the Roman Catholic Church.

This contradicts the 1985 document, which said only that one 'subsistence' of the true church existed (with only 'elements' of the same church existing outside the Catholic Church elsewhere). Thus from stating that only one subsistence of the 'true' church exists, the CDF now appeared to be saying that only in the Catholic Church does the church of Christ continue to exist *fully*.[59]

However, as Sullivan acknowledges, *Dominus Iesus* would appear to qualify further the interpretation of *Lumen gentium* by appearing to follow the 1985 interpretation and rejecting the view that the formula *subsistit in* could also mean that 'the one Church of Christ could subsist also in non-Catholic churches and ecclesial communities.'[60] Against this more exclusivist interpretation, Sullivan

responds by implying that some inconsistency exists in that section of the document, and that the 1985 interpretation of *subsistit in* could not be deemed compatible with that offered in 2000. Even the exclusivist notion that only within the Roman Catholic Church does the Church of Christ subsist *fully* cannot be true unless the CDF now agrees with the understanding of *subsistit in* as suggested by Sullivan.[61] Later, Sullivan argued that 'it is incomprehensible to me that in footnote no. 56 of *Dominus Iesus*, the CDF quoted that statement from its 1985 "Notification" as though it were consistent with what it was now saying about the separated churches that have maintained apostolic succession and the valid Eucharist'.[62]

In other words, Sullivan believes that the question of whether 'only' elements of the church of Christ, as opposed to a subsistence of it, exist beyond the bounds of the Catholic Church, a question the 1985 'Notification' had appeared to settle, may, in light of *Dominus Iesus*, now appear not to be settled after all. *Dominus Iesus* now appears to allow the possibility that a subsistence, although not a full subsistence, of the church may exist in other Christian communities. In support of such an interpretation, Sullivan also points towards John Paul II's encyclical *Ut unum sint* §11 to refute the exclusivist interpretation.[63]

I am, however, inclined to believe that more continuity exists between the *intention* of the 1985 and 2000 documents than even such profound and scholarly exegesis might suggest. Indeed, Sullivan's own analysis continues in a vein that would actually support such a conclusion *vis-à-vis* the differences between the tone of Vatican II's documentation and *Dominus Iesus* in particular. As we shall see below, both Sullivan and Joseph Komonchak lend support to the contention that the intention at the Council was primarily positive, whereas in the latter two documents it is more negative.[64] In his 2006 'Response to Karl Becker' (who sought to affirm the exclusivist interpretation of *subsistit in* as being the correct interpretation of Vatican II on this matter), Sullivan himself acknowledges that the exclusivist line appears to be gaining increasing favour in Rome.[65]

Indeed, although Sullivan actually sees this element of *Dominus Iesus* as a 'positive' assessment of some non-Catholic churches, it is one balanced by the negative assessment of those others that lack valid episcopal orders. He also reminds us that Vatican II, while referring to the latter as 'ecclesial communities' as opposed to 'churches', 'never flatly declared that the ecclesial communities are "not churches in the proper sense"'.[66] However, in the wake of *Dominus Iesus* he sees less room for ecumenical hope, as §17 of that document now denies that such communities are churches 'in the proper sense'. In addition, Sullivan, like others, notes that *Dominus Iesus* fails to refer to any of the positive agreements reached between Catholics and either Anglicans or Protestants through extensive dialogue. In contrast to Vatican II, then, the tone of the 2000 document is certainly more negative here.[67]

But Sullivan also believes that what *Dominus Iesus* recognizes for those churches deemed to be 'proper', Vatican II's Theological Commission claimed could also be said 'although with some qualifications' for other 'ecclesial communities'. The commission spoke of their 'truly ecclesial character' and noted that 'in these communities the one sole church of Christ is present, albeit imperfectly, in a way

that is somewhat like its presence in particular churches, and by means of their ecclesiastical elements the church of Christ is operative in them'.[68] Sullivan here again asserts that such a positive assessment was actually confirmed in similar terms by John Paul II in the encyclical *Ut unum sint* itself.[69]

Sullivan nonetheless admits that *Dominus Iesus* offers a more restricted understanding of the church of Christ, despite the fruitful dialogue between the Catholic Church and those it designates 'ecclesial communities'. However, at the very beginning of his essay he points out the very significant fact that *Dominus Iesus* was a document of the CDF, not of Pope John Paul himself, and so 'on questions regarding ecumenism, it has less authority than … *Ut Unum Sint*'.[70]

Returning to Rausch's analysis, we learn that the third major area in which the document appears to settle an issue that Vatican II had dicided not to is that of the link between episcopacy and ordination – specifically whether only orders conferred by a valid bishop are actually valid.

Rausch implies that, if his analysis of *Dominus Iesus* is correct, the CDF has perhaps *exceeded its authority.* At the very least, he suggests, the CDF should have made clear whether or not it was actually foreclosing debates Vatican II had *deliberately* left open. He notes that there is a great deal of difference between what counts as 'central truths of the Christian faith' and what is simply theological opinion – 'even if it is the opinion of members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith'.[71] The problem with *Dominus Iesus*, as Rausch concludes, is that it is unclear which is which in its pages. Worse still, its ambiguity extends to the status its author(s?) intended its readers to afford the statements contained in the document.[72]

We may now make some remarks concerning the document and its relevance to the wider debates with which this chapter is concerned. The evidence does indeed suggest that *Dominus Iesus* illustrates shifting sands in the definition and operative understanding of the magisterium, the CDF, the status of Catholic theology, and the role and task of the Catholic theologian today. Above all else, it is demonstrative of shifting sands in the official Roman Catholic perceptions of and attitudes towards its religious others.

Concerning ministry (in different churches) in particular, Rausch is correct to focus on the disjunction between *Dominus Iesus* and Vatican II, although the discrepancies between the document and aspects of the wider magisterium (i.e. beyond the confines of the CDF and its own recent, somewhat narrower understanding of the official magisterium) do not end there. Rausch also mentions further church documents[73] and he is another who hints at discrepancies between Pope John Paul II's own teachings on certain questions and those of the CDF, as well as the many challenges from the aspect of the magisterium that marks the contribution of academic theologians.

But it is the wider ecclesiological and, more specifically, the ecumenical implications of the document that obviously give most cause for concern. One might thus go further than Rausch and suggest that the document challenges the actual *lived* witness to the gospel, particularly in relation to ecumenical relations and practice. Indeed, as the late church historian Adrian Hastings pointed out the year before his untimely death, *Dominus Iesus* poses a particular problem for

Catholics and Anglicans in the United Kingdom.[74] And yet, during John Paul's visit to Britain in 1982, the distinguished Anglican theologian and clergyman Henry Chadwick, who had done so much to organize and facilitate the Pope's visit (not least when the Falklands war threatened to force its cancellation), was presented with the gift of a stole by the Pope himself.

Hastings wryly raises the question that naturally occurs in the wake of *Dominus Iesus*: how do we interpret the Pope's actions, his intentions, and their implications? Or, as Hastings more humorously puts it: 'If the Pope gave Henry Chadwick a stole, the special symbol of the priesthood, was it in order for Professor Chadwick to celebrate an invalid Eucharist?'[75] Indeed, Hastings' analysis goes further:

> it is fortunate that beyond such powerful gestures we have also the explicit affirmation by Pope Paul VI when in 1970 he called the Anglican Communion 'ever-beloved sister'. Unlike the note on sister Churches issued by Cardinal Ratzinger's congregation, this remark of Paul VI was included in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*. Is the cardinal affirming that Pope Paul was mistaken in what he said?[76]

On the same issue Sullivan suggests something of a *via media* in that we focus not simply on the validity of such orders, but rather on the 'evident fruitfulness' of their ministry:

> there can be no doubt about the life of grace and salvation which has been communicated for centuries through the preaching of the word of God and other Christian ministry in the Anglican and Protestant churches. We have to keep in mind that the 'fullness' which Vatican II and *Dominus Iesus* attribute to the Catholic Church is a matter of *institutional integrity*: a fullness of *the means of* grace which is not the same thing as the fullness of grace itself. There is no question of denying that other Christian communities, perhaps lacking something in the order of means, can achieve a higher degree of communion with Christ in faith, hope and love than many a Catholic community. Means of grace have to be used well to achieve their effect, and the possession of a fullness of means is no guarantee of how well they will be used.[77]

It would appear that both *Dominus Iesus* and the July 2007 CDF 'Responses' are attempts to reach 'closure' on particular ecclesiological questions of a fundamental nature. Gregory Baum had earlier expressed sentiments similar to those of Sullivan above and, indeed, also suggests that greater ambiguity remained after Vatican II and persisted in Catholic circles on these questions, perhaps helping to support the contention here that the CDF recognized this and wished to reach such 'closure' through these documents:

> Vatican II also left us confused in regard to the status of the Catholic Church as the one true church of Christ. While the Decree on Ecumenism acknowledges the means of grace and the life of grace in the other churches and honors their role in the economy of salvation, it continues to affirm the Catholic Church as the one church in which the fullness of truth and grace prevails. *Yet the decree does not explain what this means.* In fact it uses the term 'fullness' in two almost contradictory senses: it speaks of the fullness of truth, grace and the means of salvation present in the Catholic Church

[*Unitatis redintegratio* §2], and at the same time of the fullness with which Christ wants his earthly body to be endowed, which fullness lies in the future and represents the aim of the ecumenical movement [ibid., §24]. *But if fullness is a Spirit-guided task to be achieved in future history, how can any church claim this fullness at the present time?*[78]

In the light of our foregoing considerations, by now it might seem somewhat obvious that one of the foremost problems with *Dominus Iesus* was its superior tone. A leader in *The Tablet* put it thus: 'It is widely stated that the text contains "nothing new" but the objections come not so much to what is said as to what is not said, and to the exclusive and triumphalist tone.'[79] As suggested, a great many of the voices commenting on this text at the present time are of the opinion that it was published at a most inopportune moment and was most clumsy in expression. For many this document is a further example of the attempt to reinterpret and, for its critics, to reverse the mind and spirit of the *consensus fidelium* witnessed at Vatican II and increasingly developed and lived in the life of the church thereafter.

In effect, *Dominus Iesus* is a very prominent example of a document emerging from *within* one section of a particular community that purports to engage in ecclesiological hermeneutics but that many critics would perceive to be an example of an actual *refusal* to engage in meaningful hermeneutics that take account of the pluralistic world in which we live in these postmodern times. In fact, this document not only undermines but, in some cases, even negates the many positive steps taken earlier by the Catholic Church in dialogue with other Christian, religious and human communities in general.[80]

Thus, for its critics, such a shift in the tone and nuances of official Catholic statements provides further evidence of the rise of a neo-exclusivistic ecclesial mindset and the worrying re-emergence of superiorist and supremacist language, not simply in such documents as *Dominus Iesus* and the 2007 'Responses' but in a varied collection of scholars and traditions seeking to offer certitude and enclosed communal security in the face of perceived postmodern threats: in other words, something of a 'transdenominational reformation'.[81]

Attention to Consultation and Method

In the specifically Roman Catholic context, however, further questions emerge. These include how church documents of this nature are commissioned, researched, composed and released. Furthermore, *Dominus Iesus* suggested to many that there is a need for wide-ranging transformation of the processes of communication and discussion within and outside the Church. Related to the latter is the issue of how far the CDF attempts to consult widely in the field on which it releases authoritative documents: for example, how diverse a panel of experts on religious pluralism and ecumenism was involved in the production of this document?

This particular declaration also gives rise to questions concerning the role of other Vatican departments and councils in relation to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Finally, the document also points us toward the need for an

open discussion of the demarcation between fundamental aspects of Catholic Christian doctrine and theological and ecclesiological *opinion.*

To illustrate why questions of method and consultation are so important, given the authoritative tone adopted in *Dominus Iesus* and the requisite authority bestowed on it by the faithful within the church and numerous commentators (perceiving it to be truly representative of Catholic beliefs in *all* its aspects rather than just with regard to certain fundamental beliefs), assessments by experts in other fields can prove illuminating. One particularly revealing analysis is by the biblical scholar Pheme Perkins. She examines the way in which the document pulls together various biblical passages and sentences and uses them in the service of the general ecclesiological and religious case it is attempting to make. She finds that the lack of due attention to biblical scholarship, to historical and textual context and, above all else, to the *eschatological* context of the New Testament texts used therein is cause for concern.

Echoing our earlier suggestions, Perkins suspects that behind the triumphalism of the document lies a deep-seated *anxiety* brought about by the vagaries of the late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century postmodern context – in particular the impact of inter-church and inter-religious dialogue on the identity of the Catholic Church. But her main concern is where *Dominus Iesus* turns 'defensive' and 'confuses centuries of faithful testimony to the gospel of Jesus Christ with never being wrong in what one says that "good news" implies in the concrete situations of history'.[82] Perkins is especially alarmed by the document's statement that those are in error who tend to 'read and interpret scripture outside the Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church'.[83] Perkins is an esteemed biblical scholar of international and long-standing repute. We should not fail to share her concern when she writes that '*Dominus Iesus* treats examples of scripture . . . as warrants for dogmatic assertions that exist without context, whether that be within the texts that make up the canon, as representative of developments in which the people of God were addressing concrete situations, or as texts that have had a checkered "post-history" in Jewish and Christian circles.'[84] But Perkins is also concerned that it seems the document does not limit the a-contextual and a-historical use of sources to Scripture alone, further helping us to emphasize here that the methodological implications of such documents really do merit further scrutiny:[85]

> Neither scripture nor tradition are permitted a voice except as they are employed by the magisterium, which to this untrained eye appears to be found in church documents that are also treated as though they enunciated universal, univocal propositions that have no need of context or argument. So even the exegete who agrees that much of what *Dominus Iesus* wishes to affirm is crucial to our Catholic identity, and even that it can be discovered in scripture and tradition, comes away feeling that she or he has been hit with a sucker punch.[86]

But perhaps the most significant trend Perkins detects in the document and the response to postmodernity that lies behind it is the fact that it has 'no ear whatsoever for the eschatological tonality of New Testament texts',[87] which means

also that it robs itself of the possibility of being attentive to those in this world who most need the voice of the gospel and who bear a close resemblance in many ways to the people to and for whom the gospel was first preached. These are the 'choiceless', those who today are rendered still more powerless by the postmodern evils of globalization, those David Lyon refers to as the socio-economic 'alter egos' of the elites who have increasing privileges in terms of education, technology, transnational movement, etc.[88] The gospel today, as then, gives hope to such groups. But it is hope in the 'end' that the first Christians believed in. Perkins sees the dismissal of certain forms of 'kingdom'-oriented ecclesiology – because *Dominus Iesus* perceives them as overtly separating the kingdom from Christ and the Church – as a prime example of such a lack of attention to eschatology.[89]

Perkins goes on to remind us that the New Testament addresses the whole subject of evangelization from a perspective on the margins, as opposed to one from the 'center of power'.[90] The latter perspective compounds the 'triumphalist, over-realized eschatology' of *Dominus Iesus* (particularly in over-identifying the kingdom with the church) – ironic, given that the document cites Paul, who chastised the Corinthians for the very same thing – just as it compounds the document's seeming inattention to the humble, cross-centred nature of Paul's understanding of apostolic authority.[91] Perkins's forthright conclusion is that

> *Dominus Iesus* presumes that Catholics draw their faith neither from scripture nor from tradition but from the ecclesial documents in which catch-phrases and references from the former are passed through as rhetorical ornaments. The consequences of such disregard for the sources of revelation is alienation between those in control of such documents and the rest of the faithful, so the church's legitimate concern about retaining basic concepts of Christian faith appears to be no more than a power play.[92]

Even if Perkins's forthright criticisms prove only partially correct, and I am inclined to agree with the vast majority of what she writes, does this not further compound the difficulty perceived in a neo-exclusivist approach to the postmodern world – that it lessens the power of the church to speak out on behalf of those for whom the gospel charges it to speak? At the very least, does it not suggest that the possible 'fault lines' betrayed by the clashes between not simply theologies of liberation and the CDF in the 1980s (foreshadowed by investigations in the 1970s), but also between the CDF and theologies of inculturation and contextualization, betray a much deeper divide concerning how best to confront the oppression that subjugates the least of Christ's brothers and sisters in these times?

Method and Tone of the 2007 'Responses'

Alas, these concerns in relation to method and tone cannot be confined to *Dominus Iesus* alone. Not surprisingly, given their approving reliance upon the 2000 document itself, the 2007 CDF 'Responses' on questions concerning the church follow a very similar *modus operandi*. It is striking that this document does

not contain a single citation of Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Ecclesiam suam* (it merely mentions that encyclical in passing at the beginning), a document concerned with intra-ecclesial dialogue and charity. Nor does it cite the 1973 CDF declaration *Mysterium ecclesiae* (again it merely mentions it in passing at the outset). But it does cite other church documents and liberally so.

The document is at pains to assert that Vatican II did *not* 'change the Catholic doctrine on the Church' and it offers selective citation and interpretation of various Vatican II documents and papal addresses to support such a claim. But the key point to note here is that such documents and addresses are read very much through the ecclesiologically tinted spectacles of much later and more recent CDF and papal documents concerning the doctrine of the church. Thus a later form of ecclesiology is utilized in order to interpret earlier (and differing) church teachings on ecclesiology in order to pronounce the latter in total agreement with the former, thereby removing much of the novelty and genuine change in ecclesial self-understanding that was heralded as the achievement of the Vatican II documents and papal pronouncements of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Thus, for example, John XXIII's opening address to the Council is mentioned as supporting the view that Vatican II 'neither changed nor intended to change this doctrine [of the church], rather it developed and more fully explained it'.[93] But this overlooks John XXIII's sentiments in declaring that he wished to throw open the windows of the Church and let in some light, that 'we are not the curators of a museum', but rather the keepers of a beautiful garden. Nor do the 'Responses' cite John's famous words which found their way into the council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church (*Gaudium et spes*) itself. These, of course, encourage much wider debate and discussion and commend a less restrictive ecclesiological understanding than has been officially to the fore in more recent years:

> By virtue of her mission to shed light on the whole world the radiance of the Gospel message, and to unify under one Spirit all men of whatever nation, race or culture, the Church stands forth as a sign of that brotherhood which allows honest dialogue and gives it vigour. Such a mission requires in the first place that *we foster within the Church herself mutual esteem, reverence and harmony, through the full recognition of lawful diversity.* Thus all those who compose the one People of God, both pastors and the general faithful, can engage in dialogue with ever abounding fruitfulness. For the bonds which unite the faithful are mightier than anything dividing them. Hence, *let there be unity in what is necessary; freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case.*[94]

Blessed John called for *aggiornamento*, a renewal, a bringing up to date of the church. That, of course, cannot be possible without *change.* Nor does the July 2007 document from the CDF mention the notion of 'hierarchy of truths' that Vatican II developed and which has been a true blessing to ecumenical dialogue everywhere: essentially, this notion simply affirms that some things are more important than others and therefore should not be barriers to greater ecumenical conversation and indeed actual Christian unity.[95] A selective interpretation of Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism and the many debates that took place at the Council prior to its formation are provided in the footnotes to 2007's 'Response'.

In the Response to the Second Question of the CDF document, i.e. 'What is the meaning of the affirmation that the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church?', inviting further discussion of this famous phrase (which *Dominus Iesus* also invited, as we have seen), we are told that the ecclesiological understanding set down here in July 2007 is actually based on Vatican II's *Lumen gentium.* Yet one must question how accurate such a claim is. For example, the 2007 document states that 'In number 8 of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* 'subsistence' means this perduring, historical continuity and the permanence of all the elements instituted by Christ in the Catholic Church[8], in which the Church of Christ is concretely found on this earth'. Yet when one turns to note number 8 of this 2007 document, one finds not a reference to *Lumen gentium* at all, but rather to other CDF documents that seek to offer an 'official' *interpretation* of *Lumen gentium* and the debate about the meaning of 'subsists in'. The 2007 *Responses* continues,

> it is possible, according to Catholic doctrine, to affirm correctly that the Church of Christ is present and operative in the churches and ecclesial Communities not yet fully in communion with the Catholic Church, on account of the elements of sanctification and truth that are present in them.[9] Nevertheless, the word 'subsists' can only be attributed to the Catholic Church alone precisely because it refers to the mark of unity that we profess in the symbols of the faith (I believe. . . in the 'one' Church); and this 'one' Church subsists in the Catholic Church.[10]

Yet note 9 here refers to Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Ut unum sint*, and although in note 10 we have an actual reference to *Lumen gentium*, by now, of course, the interpretation of what it means has been predetermined – no alternative hermeneutical options are offered as acceptable. In the Response to the Third Question ('Why was the expression "*subsists in*" adopted instead of the simple word "*is*"?'), again a selective citation and interpretation of *Lumen gentium* are given, with *Unitatis redintegratio* also cited in a way which actually distorts the seemingly more ecumenically and less exclusivist tone of both of these documents.[96] Something similar happens in the Response to the Fourth Question ('Why does the Second Vatican Council use the term "Church" in reference to the oriental Churches separated from full communion with the Catholic Church?'), where, again, the more open tone and character of *Unitatis redintegratio* is tempered and qualified by a longer citation from the 1993 CDF document *Communionis notio.*

And we see the same *modus operandi* in response to the Fifth and final Question ('Why do the texts of the Council and those of the Magisterium since the Council not use the title of "Church" with regard to those Christian Communities born out of the Reformation of the sixteenth century?'). Here the more explicitly exclusivistic *Dominus Iesus* is used to 'settle' the status of the Christian communities that came into being as a result of the Protestant Reformation of the 'sixteenth century'. Furthermore, the tentative and inconclusive tone of *Unitatis redintegratio* (§19 of which notes how 'extremely difficult' it is to describe the 'churches and ecclesial communities' that were thus born) is followed by the

resolutely conclusive judgement of *Dominus Iesus* to declare that *all* such are not proper churches at all.[97] Thus the 2007 text reads as follows:

> According to Catholic doctrine, these Communities do not enjoy apostolic succession in the sacrament of Orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constitutive element of the Church. These ecclesial Communities which, specifically because of the absence of the sacramental priesthood, have not preserved the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic Mystery cannot, according to Catholic doctrine, be called 'Churches' in the proper sense [*Dominus Iesus* 17.2].

However, *Unitatis redintegratio* says no such thing as *Dominus Iesus* 17.2. On the contrary, it concludes, 'For these reasons, the doctrine about the Lord's Supper, about the other sacraments, worship, and ministry in the Church, should form *subjects of dialogue*'.[98] Thus whereas Vatican II raised issues for further reflection and conversation, aimed towards the furtherance of genuine ecumenical endeavour and closer Christian unity, the 'Responses' appear to settle matters hitherto believed to be open in a fashion that works against the ecumenical imperative that all churches trace to John's Gospel and Christ himself, 'May they be one' (Jn 17.21). Indeed the 'Responses' actually seem directly to flout the task and warning with which *Unitatis redintegratio* closes:

> This sacred Council firmly hopes that the initiatives of the sons of the Catholic Church, joined with those of the separated brethren, will go forward, without obstructing the ways of divine Providence, and without prejudging the future inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Further, this Council declares that it realizes that this holy objective – the reconciliation of all Christians in the unity of the one and only church of Christ – transcends human powers and gifts.[99]

Instead, the 'Responses' give the very last word not to the prayerful hope in the inspiration of the Spirit that *Unitatis redintegratio* ends with, but rather to the exclusivist tones of *Dominus Iesus*.

Once again, one must question whether the 'Responses' are actually helpful at all to the mission and communion of the Roman Catholic Church, and indeed to the entire Church, in these postmodern times.[100] Rather, what the church needs today is to recognize, embrace and affirm the pluralistic reality of the world that Christians believe is God's creation. At this time, when an accentuation and/or misunderstanding of religious differences can have tragic consequences on a scale not seen for some time, the church needs to recognize, affirm and embrace the religious 'other' – just as it needs to do so for the non-religious other.

Papal encyclicals have often been addressed to all humans of goodwill and Vatican II addressed *Gaudium et spes* to the same. Previous popes and even the present one have pointed to the human race as constituting one and the same family. Under Pope Benedict, then, it will help serve the cause of Christian unity if familial differences and even failings are less 'shouted from the rooftops'. Instead, perhaps we would do better to focus on what we all share in common. With regard to relations with other Christians, in particular, previous popes have gone down such a path and helped the ecumenical movement make great strides forward. The

World Council of Churches has also made great progress in offering much more nuanced and lengthier reflections on what might constitute the basis of an authentic Christian community or church. These have been based on research, discussions, even disagreements and consultations across hundreds of differing Christian traditions and from all around the globe. We shall see what judgment the passage of time brings for *Dominus Iesus* and the 'Responses' alike.

A very *postmodern* debate was indeed raging when *Dominus Iesus* was composed, released and discussed. But the postmodern world itself has changed greatly since that document's release, with events such as 11 September, further atrocities across the globe, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and a terrible and seemingly endless spiral of violence and infringement of human dignity and rights that often masquerades as a war on terror (but often employs the most terrifying tactics in pursuit of its ends). In the midst of an increasingly polarized world, its divisions along lines of faith and culture driven by various forms of 'fundamentalist' thinking (whether religious, scientific, economic or otherwise), the perils of casting difference in a negative light at the expense of highlighting the necessity of dialogue and commonality have been brought home to people of all faiths and none with an intensity that has not been seen since perhaps the atrocities of the twentieth century's world wars.

It also appears that Pope Benedict himself has sought to counter the evils that can emerge from such a negative accentuation of difference, as witnessed in a New Year message for 2006, where he explicitly sought to urge all to recognize that the whole world is but one family. We are told that he has made Christian unity his foremost priority. Thus this chapter engages in constructive criticism in an effort to serve such ends, in however small a way: to help foster conversation and dialogue throughout the human family and to energize further the Catholic contribution to this. For it is to such a mission that the church is called. Given the priority which Pope Benedict has given to Christian unity, it is all the more surprising, then, that the 'Responses' should have been issued at all, let alone in such a forthright manner and tone.

Furthermore, it is all the more surprising and disappointing that those gifted theologians who have sought to offer creative and faithful discussions on how greater understanding and dialogue can be achieved between Christians and those of other faiths should be investigated and denounced by the CDF authorities with renewed vigour.

Here, then, let us reiterate that any move away from the notion of the 'open church' that Vatican II helped give life to is most likely to lead to further frustration for the church in its task of fulfilling its gospel mission in our time. Better that, instead of allowing (in Lieven Boeve's terms) a 'closed' narrative to prevail – what I have termed an imposed 'official ecclesiological paradigm'[101] – the church return once again to discerning the 'signs of the times' in an open and constructive *as well as critical* perspective.[102] Thus the church in our times needs to foster and develop its own ecclesiological 'postmodern critical consciousness' – one which will enable a true concern for the 'other' to flourish.

Pheme Perkins believes that *Dominus Iesus*' inattention to eschatology could undermine the church's understanding of how Christ intended his disciples to

bring his teaching to all nations. The earliest Christians, it seemed, knew better how to 'evangelize a world full of competing religious traditions'.[103] Boeve warns that 'every (closed, master) narrative that aims at the authoritarian reduction of multiplicity on the grounds of its own premises (thus stripping the other of his/her/its otherness) is open to criticism. From the postmodern perspective it would appear that only those narratives which admit to the specificity and limitedness of their own perspective and which witness to the impossibility of integrating the remainder are worthy of any claim to legitimacy.'[104]

As Archbishop D'Souza urged the council fathers at Vatican II, it is time to jettison these renewed forms of the 'superiority complex' that have been found in many Catholic and wider Christian circles in recent times. The time is long overdue for genuine and open dialogue with all religious 'others', so that greater unity, the prayer and mission of Christ himself, might be forthcoming in these turbulent times.

Notes

* The discussion of *Dominus Iesus* in this chapter formed one of the lectures in the *Church in Our Times* series out of which this present volume arose and is also a considerably revised, updated and expanded development of ch. 4 of my *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in our Time* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007) pp. 75–101.

1. Eugene D'Souza, 'Intellectual Humility', in Yves Congar, Hans Küng and Daniel O'Hanlon (eds), *Council Speeches of Vatican II* (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), p. 142.
2. 'Responses' is available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.html. (accessed 1 August 2007). All references to church documents refer to relevant section numbers.
3. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Communionis notio* (*Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion*). Available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_28051992_communionis-notio_en.html. (accessed 1 August 2007).
4. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus* (*On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*), available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html. (accessed 1 August 2007).
5. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'Note on the Expression "Sister Churches"', available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000630_chiese_sorelle_en.html. (accessed 1 August 2007).
6. 'WCC Deputy General Secretary Comments on the Document Issued Today by the Congregation For the Doctrine of the Faith', WCC press release, 10 July 2007; available at http://www2.wcc-coe.org/pressreleasesen.nsF/index/pr-07–46.html. (accessed 1 August 2007).
7. 'Cardinal Kasper Seeks to Reassure Protestants', *Independent Catholic News*, 13 July 2007.
8. Ibid. In this chapter, I shall in the main explore issues concerning ecclesial self-identity *vis-à-vis* other Christian churches and other faiths. While I acknowledge here the importance of more specific questions of religious 'otherness', such as those issues pertaining to race, disability, gender and sexuality, such issues are explored in detail elsewhere in this volume.
9. Some commentators believed that the document was written to address the needs of bishops working in certain Asian countries where the multifaith reality posed fundamental questions

with regard to Christian mission in such contexts. See also Gregory Baum, *Amazing Church: A Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half Century of Change* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), pp. 121–2, which sees the document as a confirmation of the somewhat surprising shift in emphasis from dialogue to conversion in John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (released 9 November 1999).

10. *Dominus Iesus*, 3.
11. Ibid., 4.
12. [*Ad Gentes*, 7]; all references in square brackets are those contained in the original text itself.
13. [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 851; cf. also 849–56].
14. First set of italics supplied. [Cf. John Paul II's encyclial *Redemptoris missio*, 55, and also the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, 31].
15. *Dignitatis humanae*, 1.
16. *Dominus Iesus*, 22. An editorial in *The Tablet* sensed as early as the beginning of 2000 that a shift in curial emphasis toward other faiths was afoot. The focus was moving to a one-sided emphasis on the revelation communicated by Christ, at the expense of the future-oriented (and thus presently limited) understanding of revelation in the New Testament, and of Vatican II's acknowledgement that the church 'rejects nothing which is true and holy' in other faiths: 'Through a Glass Darkly', *The Tablet*, 26 February 2000, 259. Of course, *Dominus Iesus* itself did not refute the Vatican Council sentiment here; it simply chose to give greater emphasis to less positive Catholic perspectives on other faiths.
17. *Dominus Iesus*, 4.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 17, cross-referencing [CDF, Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, 1: AAS [*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*] 65 (1973), 396–8].
20. Ibid., [*Unitatis redintegratio*, 14 and 15; *Communionis notio*, 17: AAS 85 (1993), 848].
21. Ibid. [Cf. First Vatican Council, Constitution *Pastor aeternus*: DS 3053–3064; Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 22].
22. Ibid. See also 'Note on the Expression "Sister Churches"', and Michael A. Fahey, 'Am I my Sister's Keeper? The Vatican's New Letter on Sister Churches', *America*, 28 October 2000.
23. *Dominus Iesus*, 17 [*Unitatis redintegratio*, 22].
24. Ibid. [*Unitatis redintegratio*, 3].
25. Ibid., citing [*Ut unum sint*, 14].
26. Quoting [*Unitatis redintegratio*, 3].
27. [*Communionis notio*, 17, cf., *Unitatis redintegratio*, 4].
28. Gregory Baum, *Amazing Church*, chs 4 and 5,
29. Ibid., p. 115. Note, however, that with Baum's help, one can actually make the case that dialogue *is* evangelization, i.e. proclamation (cf. Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, pp. 139–40).
30. Baum, *Amazing Church*, p. 120. For a selection of essays on Joseph Ratzinger's views and in relation to the subject matter of *Dominus Iesus* in general, see his collection of essays, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004). Most of these essays are from the 1990s, and thus also from the period when the curial thinking reflected in *Dominus Iesus* was in formation. Baum's study illustrates the ambiguities of John Paul II's pontificate: he apparently embraced religious pluralism and commended it to Catholics in many statements, and yet Church teaching in the final decade of his pontificate was often out of step with such sentiments. See *Amazing Church*, esp. ch. 5.
31. Cf. *Dominus Iesus*, 18–19.
32. Ibid., 22. quoting [John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 36].
33. Ibid. (emphasis in original) [cf. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Mystici corporis*, DS 3821].
34. As were the conciliar debates themselves: cf. the speech on the Council decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, by the Bishop of Cuernavaca, Mexico, Sergio Méndez Arceo, 'The Church as an Open Community', in Congar *et al.*, *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, pp. 118–21. He urges that ecumenism and the desire for unity be expanded to include people of all faiths and none: see esp. p. 120.

35. On 'neo-exclusivism', cf. Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, pp. 15–16, 34, 40, 43–101 (pp. 75–101 being the earlier version of my discussion of *Dominus Iesus* in this volume), 182–3, 201–12, 217–18, 232 and 235.

36. 'Salvation and Other Faiths', *The Tablet*, 18 November 2000, 1551.

37. This was a sentiment shared also by some who had worked in the Vatican curia itself: for example, Baum, writes that John Paul's own statements, such as a message to an inter-religious conference in Lisbon the year that *Dominus Iesus* was published (in addition to the statement we have considered with regard to the Anglican Communion) was of a very different character from *Dominus Iesus*. Baum adds the name of Cardinal Arinze to our list of Cassidy and Kasper as 'dissenting' cardinals with regard to the tone of the text: 'These three defended the imperative of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and argued that engaging in it demands humility of the church': *Amazing Church*, p. 120.

38. A further variety of official responses and interpretive essays, Catholic, ecumenical and interfaith, has been collected in a very useful volume by Stephen J. Pope and Charles Hefling (eds), *Sic et Non: Encountering Dominus Iesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002).

39. See *The Tablet*, 21 October 2000, 1423.

40. Note, of course, that Cardinal Ratzinger, in the view of many, had famously changed his mind on this issue, given the position he took in the very first issue of *Concilium*. With regard to this debate see Kilian McDonnell, 'The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: The Universal and the Local Churches', *Theological Studies* 63 (2002), 1–24; Robert Leicht, 'Cardinals in Conflict', *The Tablet*, 28 April 2001, 607–8; Walter Kasper, '*Dominus Iesus*: Address to the 17th Meeting of the International Catholic–Jewish Liaison Committee', New York, May 2001; Walter Kasper, 'On the Church', *Stimmen der Zeit*, December 2000, reprinted in *America* 184 (April 2001) and *The Tablet*, 23 June 2001, 927–30. See also Walter Kasper, *Theology and Church* (London: SCM Press, 1989), part II, 'The Church as Sacrament of Salvation', pp. 111–94.

41. Kasper, 'On the Church'.

42. See *Inside the Vatican*, June 2001.

43. Thomas Rausch, 'Has the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Exceeded its Authority?', *Theological Studies* 62 (2001), 802–10.

44. Ibid., 802.

45. Ibid., 807.

46. Ibid., 810.

47. This is true no matter how much the author of the document believes it is following Vatican II here.

48. See 'Note on the Expression "Sister Churches"'.

49. Francis A. Sullivan, 'Introduction and Ecclesiological Issues', in Pope and Hefling (eds), *Sic et Non*, p. 53.

50. Including, for example, Rausch, 'Has the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Exceeded its Authority?', esp. 807.

51. Francis A. Sullivan, 'A Response to Karl Becker', *Theological Studies* 67 (2006), 405–6. This being a reply to the article by Karl J. Becker, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 5–6 December 2005, 6–7, repr. in the English-language version on 1 December and also in *Origins* 35.31 (19 January 2006), 514–22.

52. *Acta synodalia sacrosancti concilii Vaticani secundi*, [AS] 5 vols (Vatican City: Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970–8), vol. 3, part 7, p. 35, cited in Sullivan, 'A Response to Karl Becker', 405 (the translation is Sullivan's own).

53. Sullivan. 'Introduction and Ecclesiological Issues', p. 54. Sullivan infers such conclusions partly on the basis of the official interpretation provided by the CDF at a press conference following the release of *Dominus Iesus* (ibid., 53–4).

54. Quoting *Lumen gentium*, 23.

55. Sullivan, 'Introduction and Ecclesiological Issues', p. 54.

56. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'Notification on the Book "Church: Charism and Power" by Father Leonardo Boff', *AAS* 77 (1985), 756–62.

57. See also Dennis Doyle, 'Communion, Reform and Liberation: Hans Küng, Leonardo Boff and the CDF', in Dennis M. Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology: Visions and Versions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), esp. pp. 124–36.

58. Sullivan, 'Introduction and Ecclesiological Issues', p. 52. See also Sullivan, 'A Response to Karl Becker', 408.

59. Sullivan reiterates this view in 'A Response to Karl Becker', 408, where, in the light of *Dominus Iesus* §§16–17 he states, 'It does not seem possible to recognize the Orthodox and other separated Eastern Churches as "true particular churches," in which "the Church of Christ is present and operative," and still insist that outside the visible structure of the Catholic Church "only *elementa ecclesiae* exist." '

60. See *Dominus Iesus*, n. 56: 'The interpretation of those who would derive from the formula subsistit in the thesis that the one Church of Christ could subsist also in non-Catholic Churches and ecclesial communities is therefore contrary to the authentic meaning of *Lumen gentium.* "The Council instead chose the word subsistit precisely to clarify that there exists only one 'subsistence' of the true Church, while outside her visible structure there only exist elementa Ecclesiae, which – being elements of that same Church – tend and lead toward the Catholic Church" ' [quoting 'Notification on the Book "Church: Charism and Power" '].

61. Sullivan, 'Introduction and Ecclesiological Issues', p. 52.

62. Sullivan, 'A Response to Karl Becker', 408–9.

63. Ibid., 406.

64. Sullivan again returns to this subject in 'A Response to Karl Becker'.

65. Ibid., 396.

66. Sullivan, 'Introduction and Ecclesiological Issues', p. 54.

67. Ibid., 55. See also Francis A. Sullivan, 'The Impact of *Dominus Iesus* on Ecumenical Relations', *America*, 28 October 2000, available at http://www.americapress.org/articles/sullivan-DI.htm.

68. *Acta Synodalia Concilii Vaticani Secundi* III/2, p. 335, cited in Sullivan, 'Introduction and Ecclesiological Issues', 55. Joseph Komonchak lends further support to this interpretation, reminding us that, according to its own doctrinal commission, Vatican II chose to employ the term *subsistit in* 'so that the expression might better accord with the affirmation of ecclesial elements that *are present* elsewhere': *AS* III/1, 176–7; see Joseph A. Komonchak, 'Towards an Ecclesiology of Communion', in Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (eds), *History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), Vol. 4, p. 42, author's italics.

69. *Ut unum sint*, 11; see Sullivan, 'Introduction and Ecclesiological Issues', pp. 55–6.

70. Sullivan, 'Introduction and Ecclesiological Issues', p. 47.

71. Rausch, 'Has the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Exceeded its Authority?', 810.

72. Sullivan also reminds his readers that, with regard to *Dominus Iesus,* 'Theologians must distinguish between statements in it which are already dogmas of faith, and other statements that enjoy various lesser degrees of doctrinal weight. At the same time, a document such as this cannot be immune from respectful critique on the part of Catholic theologians. They have an indispensable critical role to play, not only with regard to what other theologians are saying, but also with regard to statements issued with ordinary, non-definitive teaching authority. Much of the progress made at Vatican II would have been impossible if it had not been for the critical work done by Catholic theologians, often at great cost to themselves, in the decades prior to the council': 'Introduction and Ecclesiological Issues', p. 48.

73. In relation to areas where recent CDF documents appear to settle questions that Vatican II left open, Rausch mentions *Communionis notio* (1992) and the Instruction 'On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of the Priest' (1997): 'Has the Congregation to the Doctrine of the Faith Exceeded its Authority?', 808–9.

74. A similar observation is made by Nicholas Lash, 'On Defending the Faith', *The Tablet*, 18 July 1998, 938.

75. Adrian Hastings, 'Sisters for All That', *The Tablet*, 21 October 2000, 1411.

76. Ibid. Note here the significance of the fact that Cardinal Ratzinger's commentary on *Ad tuendam fidem* also singled out the orders of the Anglican communion. Again, see ch. 7 of Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, pp. 151–72.

77. Sullivan, 'Introduction and Ecclesiological Issues', p. 56 (italics supplied).

78. Gregory Baum, going further still in 'The Pilgrim State of the Christian Church', in Giuseppe Ruggieri and Miklós Tomka (eds), *The Church in Fragments: Towards What Kind of Unity?* (London: SCM Press, 1997), p. 116 (italics supplied).

79. 'Damage Limitation Needed', *The Tablet*, 21 October 2000, 1402.

80. See Gregory Baum, *Amazing Church*, pp. 114–34, where he contrasts much good work on dialogue done by other Vatican departments, inspired by Vatican II documents, with the tone of documents such as *Dominus Iesus,* which counters such efforts.

81. As discussed in Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, *passim* and Gerard Mannion, 'Postmodern Ecclesiologies', ch. 7 of Gerard Mannion and Lewis Mudge (eds), *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 127–52.

82. Pheme Perkins, 'New Testament Eschatology and *Dominus Iesus*' in Pope and Hefling (eds), *Sic et Non*, p. 80.

83. *Dominus Iesus*, 4.

84. Perkins, 'New Testament Eschatology and *Dominus Iesus*', 80. Perkins cites, as just one example, the use made in *Dominus Iesus* of the letter to the Hebrews concerning the 'once for all sacrifice' of Christ. She notes that the document shows no regard to the *polemical* context of Heb. 9.11–14 *vis-à-vis* the perceived inferior sacrifices of the Jewish cult at that time (ibid., 81).

85. Here I might also add, as a further example, §2 of Joseph Ratzinger's essay 'The Witness of the New Testament Regarding the Origin and Essence of the Church,' ch. 1 of his *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996) pp. 21–40. It seems to be less about the New Testament witness per se and much more about contemporary issues and divisions in ecclesiology, despite the fact that it does resemble an *ad fontes* form of procedure.

86. Perkins, 'New Testament Eschatology and *Dominus Iesus*', pp. 81–2.

87. Ibid., p. 83.

88. Ibid., pp. 82–3; David Lyon, *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in Postmodern Times* (New York: Polity, 2000), p. 145.

89. And Perkins believes the author(s) of *Dominus Iesus* to be 'no better at reading patristic texts than they were at reading the New Testament': 'New Testament Eschatology and *Dominus Iesus*', p. 83.

90. Ibid., p. 84.

91. Ibid., pp. 85–6.

92. Ibid., p. 88.

93. 'Responses', First Question, Response. Note 1 of 'Responses' offers an equally selective citation from Pope John's speech.

94. *Gaudium et spes*, 92 (italics supplied). I further discuss the implications of this passage in *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, pp. 112–13.

95. Here note the constructive and ecumenical use this concept is put to by Roger Haight in *Ecclesial Existence*, vol. 3 of *Christian Community in History* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008).

96. 'The use of this expression, which indicates the full identity of the Church of Christ with the Catholic Church, does not change the doctrine on the Church. Rather, it comes from and brings out more clearly the fact that there are "numerous elements of sanctification and of truth" which are found outside her structure, but which "as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, impel towards Catholic Unity"' [*Lumen gentium*, 8.2].

   'It follows that these separated churches and Communities, though we believe they suffer from defects, are deprived neither of significance nor importance in the mystery of salvation. In fact the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as instruments of

salvation, whose value derives from that fullness of grace and of truth which has been entrusted to the Catholic Church' [*Unitatis redintegratio*, 3.4].

97. *Dominus Iesus*, 17.
98. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 22, my emphasis.
99. Ibid., 24.
100. I raise the same question with reference to *Communionis notio* and *Dominus Iesus*, amongst other recent documents, in *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, pp. 43–101.
101. See Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, chs 1 (pp. 3–24) and 2 (pp. 25–40).
102. Here note Baum's admiration, in *Amazing Church*, of the church of Vatican II not only for learning well from modernity but also helping to unmask its 'sinister side', as well as the parallels he draws between critical theory and the church of Vatican II and after.
103. Perkins, 'New Testament Eschatology and *Dominus Iesus*', p. 88.
104. Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), p. 91.

PART II

CHURCH, INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY

This page intentionally left blank

A Community of the Question: Inclusive Ecclesiology

Steven Shakespeare

Is the church today a community in question?[1] Is it a community which exists in the power of the question, the first and last question of who we are called to be?

Or is a community of the answer? A body which sets out and transmits a truth already complete and achieved, whose development is simply a matter of saying the same thing in different contexts?

This is no doubt a simplistic dualism. Questions and answers do not exist in isolation. We know that the very way we pose the question of existence will invite certain responses and exclude others. We know that the answers we give or receive provoke and demand new questions.

But there is something which deserves our attention in this question of the question. I am drawn to it by the pressing concerns of those who have been 'others' within and without the church. It is no accident, and no distraction, I believe, that the questions facing the church today are so often those of gender and sexuality. Here, the dynamics of our embodied relationship to otherness are worked out. Here, our intimate identities are criss-crossed by power lines, and fleshed out in cultural artefacts. The personal and political are always already locked in a strange embrace. The church's sense of itself is exposed as an unsettled compromise or a rearguard action against the forces of instability and impurity.

To put it in its starkest terms, as Woody Allen once said, 'Love is the answer. But while you're waiting for the answer, sex asks some pretty good questions.'

The church, then, is certainly a community in question. But can we say more? Can we go beyond the entrenched positions of a debate whose unreality is only partially related to the fact that it is conducted largely by pronouncements in cyberspace? To get to the trenchant point: can those of us who make the case for a church we call 'inclusive' really come to the table with an ecclesiology worthy of the name? Or are we simply the pale reflections of the liberal settlement, mimicking the world's love of tolerance, individual freedom and rights? Do we stand on a ground that has little if anything to do with the claims of Christian tradition, and the substance of its worship and communal discernment?

I want to take a slightly perverted approach to this issue, by calling on that nihilistic son of despair and errant 'rabbi', the philosopher Jacques Derrida. Derrida is an important voice because of his sustained meditations on the questions of difference and otherness, of forgiveness and hospitality. He reminds

us – a point to which I shall return – that no community, no language is a self-contained whole which can simply define itself without any recourse to violence, or the exclusion of its rejected other. And he challenges the answers of a theology based on revealed religion with the open wound of a philosophy which does not speak the last word, but keeps words in motion.

In his famous essay on Levinas, 'Violence and Metaphysics', Derrida begins by asking what it is that founds the community of philosophers. He speaks of philosophy being concerned with questions of its own identity, the violent ways in which it has opposed itself to all that is not philosophy. At the same time, philosophy needs its other, needs what it opposes, because thought has to think something. It is never sufficient unto itself. It is always founded on origins and directed to a future of thinking which it can never fully grasp.

In this context, Derrida raises the intriguing possibility not just of a community in question, but a community of the question. I'd like to quote at some length what he has to say about this:

> A community of the question, therefore, within that fragile moment when the question is not yet determined enough for the hypocrisy of an answer to have already initiated itself beneath the mask of the question, and not yet determined enough for its voice to have been already and fraudulently articulated within the very syntax of the question. A community of decision, of initiative, of absolute initiality, but also a threatened community, in which the question has not yet found the language it has decided to seek, is not yet sure of its own possibility within the community. A community of the question about the possibility of the question. This is very little – almost nothing – but within it, today, is sheltered and encapsulated an unbreachable dignity and duty of decision. An unbreachable responsibility. Why unbreachable? Because the impossible has *already* occurred.'[2]

This dense quotation could justify any number of papers. But my interest is how this discourse, a discourse which is other to theology and the church, might have things to teach us about the nature of ecclesiology.

At first glance, we might not see much hope for common ground. Derrida is clearly suspicious of 'answers' provided in advance which seem to shut the question down. This would not sit well, presumably, with an understanding of the church which defined it on the basis of revealed truth, whether 'purely' scriptural, or developed through authoritative tradition. However, it is well known that recent theology – including ecumenical statements – have recovered a lively sense of eschatology, of the 'not yet' of the kingdom within and through which the church lives.

The recent World Council of Churches document *The Nature and Mission of the Church* provides an example. In a discussion of the marks of the church, it states that 'The oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the church are God's gifts and are essential attributes of the church's nature and mission. However, there is a continual tension in the historical life of the church between that which is already given and that which is not yet fully realized.'[3] The church, as the creature of God's Word and Spirit, receives its essential identity as a gift. This gift must be proclaimed and handed on in a conflicted history. Thus, we read that

'The Church is an eschatological reality, already anticipating the Kingdom. However, the Church on earth is not yet the full visible realisation of the Kingdom. Being also an historical reality, it is exposed to the ambiguities of all human history and therefore needs constant repentance and renewal in order to respond fully to its vocation.'[4]

This contrast between the essence of the church, epitomized in the marks of apostolicity, unity, catholicity and holiness, and the church as a lived reality in an incomplete history is, however, unstable. Consider how the document addresses the issue of change in the church, immediately before the passage just quoted. On the one hand, we are told, the church 'already participates in the communion of God'. The text then continues, 'On the other hand, the church, in its human dimension, is made up of human beings who – though they are members of the body of Christ and open to the free activity of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 3:8) in illuminating hearts and binding consciences – are still subject to the conditions of the world.'[5] The church is therefore said to be 'exposed' to various things: change, contextual conditioning and sin. The first two – change and conditioning – can have positive and negative aspects.

What interests me is the grudging tone of this document towards the only medium within which meaningful human life can be imagined to exist: history. History is what stops us fully exhibiting the full reality of the kingdom. History is something to which we are subject, in contrast to which the free activity of the Holy Spirit seems to break in from beyond. And this means we are 'exposed' – an interesting choice of word – to change and culture and individuality. Even though these can have positive aspects, it is difficult to conclude that they have any essential being or goodness. We approach the kingdom *despite* history. Our essence is a timeless communion with a timeless God. The essence is a perfect form or origin, in which we participate. History and individuality – the marks of existence – become obstacles to this participation.

The document uses the term 'communion' or *koinonia*, as do many recent ecumenical works. It is convenient as a word that does not seem to carry denominational baggage, but can suggest a rich theological concept of the church in both its human and divine relationships. However, it has its drawbacks. Martyn Percy, writing in response to the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission report, *The Gift of Authority*, argues that 'A number of recent statements about the Church have tended to Platonize the koinonia of the Church (concrete reality), identifying it as a parallel reflection of the koinonia of the Holy Trinity (ideal form).' The resulting model, he says, 'demonizes all conflict and division as inimical to the life of the Church.'[6] Lip service might be paid to diversity, but we all really *know* that it's a bad thing if it's anything more than surface deep, if it touches on anything 'essential'.

The presumption of this trend is that of an original or ideal perfection of the church, out of which we fall into history, much as Gnostic myth depicted creation as a splintering of the divine fullness into matter and time.

This might seem a harsh judgement. After all, the documents referred to by Percy are Anglican ones, which have to be read in the context of current deep divisions. The WCC document seeks to do justice to the church's historical

existence and to what it calls 'authentic' diversity. But here's the rub. Who decides what is authentic diversity? It is noteworthy that the section titled 'Limits of Diversity' is one of those placed in a shaded box in the WCC text, as an area where the churches are in disagreement between and within themselves.[7] In other words, for all that *koinonia* language has been dominant in ecumenical theology for several decades, it is incapable of actually resolving what is at issue.

I believe the reason for this is that the kind of idealistic *koinonia* privileged by documents such as *The Nature and Mission of the Church* brackets out the contested political processes which arrived at ideas of holiness, catholicity, unity and apostolicity in the first place. The notion that these ideas are delivered to us freshly minted from the hand of God, and then tarnished by our historical hands is not sustainable. Without a critical questioning of such Platonic assumptions, we will lapse into Gnosticism, a devaluing of creation, time and difference. And we will not be able to recognize the necessary role of conflict in shaping the identity of the church. The fact that Percy has Anglican disputes in mind does not discredit his remarks. It shows that even within a certain 'communion', ideas of *koinonia* are invoked to silence dissent. The result is not to create unity, but to claim unity as one's possession in an ideological war. And this is as relevant to ecumenical dialogue as it is to intra-Anglican debates.

These Platonic tendencies have of course been a powerful force in theology from the beginning. And I am not suggesting that they can simply be dismissed. Plato's struggle to resolve questions of identity and knowledge are canonical for a reason. The problem arises when they are deployed uncritically, with little awareness of the huge philosophical assumptions being made. Then they ride roughshod over actual historical existence, even when the intention is to do justice to history.

It is no accident that this trend is reflected in some of the dominant academic voices in theology. I have in mind particularly those associated with Radical Orthodoxy, though this could be broadened out to include what Jeffrey Stout calls the 'new traditionalism' of Hauerwas, MacIntyre and their acolytes.[8]

The new traditionalism begins with a searing critique of secular Enlightenment liberal thought and polity. It claims that secularism is not a neutral, objective and scientific set of ideas, but a deeply ideological, Eurocentric, even quasi-religious movement, whose values are incompatible with those of Christianity. In particular, secular liberalism presents an abstract, individualistic view of human rights, tolerance and freedom. Behind the appearance of civilized values lurks an atomized, violent reality. The emptiness of secular freedom, devoid of any substantial content or goal, is an invitation for the reckless self-assertion and will-to-power of capitalism to take control.

The problem with secularism is twofold. First, it is hostile to the idea of tradition, which means that it asserts its values in a void, shorn of historical memory and the communal practices which shape human lives. It offers an ethic of indifferent toleration and supposedly universal norms, but it fails to see that these are culturally evolved, contingent ideas, which serve particular economic and political masters.

Secondly, secularism refuses any orientation of human life to a transcendent reality. It does this to resist religious authoritarianism and conflict, making

religious beliefs into private preferences, far from the public realm. However, once again secularism is self-defeating. By rejecting the transcendent, secularism by default makes immanent laws and forces into absolutes: the march of progress, the invisible hand of the market, the inevitable triumph of the proletariat. And religion does not go away. In the return of the repressed, it re-emerges, but because it has been denied any stake in public rational discourse, it returns as non-rational 'spirituality' or anti-rational fundamentalism. Secular scepticism is unmasked as an alternative religion, and its attempts to bring religious peace unveiled as the initiation of a ceaseless war of all against all.[9]

The alternative proposed by Radical Orthodoxy is a reassertion of the Christian narrative, sustained by the church and its liturgy. This narrative rejects the idea that violence and conflict are an original or necessary part of our world. There is an original peace, an original gift from God's plenitude, a gift renewed in Christ and received again at each Eucharist. There is no neutral view from nowhere. Rationality is always shaped by traditions of thinking and action. 'Narrative is our primary mode of inhabiting the world', says John Milbank.[10] And that narrative has to be performed liturgically.

The corollary of this is that, for Christianity, there is no pure secular thinking, or secular part of the world. Everything must be understood in its relationship to its transcendent source and goal. Reason must 'participate' in the mind of God. Radical Orthodoxy in no way distances itself from the Platonic roots of this idea, as we see in this quotation from the introduction to the *Radical Orthodoxy* volume of essays:

> The central theological framework of radical orthodoxy is 'participation' as developed by Plato and reworked by Christianity, because any alternative configuration perforce reserves a territory independent of God. The latter can lead only to nihilism (though in different guises). Participation, however, refuses any reserve of created territory, while allowing finite things their own integrity.[11]

We have to acknowledge that the interpretation of Plato in question is distinctive. Radical Orthodoxy does not accept that Plato is simply a dualist who devalues the body and the rest of the material, temporal world. The Radical Orthodox Plato is the one of the *Symposium*, affirming our embodied desire for the ideal and the liturgical practices which orient us to that end. This has not convinced some who are otherwise sympathetic to the movement. Several contributors to the volume *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition* question the version of Plato on offer, and worry about the effects of adopting Platonic models on the integrity of creation.[12]

Whether or not we agree with Radical Orthodoxy's take on Plato (or Aquinas, or any number of other thinkers controversially recruited to their cause), what is relevant to our purposes now is the way in which the foregrounding of participation has an impact upon ecclesiology. It is no secret that Radical Orthodoxy has an extraordinarily high view of the church. The church is the bearer of the Christian narrative, and it is only from within the church that people's lives and vision can be so shaped that they can participate in the mind of God, and see

things truly. Frederick Bauerschmidt quotes Gregory of Nyssa's statement with approval: 'he who sees the Church looks directly at Christ'.[13] Graham Ward offers a similar endorsement of Hegel's view that 'God in Christ dies and the Church is born. One gives way to the other, without remainder.'[14] Michael Hanby tells us that the human mind 'can only be an image of God, only manifest God in creation, insofar as it doxologically participates in God's charity through the historic ecclesia'.[15] Stephen Long says that 'the Church is the social formation that renders intelligible all other formations'.[16] And, not to leave him out, John Milbank writes that 'The Church itself, as the realized heavenly city, is the *telos* of the salvific process.'[17] It is, of course, never clear which church one should have in view when interpreting any of these statements.

The apotheosis of this tendency comes in Catherine Pickstock's *After Writing*.[18] Pickstock offers a by-now familiar critique of modernity and postmodernity as the creation of a dead social space which can be controlled by arbitrary power, and then dressed up as freedom. The apparent worldliness of this view disguises the fact that it suppresses time and community, turning life into soulless commodity. Against this bleak vision, she pits a Christian faith centred on – one might say wholly identified with – the Eucharist, and specifically the Latin Mass. Only in the Eucharist, Pickstock argues, is the relationship between time and eternity, presence and absence, nature and grace truly resolved. The Latin Mass, with its stop-start structure and redundancies, does this better than any modernized rite. And part and parcel of this vision is a strong affirmation of transubstantiation. Here alone is the identity of sign and referent completely overcome, as bread and wine wholly participate in the being of God. Anything less than transubstantiation, she argues, leaves us with worldly signs trying to hook up with a distant God. And this in turn leads to the evacuation of any substantive meaning in language. Thus Pickstock's astonishing conclusion is that 'The words of Consecration "This is my body", therefore, far from being problematic in their meaning, *are the only words which certainly have meaning, and lend this meaning to all other words.*'[19] The isomorphism this creates between Eucharist, church and Christ is revealed when Pickstock states that the Eucharist 'repeats Christ himself as always nothing other than the gift of the Eucharist'.[20]

Radical Orthodoxy does not wish to transport us outside of language and time, but to embed us more deeply within them, recognizing them as created gifts and the means of our participation in God. However, this intention is undermined by the idealized and a-historical picture of the Eucharist which is commended. Related to this is the disturbing abolition of any gap between eucharistic celebration, church and Christ. Pickstock may rail against the spatialization of contemporary culture, but her account of the Latin Mass is wholly divorced from any particular context, and brackets out all questions of the relationships of power and inequality which structure any specific liturgical action. The end result is a commodified Eucharist, a brand name owned and administered by an invisible corporation known as the Church (again, *which* church is left undecided), a Eucharist which is marketed as pure reality, the real thing. Just do it, we are told, and we will know the mind of God.[21]

This might seem like a sideshow attraction in the world of ecclesiology. However, Radical Orthodoxy's intellectual influence goes well beyond a small academic sect. More telling, perhaps, is that it reflects wider realities: the notion of the mutual creation of Church and Eucharist, found in recent Catholic teaching documents, and the stress on *koinonia* and participation in God which thrives in ecumenical reports. Despite all the acknowledgement of change, development and cultural diversity, what we are being offered is identity politics writ large, the identity of sign and thing, believer and church, Christ and sacrament. The Church is subject to a new captivity: a eucharistic captivity.

It is significant that one of the targets of Radical Orthodoxy, and of Pickstock in particular, is Derrida. Derrida is lambasted as a nihilist, who makes blind violence and dumb difference the driving forces of history. Pickstock claims that Derrida's famous critique of the priority of speech over writing leads to a view of language as something static and spatial, like the printed page. Against this she pits the living, communal speech of shared liturgy.[22]

But I fail to recognize Derrida's actual writing in Radical Orthodoxy's caricatures. His questions and critiques (along with anything else that is not deemed to be part of the Christian narrative) are too easily rejected by labelling them as secular, nihilistic, pagan. This refusal to move out of the 'pure citadel' of the eucharistic city is itself arguably a violent gesture, one worthy of deconstruction.

Derrida does not reject the possibility of meaning or a rigorous approach to questions of truth. What he questions is any attempt to establish a purity of truth, a truth which is sheerly given and wholly present, without mediation or deferral.[23] His questions do not merely serve an ironic detachment, but summon us to decision and responsibility. They also open our narratives and structures to what is impossible, to an event and a future which can never be entirely pre-programmed or structured.

I need to say that I do not believe Derrida can simply be recruited as an unlikely ally, who looks and feels ironic but is filled with good old Christian truth. However, a difficult dialogue with him just might prevent us from succumbing to the simplistic stories embedded in the intellectual bravura of Radical Orthodoxy.

Going back to the passage quoted at the beginning of this paper, we find Derrida posing the question: what makes the community of philosophers possible? And he answers this question by appealing to a tradition. Not a tradition in which an inviolate truth is handed down, or in which a pristine script is constantly repeated, but a wounded tradition. It is a tradition conscious of being opened up by exclusion, by acts of definition. And these acts of definition have something contingent about them, which means that there is always something questionable about the community they sustain.

In addition, philosophy is constantly directed to its other, to the limits of what can be articulated and rationalized. Death, the future, the impossible: these are the names Derrida gives to philosophy's other, to the other who calls it into question.

Derrida, then, is very concerned with tradition, narrative, community and with what calls these things into being. What he resists is any identification of philosophy's tradition or community with the 'answer', the final name of being,

the absolute truth, present in all its given nakedness. No: there is always language, and time – and we have not yet found the language we have decided to seek.

For Radical Orthodoxy, this looks like nihilism, a retreat into the play of irony without end. But notice what Derrida writes in this early essay, long before his writing on ethics, justice and religion seemed to take centre stage amongst commentators. He writes of an 'unbreachable responsibility' addressed to the community of the question. Of an absolute origin of the question. Of the fact that 'the impossible has *already* occurred'.

What do these cryptic remarks amount to? Derrida calls into question any pure starting point or absolute knowledge accessible to us. As he puts it elsewhere, 'My own presence to myself has always been preceded by a language.'[24] The new traditionalists also want to contrast a narrative view of faith and ethics with both liberal universalism and conservative positivism. However, they continue to offer an absolute identity between one particular narrative and truth itself. Transubstantiation is indeed the key to meaning for Radical Orthodoxy, because it asserts the isomorphism between divine reality and ecclesial sign. To look at the church is to look at Christ, and only those with the eyes of faith can ever see this.

Derrida deconstructs this self-enclosed circle. No system, no truth, no presence can wholly account for its own possibility. There is always a remainder, something unthought, unsaid, undone. And therefore there is always the possibility of genuine ethical decision and faithful response, because truth does not lie in the abolition of time and finitude.

This cannot be dismissed as mere irony and relativism. Derrida's appeal to an unbreachable responsibility and an absolute origin aim to ensure that the tradition of philosophical questioning never closes down its dialogue with its other. It is a radically open tradition, a communion of self-critical questioning, not of fixed positions.

Of course, this tradition is always imperfect. The pure question is never left entirely open. We always approach it with presuppositions and interests, and we always therefore condition the question by our answers. But this is not something to be regretted. Only in the labour of historical interpretation and responsibility does the question ever appear. It is absolute because it can never be exhausted, and because it always escapes our totalities, but it is not a timeless ideal.

Derrida's community of the question is indeed 'very little – almost nothing' but it keeps ethics and faith in motion. It does not pretend to answer the needs of ecclesiologists. But it does suggest some ways forward for those seeking an alternative to current dominant models.

Any ecclesiology must reflect on what it excludes, on what is not church. This is inevitable. An inclusive ecclesiology therefore looks like a potential contradiction in terms. The concern is highlighted by a recent interview given by Rowan Williams to the Dutch press. He is quoted as saying: 'I don't believe inclusion is a value in itself. Welcome is. We welcome people into the Church, we say: "You can come in, and that decision will change you." We don't say: "Come in and we ask no questions." '[25]

The implication is that inclusion is the flip side of secular tolerance. It has no standards, no boundaries, no virtues. It simply says 'anything goes'. It is an empty

vessel, into which any content can be poured. It is not too great a distance from this to the new traditionalist line that beneath the smiling mask of liberal inclusion lies the bloody maw of capitalism and individualism and their concomitant violence.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find the Anglican Communion groping its way towards a confessional covenant. Only if we decide what we believe in advance, it seems, can we belong to one another, and offer admission to properly defined outsiders who must then become like us in order to be welcomed. (I hope you will forgive the cynicism. It is an occupational hazard of Anglican theology today.) This solution only holds, however, if we accept its premise: that inclusion is an empty secular invention, and therefore antipathetic to Christian tradition.

In the light of our discussion of Derrida, and of Jeffrey Stout's response to the new traditionalists, a number of things need to be said. First, inclusion (and liberalism in general) is both a tradition and a set of virtues. Granted that *some* secular theorists might want to forget tradition, this does not invalidate the point. Jeffrey Stout's work, for example, shows how the religious sensibilities of the American democratic tradition were oriented towards shaping the kind of people who could engage in mature, open debate and dialogue. Moreover, such sensibilities were rooted in a broader tradition of Christian polity. They were not simply alien excrescences.

The second point goes further. The Christian tradition offers a discipline of hospitality which actively challenges and reshapes the idea of church and the boundaries which enclose it. It is a wounded tradition from the very first, when the Gentiles were admitted to the fellowship because the Holy Spirit was already recognized at work among them. It is a wounded tradition in which the categories of gender and status were deprived of ultimate force, and in which it has been accepted that the full implications of this have only gradually been discerned.

And this leads to the third point. It is not credible on either historical or theological grounds to argue that there was an original Christian perfection which has subsequently been corrupted by what is other than Christian. We need to acknowledge openly that the Christian is a contested subject. St Vincent of Lérins' oft-quoted definition of orthodoxy – that which has been believed everywhere, at all times and by everyone – deserves to be pilloried as a political sham from here to kingdom come.

The problem here is deep-rooted. According to John Milbank, drawing on Augustine, violence and death are not original parts of creation. They are the result of the fall.[26] This belief in original peace is the foundation of the Christian narrative and, ultimately, what makes it distinct from all else, which is pagan and secular. Nowhere, however, is any attempt made to correlate this claim with the historical or evolutionary record. Is it a rhetorical flourish, a non-cognitive attitude, which we adopt without any reference to supposedly external facts? If so, it hardly justifies the anathemas pronounced on all alternative configurations of reality. If not, we are left asking how this original peace squares with what we know about the ubiquity of predatory behaviour – life feeding on life – which is part and parcel of our ecosystem and its history (even if not the whole story).

Augustine, of course, is not the only source for our knowledge of human pre-history. Even within the patristic tradition, Irenaeus offers a very different view of evolutionary change, as the now-unfashionable John Hick pointed out long ago. It is surely possible to articulate a Christian theology which has something more positive and more realistic to say about evolution, time and mortality – a theology which is more hospitable to embodied, material, desiring life.

This is where an ecclesiology for an inclusive church must begin, with a reaffirmation of Christian tradition as a tradition of embodied hospitality. By its very nature, that hospitality will be cautious about assuming that it knows in advance where and in what guise God will appear (or what the church 'is'). It will not, however, be without definition or exclusion. Inclusive ecclesiology which is simply a baptism of any and every human social structure would be a travesty. But our criteria of judgement should not be defined by a mythical ideal of perfection, or identity between Christ and the church, but by the substantive virtue of hospitality itself, if there is such a thing.

The difference will be as much in the way of doing ecclesiology as in its results. Derrida suggests that there is a 'discipline of the question'. Perhaps we should also speak of a discipline of hospitality. A discipline, because it does not sell short the demanding and costly venture of making room for the other – but also because it acknowledges the contingency and otherness which is always already lodged in the heart of every claim for identity.

Can the churches bear this? Can we admit that our exclusions have been and continually need to be questioned, not because we abandon tradition, but because that is the very dynamic of Christian tradition? Can we admit that we have Platonized the church at the expense of our particular embodied existence?

I suggested that it is no accident that current inclusion debates revolve around gender and sexuality, that those who remind us forcefully of the fluidity of embodied life and the strangeness of desire should be the ones who are subjected to exclusion. That issue can only be addressed by an ecclesiology which recognizes the necessary role of contingent human acts of interpretation in constructing the concept and reality of church. The church is never purely given. The Eucharist cannot happen without the offering of the work of human hands (even when our making is a deforming).[27] Idealistic ecclesiologies obscure this point and trap the church in its own hermetically sealed language-game. They legitimate the continuing occlusion of those whose faces and bodies and sexualities do not fit.

Having given Radical Orthodoxy such a hard time, I'd like to end by welcoming one of its insights. John Milbank is clear that the gift of God is simply not there for us without a response, a corresponding act of human making. And he acknowledges that this means the church is 'an enacted, serious fiction'.[28] Where Radical Orthodoxy goes wrong is in supposing this fiction must be set in conflict with all others. But no fiction can claim divine status. Only if it accepts its constructed, particular, mortal nature can it be open to the divine other, to the human other and the promise of the question which calls it into being.

This is not an abandonment of grace, but a working out of what I would call incarnate truth. Incarnate truth does not abolish its fleshly mediation to arrive at pure spiritual insight. It is hospitable to the freedom and risk of creation, the

dignity of creation's answering. It is therefore not simply a version of liberal sociology, but a genuinely Christian sensibility.

I realize I have not gone very far down the path of articulating an alternative ecclesiology. It might seem a weak alternative to the all-subsuming vision of *koinonia*. But perhaps the strength of that particular myth hides its flight from life. And perhaps the promise of the question – 'very little – almost nothing' – will yet prove both intrinsically open and utterly unbreachable.

Notes

1. I would like to cite a paper delivered by Paul M. Collins at the meetings of the American Academy of Religion in 2006 which explored the World Council of Churches' document *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, 'Communion: God, Creation and Church' (since published in Paul Collins and Michael Fahey (eds), *Receiving 'The Nature and Mission of the Church'*. (London, T&T Clark, 2008) for its role in stimulating these reflections (which are of course my own responsibility).
2. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 80.
3. *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, Faith and Order Paper 198 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2005), §52.
4. Ibid., §48.
5. Ibid., §49–50.
6. Martyn Percy, '*The Gift of Authority* in the Church of England: Sketching a Contextual Theology', in Peter Fisher (ed.), *Unpacking the Gift: Anglican Resources for Theological Reflection on* The Gift of Authority (London: Church House Publishing, 2002), p. 85.
7. World Council of Churches, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, pp. 16–17.
8. Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 118–39.
9. See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 9–17.
10. Ibid., p. 359.
11. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward (eds), *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 3.
12. See especially James K. A. Smith, 'Will the Real Plato Please Stand Up?', in James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthius (eds), *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant and Participation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), pp. 61–72.
13. Milbank *et al.* (eds), *Radical Orthodoxy*, p. 212.
14. Ibid., p. 177.
15. Ibid., p. 115.
16. Stephen Long, *Divine Economy, Theology and the Market* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 262.
17. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 403.
18. Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).
19. Ibid., p. 263 (emphasis in original).
20. Ibid., p. 264.
21. See George Pattison, 'After Transubstantiation: Blessing, Memory, Solidarity and Hope', in Wayne Hankey and Douglas Hedley (eds), *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric and Truth* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 149–60.
22. Pickstock, *After Writing*, pp. 102–18. See Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, pp. 307–8.
23. Graham Ward offers a far far more positive reading of this aspect of Derrida's philosophy than is found in other Radical Orthodox texts. See, for example, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

24. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (London: Athlone, 1981), p. 340.
25. See Wim Houtman, 'The Church is Not Inclusive', *Nederlands Dagblad*, 19 August 2006, available at http://www.nd.n1/htm/dossier/seksualiteit/artikelen/060819.eb.htm.
26. 'It is, of course, quite simply impossible to be a Christian and to suppose that death and suffering belong to God's original plan, or that the struggle of natural selection (which one doubts is even proven as a full account of evolution) is how creation *as creation* rather than thwarted creation genuinely comes about. To do so is to embrace a sickly masochistic faith, against the explicit words of scripture': John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 229 (emphasis in original). Was this passage inserted in Milbank's book by a rogue Intelligent Designer? I think we should be told.
27. 'God's Eucharistic presence strangely depends on what can be found and sold in the streets, or even on the possibility of finding some stale bread in a bin': Marcella Althaus-Reid, ' "A Saint and a Church for Twenty Dollars": Sending Radical Orthodoxy to Ayacucho', in Rosemary Radford Ruether and Marion Grau (eds), *Interpreting the Postmodern: Responses to 'Radical Orthodoxy'* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), p. 107.
28. John Milbank, 'Enclaves, or Where is the Church?', *New Blackfriars* 861 (June 1992), 342.

'BEING NICE IN CHURCH': RITUALS OF PROPRIETY AND THE SIN OF
OBLIVION

Mary McClintock Fulkerson

I begin with a rather odd juxtaposition – what has 'being nice in church' got to do with the topic of our section, 'Church, Inclusivity and Diversity', and the wider issues of marginality connected with these themes? Of course being nice is not antithetical to Christian faith. My mother *did* teach me to be nice in church. In fact, as a privileged white girl reared in the southern United States, learning how to be 'nice' was (unfortunately) practically the most important part of my formation. Issues of marginality, however, seem a bit weightier. The dehumanization of large populations on the basis of their perceived 'racial' difference from the dominant group has long characterized US history. Recognition of that dehumanization, in such forms as the US civil rights movement of the first half of the twentieth century or the anti-apartheid movement of South Africa, is more recent, but has been crucial to such struggles for justice. Historical marginalizations on the basis of other social markers such as gender, sexual orientation and class still affect our lives and must continue to engage us. 'Being nice' does not seem a particularly powerful mode of engagement with these dehumanizing forces.

Nor do I wish to argue that 'being nice' is a serious way for ecclesiology to address issues of social marginality. However, I do want to suggest that 'being nice' is what many approaches to difference and marginality basically amount to. Let me draw an analogy with social legislation. The legal decisions of the past several decades in the US have been crucial ways to engage many of our social marginalizations. It matters that in 1918 women were finally given the vote. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and voting rights legislation of 1965, which outlawed specific racist practices and discrimination on the basis of race, and opened up the possibility of 'equal opportunity' mandates, are necessary parts of 'redeeming' these marginalizations.[1] Attempts, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), to outlaw discrimination against persons with disabilities are as necessary as civil rights legislation against racial discrimination. However, the marginalizations that eventuate in the need for such laws are much more complex and cannot be totally cured by formal restrictions; indeed they connect to deeply embedded sensibilities about the 'other' that constitute powerful *and* marginalized subjects. And laws, just like Christian convictions, do not necessarily address these embedded realities.

Social scientists Michael Omi and Howard Winant call this embeddedness a 'racial formation', which is 'the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed'.[2] A racial (or other) social formation *surrounds* us. It is not just politics; it is about all ' "levels" of lived experience simultaneously'.[3] Economic differences matter, but it is especially cultural representations – particularly of bodies – that shape our sense of who we are and who others are. The latter include internalized, 'naturalized' knowledges that are not explicitly held views but represent typifications that bear much of the experiential prejudices and fears as well as hopes of our complex social, political and economic lives. Such naturalizations are illustrated where behaviour does not match up with legal realities. In the US, for example, outlawing discrimination against people with disabilities or racial minorities does not correlate with the growth of communities characterized by a full embrace of difference. Indeed, the view that such legislation has fixed the problems of racism has its own term – 'colour-blindness' – and it refers to a refusal to recognize that the effects of racism are still with us and transcend legal discrimination.[4]

In this essay I want to suggest that this contrast between legal address for social marginalizations and attention to the effects of this larger world of social typifications is instructive for attention to Christian practices. My phrase 'being nice' refers to Christian practices that function like legal colour-blindness, i.e. they act as if the official (legal) outlawing of racism and ableism and sexism are all we need, that they sufficiently alter the inherited sensibilities that have created these dehumanizing social realities. I want to argue not only that church habits of official welcome, typically employing the language of inclusion, are inadequate ways to address marginality – that's hardly a surprise – but, more fundamentally, that theological approaches which treat faith and tradition primarily in cognitive terms have some responsibility for continuing inadequate church practices. I am associating being nice, in other words, with focusing on faith as primarily an intentional, belief-centred human activity and claiming that it has the effect of relying upon legal change to alter a society's everyday habits and proclivities.[5] Constructively, my claim is that we must construe faith so as to allow for the role of bodies, the visceral, and fear/anxiety in our practices for 'including' the marginalized. Otherwise, our theologies are too 'cognitive' and thus 'too nice' to matter.[6]

Being Nice Doesn't Work

First, let me illustrate what I mean by associating 'being nice' with an overly cognitive account of faith. I will do that by drawing primarily upon material concerning race relations in the US (and to a lesser degree people with disabilities) which comes from an ethnographic study I did of an interracial church, one which also included people with disabilities. From 1996 to 1999, I was a participant-observer in a small United Methodist Church, Good Samaritan. Located in a low-income section of the medium-sized southern town of Durham, North Carolina, which had experienced changing racial demographics over the past two decades,

this all-white church had suffered a radical loss in membership. A newly appointed minister in 1989 fulfilled the Methodist Conference's charge to revitalise the community, but did so in an unexpected way. Revd Dan Weaver, a middle-aged white man, helped the remaining members discern a ministry to bring in 'people not like us ... the overlooked, the passed over'.[7] They identified 'people not like us' as those of other 'races', and, later, those they called 'special needs' folks.[8] Over the next decade Good Samaritan grew to about 130 members, at its largest, almost two-thirds of whom were African-American or African, with a small number of Koreans, and a third Anglo-American. Residents from two group homes with a variety of disabilities (Down's syndrome, autism and other forms of mental and physical disability) became regular attendees as well.

A secular version of this vision characterizes the US population, where there is now a widespread public affirmation of inclusiveness. For several years now, according to Andrew Hacker, most white North Americans indicate they are in favour of racial equality and integration.[9] In this sense Good Samaritan's *views* have a lot of company. Indeed, the language of 'inclusiveness' is almost more prominent in the church than biblical imagery for this worldview. When it comes to where people put their *bodies*, however, this church is quite rare. Neighbourhoods, churches and schools remain largely (and in some cases increasingly) racially segregated. The same is true of churches: only 2.5 per cent of mainline Protestant churches in the US are considered interracial, where no more than 80 per cent of the congregants are of one 'race'. It is Evangelical churches that are the most interracial, but even that figure is only 6 per cent.[10] Thus Hacker concludes that the only thing that has really changed is 'the way people speak in public', not living patterns.[11] I cannot think of a predominantly white Protestant church I have belonged to that did not use some language of inclusiveness, particularly post-civil rights movement. 'All of God's children are welcome here' is a typical claim. Yet Protestant churches by and large remain very homogeneous when it comes to race, class and ability.[12]

Not being a sociologist (and only an amateur ethnographer), I do not presume to be able to make causal or explanatory claims about this paradox or about this striking ecclesial desire for 'the same' (we just want to be with people like ourselves). However, I do want to interpret a couple of events in this church to suggest some possible expansions of theological anthropology that might help break out of the overly cognitive habit. What prompted my musings had to do with a dominant population, in this case people designated as 'white', expressing or displaying anxiety when they perceived themselves to be outnumbered or not in control. Within the first year of Good Samaritan's 'rebirth', several members successfully recruited African-Americans and Africans to join. The warmth and friendliness of the minister, Dan, and his wife Sarah, a diaconal minister, were quite a draw. Some United Methodist connections with the Liberian community also helped bring in new members. Although blacks did not outnumber whites, the church was well on its way to becoming interracial.

On one Sunday when Dan was to be out of town, he brought in a Liberian minister to preach in his place, and the ranks of Africans swelled for that worship service. When he returned, some white members expressed their concern to Dan,

saying that the church was getting 'too black'. While numerically incorrect in terms of actual membership, the complaint is suggestive of a dynamic I observed later when the white minister, Dan, was replaced by a Bahamian man of 'colour'. With a black male body as the authority figure, the initial fears of African-Americans that whites would immediately leave were not realized. But some abstract discussions soon after about the possibility of welcoming 'homosexuals' led to the departure of several quite active white families. Significantly, this departure was interpreted by Africans and African-Americans alike as being a response not to the hypothetical issue of welcoming gays, but to the race of the new minister.[13]

I interpret this behaviour to be unhappiness with the perception of 'excessive' black presence, whether numerical or in positions of authority. While I have no way to prove this diagnosis, such dis-ease on the part of whites is a phenomenon identified in residential situations, where there is something called a 'racial tipping point'. Hacker says that while most blacks (85 per cent) want to live in integrated neighbourhoods, 'hardly any whites will live in a neighbourhood or community where half the residents are black'. They will tend to stay only if blacks 'do not exceed 8 per cent'. But once the proportion reaches somewhere around 10 per cent or larger, the tipping point has been reached and whites begin to leave.[14] Such responses as these suggest something that is attributable neither to the 'nice' kindly attitudes of colour-blind inclusiveness, on the one hand, nor to malicious racism on the other. To think about another way to imagine such postures, I turn to hints in a modern theological anthropology.

Sin, Desire and Bodies

A quick review of theological anthropology is suggestive of an alternative. First, we understand human being as created in the image of God. This is to say that our *telos* is right relationship with God; we are theonomous, or finitely good, God-dependent creatures. Mainstream traditions from Augustine to Tillich to contemporary feminist theologians like Marcella Althaus Reid and Wendy Farley would have it that this relationship is founded on desire – rightly ordered desire. Loving (and being loved by) God is the source of our well-being. To interpret racism, or any other form of social marginalization, in this context is to read it as a sinful deformation, but not as an error or intellectual gap of sorts. Such sinful deformations as racism must be connected to disordered desire in some way. A diagnosis along these lines is offered by Leonard Lovett, a member of a Faith and Order group which did a seven-year study of how to address racism.[15] Racism, he says, is 'fundamentally a spiritual problem with apparent social manifestations … the roots of racism lie deep within the soil of human pride and the pervasive will to be different and superior. Racism presupposes dominance. It has to do with the abuse and misuse of power by the dominant group … [it] *is grounded in pride (hubris, which is the exaltation of the self)*'.[16] Thus racism is disordered desire as idolatry, exaltation of the self over (proper worship of) God.

However, I want to dig deeper, particularly when most if not all churchpeople have denounced racism. (Many of the white members of the Faith and Order Group, all committed to ending racism, confess their surprise at discovering their own complicity.) To get at the subtle and complex ways in which such marginalizations are connected to human desires, I turn to modern theologians' linkage of sin to desire. Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich and Edward Farley, among others, are most helpful in parsing the way sin is a haunting kind of 'bondage'; in other words it transcends two false extremes: the individual voluntarist malicious act – as in 'As a white person, I AM superior to and I WILL subordinate blacks!' – and sin as an inherited determinist condition – as in 'My very createdness makes me racist'. Demythologizing the story of the Fall, Niebuhr and others point to the contradictory character of the freedom of a finite creature. We are free to act on desires (and to imagine in unlimited ways), but our finitude and fallibility mean inevitable failure and suffering, exacerbated by the unlimited character of our fearful imagination. The resultant fear and anxiety that attend our located, finite spirit constitute the precondition of sin. Not inherently sinful, anxiety is the precondition of human creativity, as Reinhold Niebuhr points out; however it almost inevitably leads to attachments to that which is not God.[17] So even the nice, kindly folks who welcome the outsider are finite and shaped by anxiety and fear (and thus open to such attachments).

Now, Niebuhr's account must be made even more complex; his human being is modelled on a generic white male, whose embodiment is ostensibly unmarked. Social marginalizations are not factored into his anxiety. But what Niebuhr's account *does* provide is the suggestion that our faith posture in the world involves a continuum of human experience, little of which is rational and intentional. Let us turn to the bodied way that anxiety may be deciphered. We are not simply finitely located somewhere as creatures, we engage and know the world as bodied creatures. And bodies are socially marked by associations. Many white perceptions of those designated as 'having race' include powerful stereotypes that function as social stigmas. Citing a taxi driver's refusal to pick up a black man at night as an example, race theorist Glen C. Loury calls attention to the effect of internalized stigmata associated with African-Americans (or any black body).[18] Stereotypes abound in US culture that associate black bodies with violence, hypersexuality and uncleanness. (One white member of the Faith and Order study group – a clergyman – confesses how he thought he was free of race prejudice until he realized that he had always felt his hand was unclean after shaking hands with a black person.[19]) Indeed, internalized associations that typify social groups characterize all human experience. It is not just the powerful who internalise such typifications. People designated as being 'of colour' have stereotypes of people designated as 'white', frequently for protective purposes; they also suffer by internalizing the negative associations of their own groups.[20]

An important way in which fear and anxiety are connected to bodies is through the visceral, the term typically associated with affective bodily responses to the world. This 'pulse of attraction and aversion' that attends our knowing and thus, inevitably, our faith, originates in bodily processes, but it is often a response *to* bodies as well:[21] *not*, as I said, as a perception of the other that is necessarily true to

his/her individuality, but, more likely, through the lens of our internalized stereotypes of that other, particularly when the other is 'different' from us. While the literature on this subject around race, gender, disability and other margin-alising markers abounds, testimonies from members of Good Samaritan are illustrative. White members of the church admitted to racism – 'it's the way it always was', as an older white woman put it. African-American Betty confessed that she had been brought up always to distrust white people, even as she grudgingly admitted that internalization of white standards of beauty had made her ashamed of her 'nappy hair'. Such reactions are not limited to whites and African-Americans. African members of the church had stereotypes of African-Americans; several African-Americans spoke of assuming that Africans wore bones in their noses and were primitive.

Ironically, such social 'marking', while seeming to make groups highly visible in their 'otherness' – because he is black, the man is perceived by the taxi driver as potentially dangerous – in fact functions to make human beings *disappear*. As Loury puts it, the unique humanity of the man trying to flag down a cab cannot be seen, even as a potential. With racial stigmatization, 'the meanings connoted by race-symbols undermine an observing agent's ability to see their bearer as a person possessing a common humanity with the observer'.[22] For people with disabilities, the stigmatization has led to such visceral reactions to them by those of us who are supposedly 'normal', that our responses to those with visible handicaps have been given a name: 'rituals of degradation'.[23]

Theologically, then, how does this connect desire to bodies and to sin? First, we must take seriously this fuller continuum of human experience: from the intentional and rational, to the affective and visceral. The *imago Dei* refers to human being as a finitely good desiring, bodily responder. And the dynamics of power must be factored in – which of us are marked by social identities that render us 'normal and neutral human beings' and which of us 'have race' or gender or some other marginalizing indices? (Admittedly there are no human beings who are completely unmarked – many of the white men in my community are marked by class or cultural origins; women are always marked by a combination. However, these social typifications are constitutive of our situation as anxious, fallible and 'tempted' creatures, and it is our marked/unmarked bodies which bear them. They matter to the degree that they become vilifications that harm and marginalize groups. Being characterized as a 'southern white boy' may invite stereotypes, but they will not typically produce the dehumanizations that attend 'having race'.) Secondly, if finitude, and the fear and anxiety that constitute it, make up what modern theologians term the precondition of sin, then we must identify this precondition as bodied – which is not the same thing as saying that bodies or desire are sinful. Rather, it means that these preconditions and any resultant sinful deformations will look different in relation to different groups precisely because of their cultural markings. The tendency of theologians to think in terms of a (false) generic human being is inadequate.

A third general implication of this theological anthropology brings us more directly to sin, both to its connection to God and to the enormous difficulty of pinning down 'blame'. If sin at root is disordered desire and trust (and here I rush

through what is a more complicated topic than I can do justice to), then vilifications of the threatening other (whether inherited or newly produced) are indirect signs of idolatry, that is, of attaching oneself to something worldly, rather than God. From a theological perspective, broken social relations inevitably accompany broken relationship with God. A full analysis would show how clinging to one's racial (gender, etc.) identity leads to the endless need to vilify whatever it is that exposes the finitude and inadequacy of this false security. However, not all fear of the other is disordered or sinful, just as anxiety and fear are not identical with sin. These are necessary elements of survival for a finite, fallible creature. The distrust and anxiety that members of Good Samaritan may have felt toward each other, like the taxi driver's desire to be safe, is part of being human. Precisely where to draw the line between this situation as a precondition of sin and the move into the sinful vilification and dehumanizing that is injustice is hard to say. This is true especially when we factor in the social *inheritances* that create these sensibilities and remember that this is not the purely voluntarist invention of an individual; the tragic inevitability of dehumanizations is hard to deny. Nibs Stroupe, white minister of an interracial church, puts it well for those with racial privilege, the 'paradox of being good and also being racist is central to being white'.[24] To leave out the notion of anxiety and fear is to simplify sin in too many ways. To fail to see its marked, bodied, visceral forms is to miss the determinate and varied ways group sensibilities are distorted.

Practices of Propriety: Hypervigilance and Ownership of Space

On the basis of these observations – the bodied, affective character of human beings as *imago Dei*, the socially marked character of our fallibility as a precursor to sin, and the connection between social vilifications and broken relationship with God – I offer two proposals for thinking about marginalization as I perceived it in the communal relationships of Good Samaritan UMC. These proposals will suggest how it is that 'being nice', or simply announcing that all persons are God's children and that persons of all races and social locations should be included in your church, regardless of one's sincerity, is a seriously inadequate way to deal with marginalization.

First, my description of human experience as a socially shaped, bodied engagement with the world, an engagement shaped by cultural and other social processes, both past and present, is best articulated with the category of *practice*. By practice I refer to the updating of Aristotelian *phronesis* and *habitus* in numerous contemporary theories as part of attempts to reconnect knowing and doing and honour the formative character of practice. While Alasdair MacIntyre's account of practice as corporately shaped cooperative activity allows for normative assessment of practices by virtue of their ordering by a tradition with attendant shaping of character, Pierre Bourdieu's account is more immediately useful. Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* focuses more specifically on the bodily character of pre-reflective 'knowing' and presents the continuity of a practice in the form of improvization.[25] Cultural habituation on Bourdieu's terms refers to bodily skills such as fencing,

but also to the gendered and racialized bodily 'wisdoms' of a society. Some of these habituations create what one theorist calls 'bodily proprieties', which are the 'proper' forms not only of behaviour, but of dress, posture, manners and any kind of public display as defined by a society for its different groups. The peasant and the courtier will have very different bodily proprieties, as the Saudi Arabian woman's will differ from those of Saudi men. 'Incorporative practices,' as Paul Connerton calls all forms of bodily practices, are distinct as well because they are communications that occur in the presentist bodily *performance*; they are not simply the 'expressions' of storable meanings such as writing or other forms of inscription.[26] As a result the communications of bodies may even be in conflict with expressed meanings and values of a society.

I now return to Good Samaritan UMC to ask what bodily practices of propriety might form its members and how they might exceed or contradict its claims to be inclusive, i.e. its 'practices of inscription'.[27] A historical example of practices of propriety is instructive. Take, for example, the way the slave 'knows' the proper posture and place to put her/his body in the presence of the master: 'not to look white males in the eye was really a survival pattern in the South', as one scholar notes.[28] Such 'wisdom' is not something that is best thought of as a belief or consciously held conviction. As a protective device it may be articulated, but would soon become something one simply did without thinking. The confessions of contemporary African-Americans to protective behaviours also point to bodily wisdoms. African-American writer Toi Derricotte invokes awareness of such bodily proprieties, both racial and gendered, as she wanders the all-white streets of a new town – '*I'm not supposed to be here*'.[29] Although moderated for a 'free' society, such self-protective practices undoubtedly characterize the African-American members of Good Samaritan. I call them practices of fearful hypervigilance. This is to say something like W. E. B. Du Bois's famous concept of double consciousness, indicating the need for a marginalised population to attend not only to its own realities, but to those of the dominant group as well.[30]

As for white members, not only will their practices of propriety differ from those of African-Americans, their capacity to recognize their habituations will also differ. These different bodily practices and awareness of them are no less significant in forming their lives and intersubjective behaviours with those not like them. Instead of proprieties of fearful vigilance, however, where one must be on guard as to what the dominant group is doing, proprieties of the white population can be characterized as what African-American theorist William Hart calls 'proprieties of ownership of space'.[31] Such a habituation indicates the internalized habit of feeling free to occupy almost any public space; one is either in control or protected by those in control. Like the unmarked character of being white, such a bodily practice comes with a kind of obliviousness, precisely because this population doesn't need to worry about another dominant group.[32]

Now what I have described is only part of the implication of a theological anthropology that takes socially marked bodily experience seriously. For what happens when these interlocking socially produced proprieties intersect? What happens when black and white bodies cross paths? Clearly they do, and legally they are (now) all allowed equal access to public places. And sometimes white

proprieties of ownership of space get disrupted in these public places. But remember that places of greatest importance to whites – residential areas and churches in particular – mostly reflect this ownership of space. When black bodies occupy such space they are typically in the minority. These places seem to be disrupted, not so much when black bodies appear – a white person experiencing black bodies in janitorial or maid's attire is not bothered. Disruption and the attendant visceral (sometimes) aversive response occur when black bodies appear displaying 'transgressive' bodily proprieties. When the white members of Good Samaritan perceived the place as getting 'too black' I suggest that it was the experience of *transgressed* ownership of space. The white departures when the authoritative body became black were in some sense connected to disrupted white 'proprieties' of who should be in control. There were never more blacks than whites, but they were all there performing and dressing as fellow church members, i.e. as equals, and that is what felt transgressive.

Transgressions as Openings for Redemption

The transgressions of their ownership of space that occurred for white members may not have led to a 'cure' for the obliviousness that can attend privilege, but I think such transgressions are crucial openings for another kind of reckoning with the legacies of sinful social inheritances. That reckoning involves more than 'being nice', and its shape requires more space than I have here to explore.[33] But minimally, that reckoning opens up possibilities for initiating profound recognition and acknowledgement of deeply embedded sensibilities/habituations that have shaped us all in varying modes of distrust toward one another, from blacks' fear of white racism to whites' guilt and fear of losing power. That reckoning would require, of course, a courageous and committed community able to discuss these painful realities with some honesty. Good Samaritan began to have some conversations in light of these departures where the African and African-American members spoke more honestly about their feelings about racism. Many appealed to Jesus as the model for welcoming all who are different. A powerful discussion of the desired character of the community led to the judgement that since God calls us all to be willing to confess and change, that no other requirement for membership was necessary other than a willingness to recognize our prejudices and to change. Several members shared with me how their convictions about the other 'race' had been altered by their participation in Good Samaritan. However, I rarely heard of white confessions with respect to people of other races. Nevertheless the experience of disruption, at least on the part of whites, seems an important opening for a move beyond what I call a benevolent form of avoidance and denial – amiable tolerance.[34]

Since I have argued that, important as they are, convictions are not adequate, let me close with a return to bodily practices for my second proposal. Recognition of these bodily incorporative practices suggests something crucial to a theological account of tradition. Insofar as the social forces that continue to reproduce historic marginalizations can be interpreted through the lens of sin, I have argued that

attention to Christian practices (such as 'inclusion') that aim at redressing such situations requires a broader understanding of what it means to shape and 'tradition' us into Christly communities of welcome. As such, my expansions are intended to take our finite desire, propensity for anxiety, and bodied way of being in the world more seriously. To do that we need a fuller notion of traditioning. For it is our formation in its full experiential sense, like mine as a nice white southern girl, that constitutes the more adequate way to imagine how faith is a fully experiential lived reality. Of course Christian tradition has not typically been defined in a simplistically cognitive way. Not reduced to belief, tradition is 'the whole way of life of a people as it is transmitted from generation to generation', as J. P. Mackey puts it.[35] Tradition is a *communicative process best imagined as participatory, vision-shaped practices.*[36] One is never formed simply to love Jesus; one is formed as a supposed-to-be-submissive female to love Jesus. The call to take up the cross is internalized along with your gendered/racialized bodily wisdom – not a random cultural idiosyncrasy but, in fact, part of the very traditions that make up a society.

The category of incorporative practices is designed to reveal that a society's very identity is formed from its bodily practices (from propriety to techniques to commemorative ritual practices) as it is from its stories and other written traditions.[37] In short, tradition as a corporate identity-forming memory is bodily as well as discursive. While the implications of this for a normative category such as Christian tradition are complex, it is surely crucial to recognize the different ways that meanings have been communicated through various incorporative practices in key moments of our past. Not only does it suggest that more meaning was being communicated than is captured in our doctrinal traditions, and the 'vision' of tradition, but it opens up the possibility of contradictions and possible enhancements, at the very least, that have long been ignored. While I am not suggesting that there are clear normative bodily proprieties for a Christian identity, bowed heads, reverential gestures and kneeling are certainly significant practices. I am not suggesting, however, that such proprieties are simply to be endorsed more strenuously for everyone. I am suggesting that the already existent habituations of our cultures must be read as 'languages' that matter in our attempt to create redemptively inclusive churches. What kind of habituated bodies were in view with the call to various forms of ecclesiological reformation? Feminist and womanist theologies have already pointed to the inadequacy of the focus on sin as self-assertion and pride for many communities of women; I am now asking that bodily proprieties connected to such situations be brought into focus.

In conclusion, I propose that ecclesial existence needs to be conceived in terms of redeeming these deformations of proprieties of fearful hypervigilance and ownership of space; minimally that requires contiguity and time. White people, as Revd Nibs Stroupe says, must 'remain in the presence of black people or other people of darker color'. They must resist flight and the attraction of homogeneity.[38] There is no recipe for this, but we who are white must become habituated into new typifications of the full humanity of those designated 'black', which I assume requires something different than the white church with a few token blacks. (It was *working together* as well as reading their lives with intersecting

languages of gospel that, I believe, enabled some of Good Samaritans' members to alter their deforming bodily habituations.) I am more reluctant to say what persons designated 'black' (complicated by gender) need to redeem proprieties of hypervigilance, since they are always forced to be in settings with us, the dominant group; at the very least it would diminish the fear. My main concern here is my 'race': our sin is not simply negative stereotypes, but, in large part, obliviousness – a *not seeing* that may accompany all the kind Christian inclusiveness – niceness – in the world.[39] And it is the call to *notice* and *attend*, and explore processes of gaining new habituations, that is paramount. Habituations or practices, as MacIntyre would remind us, are only worthy with regard to their production of good ends. But the good ends of *agape* for the other as finitely good creature of God requires new bodily skills for us who are white, capacities to 'improvise' our way out of our problematically racialized bodily proprieties.[40]

Notes

1. A deeper and more critical analysis of the state as part of a racial formation is found in Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s,* 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 1994).
2. A formation could be identified around gender or any other social marker as well: ibid., p. 55.
3. Ibid., pp. 1–23, 97–112, 96.
4. The Critical Race Theory movement has identified 'colour-blind constitutionalism' as an offender. The effects of this legal philosophy radically restrict legal capacity to deal with the social effects of racism and reduce the recognition of the harm of this deeply entrenched social legacy to the most explicit and offensive acts. Much of the problem is related to the reliance upon 'formal race', a use of race that disregards 'ability, disadvantage, or moral culpability' and treats 'white' and 'black' as neutral objective features of subjects with regard to skin colour: Neil Gotanda, 'A Critique of "Our Constitution is Color-Blind"', in Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller and Kendall Thomas (eds), *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: New Press, 1995), p. 25.
5. Even the current fascination of systematic theologians with the category of 'practice' is not up to this challenge.
6. Of course, there are many counters to this claim. No decent theologian reduces faith to belief. Faith is grounded in God's grace; it is not a human cognitive achievement. However, while the role of bodies is taken more seriously in contemporary theology, particularly with the impact of feminist and queer theology, my sense is that a full-blown theological anthropology with regard to the continuum of human affect is still worth more work. A recent WCC Faith and Order Study Document notably treats embodiment as basic to the epistemology of human being: *Christian Perspectives on Theological Anthropology*, Faith and Order Paper 199 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2005), II. B. 12.
7. This decision was based upon a Bible study where a group of the remaining members of the church (about 12) interpreted the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 to be a call to minister to those 'not like us', as they put it.
8. I put quote-marks around both terms because 'race', now defined as a construct, is problematically associated with non-whites; and because terms for people with various disabilities are contested.
9. Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992), p. 52.

10. See Michael Emerson and Chris Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 10.

11. Hacker, *Two Nations*, p. 52. For indications of increased segregation in schools, see 'Race in American Public Schools: Rapidly Resegregating School Districts', press release, 8 August 2002, from the report of Harvard University's Civil Rights Project, *Race in American Public Schools: Rapidly Resegregating School Districts*.

12. Catholic churches must be better, but I do not have those figures. Nor do I have figures on churches and the incorporation of people with 'disabilities', including residents of group homes. However, see Nancy Eiesland's pessimistic account of how far churches in the US have to go to be significantly welcoming to people so labelled: Nancy L. Eiesland, 'Barriers and Bridges: Relating the Disability Rights Movement and Religious Organizations', in Nancy L. Eiesland and Don E. Saliers (eds), *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), pp. 200–29.

13. I connect this departure to the dis-ease with race because it was perceived to be that. The situation was undoubtedly more complex.

14. Even newly arrived immigrants are preferred over blacks in white neighbourhoods. Hacker cites the significant white intolerance for being in the minority: *Two Nations*, pp. 34–6. After finishing this paper, however, I read an editorial by sociologist Orlando Patterson that the theory of a racial 'tipping point' has been convincingly contested, even though the pattern of racial segregation has steadily increased, especially around the 'private life of the white majority'. See Orlando Patterson, 'The Last Race Problem', *New York Times*, 30 December 2006.

15. A book resulting from that study is Susan E. Davies and Sister Paul Teresa Hennessee, SA (eds), *Ending Racism in the Church* (Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press, 1998).

16. Leonard Lovett, 'Color Lines and the Religion of Racism', in Davies and Hennessee (eds), *Ending Racism in the Church*, p. 24.

17. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. I, *Human Nature*, 2nd edn (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 183. This modern theological analysis is also indebted to Kierkegaard.

18. Glenn C. Loury, *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 65–7.

19. Jack W. Hayford, 'Confessing What Separates Us', in Davies and Hennessee (eds), *Ending Racism in the Church*, p. 17.

20. These designations are all problematic. They frequently suggest that people who are 'white' are simply neutral, and thus normal or ideal human beings. Even 'of colour' is a strange expression that does not seem to have a parallel. 'Who are the "people of white"?', as Burton Tan put it: quoted in 'Introduction: What is Racism?', by Susan E. Davies and Sister Paul Teresa Hennessee, ibid., pp. 1–2.

21. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 123. Political theorist William E. Connolly explains the visceral, its origin in the part of the brain called the amygdala (drawing upon Kierkegaard), and its interconnection with reflective modes of human response: Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 25–9.

22. Loury, *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*, pp. 66–7.

23. This is taken from the social scientist of disability Erving Goffman's theory of stigma, cited in Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), pp. 92–3.

24. Nibs Stroupe and Inez Fleming, *While We Run this Race: Confronting the Power of Racism in a Southern Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), pp. 97ff.

25. A practice is 'any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence that are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.' MacIntyre's view

also includes an account of virtues as the human qualities which 'enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices'. They contribute to the common good: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd edn (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1984), pp. 187, 191.

26. I am using examples of what Connerton sometimes calls *ceremonies of the body* to illustrate practices of *propriety*: Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 73. The contrast entailed in the distinction begun with the notion of inscribing practices is not between signifying and pre-linguistic bodies, but between practices in which this storage is the primary way to pass on the communal memory and practices that focus primarily upon the passing on that occurs in face-to-face bodied encounters (which itself can include inscripted communication) – incorporative practices.

27. Again, practices of inscription are storable memories, such as writing. I will confine myself to African-American and Euro-American white members. I don't doubt that the various African members have their own, which are relative to different African countries, but I do not have the ability to interpret these latter.

28. Kenneth R. Johnson, 'Black Kinesics: Some Non-verbal Communication Patterns in the Black Culture', in Ronald L. Jackson II (ed.), *African American Communication and Identities: Essential Readings* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2004), p. 41. Johnson identifies a host of other forms of non-verbal communication that would seem to qualify as incorporative practices. The bodily practices characteristic of traditional African-American worship are some of the many good examples.

29. Derricotte also charts the experience of being a light-skinned African-American and the constant fear of not being a 'real' black person: Toi Derricotte, *The Black Notebooks: An Interior Journey* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), pp. 33, 18.

30. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903; repr. New York: Vintage Books, 1990), pp. xii, 7–9.

31. Personal conversation with Professor Hart.

32. And the fear that occurs when a white person finds her/himself in a 'black' neighbourhood is still the moderation of a propriety of ownership of space that expects the police to be an ultimate protection. This is not assumed in the same way by African-Americans.

33. An account that resonates with my argument is suggested by Sister Paul Teresa Hennessee, SA, who draws upon psychologist-priest Van Kaam to locate racism in our formative dispositions. Racism emerges as a disposition toward violence, 'the defensive refusal of the potential fullness of our awareness'. The full quote by Van Kaam is 'The primary act of violence ... is the defensive refusal of the potential fullness of our awareness. It is the denial of the spiritual dimension of our life. All other acts of inner and outer violence against self and others are conditioned by this primal act. This basic violence is the root cause of a blindness that refuses to face the repulsive reality of violent behavior': quoted by Sr Paul Teresa Hennessee, SA in 'Violence in the Household', in Davies and Hennessee (eds), *Ending Racism in the Church*, p. 82. She says, 'Racial appreciation does not mean being "nicer" to people. Being "nicer" is an act and does not necessarily mean that a deformed disposition has changed': ibid., 88.

34. See my analysis of this in *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch. 7.

35. J. P. Mackey, *Tradition and Change in the Church* (Dayton, Oh.: Pflaum, 1968), p. x.

36. Terrence W. Tilley, *Inventing Catholic Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000).

37. The title of Connerton's book is *How Societies Remember*. His recovery of incorporative practices comes from recognition of social history and the various ways that status and power are key to the identity of a culture. Thus such incorporative practices as bodily proprieties are as important as its laws. I agree that there is something very misleading about appropriating only the discourse of the past.

38. This is the most important demonstration of a fierce dedication to equality by whites, says Nibs Stroupe. 'To accept white segregation is to return to the addiction of the system of race': Stroupe and Fleming, *While We Run this Race*, pp. 133, 134.

39. The criticisms of 'colour-blindness' extend to other habits. Ellis Cose describes parallels between the discomfort white people have with race and with disabled people. In reaction to these discomforts, whites frequently claim 'not to see difference'. Ignoring race with black people (such as not mentioning slavery or the race of a famous figure) is comparable to 'that [behaviour] exhibited by certain people on encountering someone with a visible physical handicap. They pretend not to notice that the handicap exists and hope, thereby, to minimize discomfort.' The conclusion was that although the 'colour-blind perspective' might 'ease initial tensions and minimize the frequency of overt conflict', it did so at a high price: Ellis Cose, *Color-blind*: *Seeing Beyond Race in a Race-obsessed World* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), pp. 189–90.

40. There is another form of habituation relevant here that has to do with being 'normate', the term used by disability studies to refer to those of us who do not think of ourselves as having disabilities. That is, however, more than I can attend to in this essay.

The Eucharist: A Meal with Friends

Steve Summers

Introduction

The background to this chapter is a wider research project, which asks the question: 'With reference to Christ's description "you are my friends" in John 15.15, what are the implications of friendship for the church in postmodernity?' I suggest that amongst the various expressions of the church currently used, such as 'the Body of Christ' or 'the People of God', few have more unexplored potential in our postmodern context than 'the Friends of Christ'. I contend that an emphasis on friendship and an understanding of the church as Friends of God, and thus of each other, provides a challenge to re-evaluate the church's mission ethos;[1] and further, it offers a robust relational and non-structural way of re-thinking its identity.

This facet of the argument – the role of the Eucharist in the church community – presupposes some familiarity with the wider context of friendship as it relates to the church, particularly in the following areas:

1. in revealing the long-term but sparse theological interest in friendship, mainly building on classical roots,
2. in establishing the nature of personhood as being defined in relationship, and
3. in developing the potential of corporeal beings, as essentially connected and not isolated in the Cartesian sense.

Also important is how personhood is currently understood, and how this feeds into ambiguity about the role of friendship in the twenty-first century.

I intend the outcome of this exploration to reveal the potential of friendship for the contemporary church, and its particular expression offered in the Eucharist. This is a *communio* ecclesiology, recognizing 'relationality' as fundamental to its being, and underpinned by Jesus' description of his disciples in John 15. His statement 'you are my friends' might turn out to be more than just a warm-hearted turn of phrase.

The Eucharist

The centrality of the Eucharist to the Christian Church is widely accepted. From its earliest days it was the practice to worship in this way, and it formed doctrine in the pattern of *lex orandi, lex credendi.* Yet, beyond this, the Eucharist is a comment on 'who the church is' in relationship with Christ: it is an expression of how Christ was known in a pattern of table-fellowship. In other words, the Eucharist can operate on a parallel plane to belief and doctrine, where the interpersonal and social is the focus; where 'breaking and sharing' is more than metaphor. It is easy to forget that here a shared meal is experienced, not just an ecclesially couched, liturgical metaphor for 'sustenance by Christ'.

Timothy Gorringe makes the point in *The Sign of Love* that the Eucharist does not correspond entirely to the Passover (or Passover-style) meal that Jesus shares with his friends immediately prior to his death.[2] There is a continuation of shared table-fellowship after his resurrection, most clearly described in St Luke's account of the Emmaus road encounter (Lk. 24.13–35). In this regard, the term 'Last Supper' is something of a misnomer, as Jesus continued to eat with his disciples after the resurrection. Gorringe's point is not merely semantic: he wants to identify the Eucharist with a spirit of 'hope-filled celebration', as well as locating it in the more familiar matrix of a mournful farewell prior to suffering and death. He suggests that 'Emmaus is as much a forerunner of the eucharist as the meal in the upper room, if not more so'.[3] This celebratory dimension links the Eucharist to the table-fellowship with friends that Jesus enjoys prior to his arrest and crucifixion, this fellowship being open and welcoming to all.

Of course, Gorringe highlights but one understanding of the Eucharist amongst many, so I have selected three other approaches that seek to uncover the theological implications of sharing bread and wine together in a communal setting: the hospitality of God experienced in a meal with friends. The following are illustrative, rather than comprehensively representative.

Firstly, the liberative power of the Eucharist is evident in William Cavanaugh's *Torture and Eucharist*: he takes the Eucharist into the realm of the political by using it as an example of hope in the face of government-sponsored abuse, oppression and torture. He sees the Eucharist as the church's response to torture: it is an event in which bodies are given over to God, and incorporated into the church's liturgy of love and sacrifice. The eucharistic ethic includes the 're-membering' of bodies who have been silenced or imprisoned and tortured, or worse still, 'disappeared'. Writing in the particular context of Chilean politics, during Pinochet's oppression of the Catholic Church from 1973 to 1990, Cavanaugh's reclamation of the Eucharist highlights its potential for opening up an eschatological horizon, whilst remaining located in the present. In this way, the Body of Christ can be constructed in a 'hopeful' manner that looks to a future which counteracts the constriction and reduction of the world, in this case by violent oppression. This approach is capable of looking back into history and keeping alive the 'subversive memory of Christ's confrontation with, and triumph over, worldly power'.[4] Cavanaugh thus asserts the supreme relevance of the

Eucharist for the contemporary nature of the church, not just as a political statement, but as a means of the church realizing its identity and becoming visible. He states:

> If the church is to resist disappearance, then it must be publicly visible as the Body of Christ in the present time, not secreted away in the souls of believers or relegated to the distant historical past or future. It becomes visible through its disciplined practices ... a Eucharistic discipline ... a conformity to Christ, and therefore an assimilation to Christ's self-sacrifice. Christ in the Eucharist actively disciplines the church. The church does not simply perform the Eucharist; the Eucharist performs the church.[5]

Secondly, the foundational nature of the Eucharist to the identity of the church is a key component of Paul McPartlan's book *The Eucharist Makes the Church*. Here he develops the Augustinian notion that in receiving the body of Christ, the church *becomes* the body of Christ: the dynamic of sharing in this body is a sharing in the life of Christ, and is thus a *present event* more than the re-enactment of a past one. McPartlan sets out Henri de Lubac's argument that the community dimension of the Eucharist suffered greatly in the eucharistic controversy at the start of the second millennium. Up until then, he argues, the Eucharist was seen to be making the church, enduing it with distinctive identity. After this watershed, the Eucharist ceased to shape the church, and became one of seven sacraments that the church celebrated. Much more attention was paid to the assertion that bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ than to the church's reception of these transformed gifts, and its own subsequent transformation in Christ: hence the church came to see itself as 'making the Eucharist'. McPartlan hopes to redress the balance and, by applying John Zizioulas's Trinitarian insights on the life-giving nature of communion, to reveal a new way forward for the third millennium. He describes Zizioulas's stance, found in the first of his three lectures on theology and ecology, *Preserving God's Creation*, as follows:

> For Zizioulas, *all* Christians, in their respective order in the Eucharist, exercise the priesthood of Christ; *complementarily* they *are* Christ the Priest, situated between God and his creation. There Christ stands not outside them but in their midst, constituting them and being constituted by them. There, between God and His creation, stands the corporate Christ, utterly differentiated in unity.[6]

Although there is no structured attempt to create parity between these two theologians, McPartlan's approach is inherently ecumenical, showing how de Lubac and Zizioulas, from very different ecclesial traditions, are saying similar things about the *constitutive nature* of eucharistic celebration.

Thirdly, whilst McPartlan is concerned with the constitutive nature of the eucharistic meal for the church community, Ann Primavesi and Jennifer Henderson write in the context of the divided church in Northern Ireland, and seek to restore the Eucharist as a sign of unity and liberty. They deal with how this meal is shared in the community: in *Our God Has No Favourites: A Liberation Theology of the Eucharist*, they encourage a re-thinking of what liberation theology might mean if cut free from a Latin American context. For them, the recipients of

a liberative theology need not be exclusively those in the 'developing world'. The oppressed are those who are discriminated against and excluded, wherever that might be. In particular, Primavesi and Henderson want to reclaim the eucharistic meal as an act of community fellowship which, because it is presided over by a priest, is prone to institutional corruption in the form of adherence to authority structures that determine who is, and who is not, worthy to share in that meal.[7] This exclusion, so familiar to the authors in their context, is unacceptable, for it is a betrayal of the commonality of this shared meal. They therefore pose this challenge:

> Those who go hungry at our Eucharists raise . . . awareness in the Christian churches about discriminatory structures.[8] These institutionalise the injustice of withholding true bread for life from those not recognized as worthy.[9]

The roots of their alternative approach are found in the historic disruption of conventional divisions initiated by Jesus in his culture. They see this in his use of parables for teaching, and in open table-fellowship, where he effectively erases the 'worthy/unworthy' distinction, the breaking of bread together being inherently inclusive rather than exclusive.[10] In sharing eating and drinking vessels and food, in touching the unclean (and allowing himself to be touched by them) Jesus is deliberately violating commonly accepted socio-religious and purity codes. Like Gorringe, Primavesi and Henderson argue that modelling the Eucharist *exclusively* on the last meal of Christ with his disciples fails to recognize the diverse and radical nature of his 'normal' table-fellowship. The exclusive company of twelve males for this ritual meal takes no account of his known pattern of eating with non-disciples and women.[11] Regarding this, Primavesi and Henderson comment on two passages from Lk. 14.7–24. Here, the story is told that Jesus, attending a meal in the home of a leader of the Pharisees, challenges the hierarchical seating arrangements around the table. He suggests that they ought to seek lower, not higher positions of honour at meals, and when feasting, should invite those who cannot reciprocate the favour, namely the poor and marginalized. The apogee of this principle is reached in the parable of the Great Feast, in which a host, having been turned down by all his invited guests, gathers in every available person, of whatever status, in order to make up the numbers at his table. They observe that

> The shock we experience today when juxtaposing excluding church disciplines with the inclusive invitation of the Great Banquet parable, forces on our attention the failure of the churches to witness to the indiscriminate love of God . . . But perhaps the deepest shock is felt when we face the mystery of our own invitation. We can make no claim on God's graciousness.[12]

Primavesi and Henderson encourage recognition of the great social levelling inherent in the eucharistic meal, a meal in which Christ includes rather than excludes: it is a meal that emphasizes that *all* who come to it are needy and that (since God has no favourites) *all* are welcome. In this way, the recognition of a common status as 'needy' forms the basis for a liberation theology of the Eucharist,

at the heart of which is the giving of thanks and celebrating (in a communal context) the life-giving nature of Christ for all who share with him.

The Eucharist as a ritual meal expresses links to the past in terms of ecclesiological practice and the divine–human relationship, but also hope for the community's future. It is *the* ritualized expression of a sharing community: in the act of sharing a meal, there is potent symbolism. In the eucharistic ritual, the ancient hospitable offer to share around God's table is extended.

A Meal with Friends

I now want to consider the Eucharist as an expression of the social nature of the God who engages in intimate fellowship (or communion) with those whom he[13] calls friends. This understanding of the Eucharist shifts the definition of 'friends' away from those whose ecclesiological pedigree deems them worthy to gather at the table. It removes the Eucharist from the realm of self-selection (or indeed from the realm of peer selection), and places it in the hands of God. Those whom God calls friends are those he meets at the table.

Timothy Gorringe begins *The Sign of Love*, a reflection on the Eucharist as descriptive of relationship with God, with a definition of the Eucharist as 'trans-significational',[14] rather than focusing on the changing of bread and wine into something 'other' (transubstantiational). Gorringe argues for an understanding of the elements in the Eucharist as *signifying* something, and this signification is what is being changed in a eucharistic context. He asserts that

> We take bread and wine – the stuff of ordinary life, symbols of basic nourishment and of celebration – and we place them in quite a different context, within the story of God's redeeming activity. In this case, what they signify is changed.[15]

Trans-signification, for him, means that 'at the level of signifying, at the level of the social world which human beings occupy, the bread and wine are quite different'.[16] He locates the sacramental quality of the Eucharist, not in an elemental change, but in the *meaning* of the elements to those who receive them. What is of interest here is the potential that this approach offers to a consideration of friendship as a relationship that is open, not exclusive, despite being a particular expression of love. Indeed it is a relationship that well expresses fundamental human relationality, through which one discovers personhood. However, the question must be asked in the context of the church: is Christian friendship different from secular friendship? Augustine argued that there *was* a fundamental difference, as friendship was an expression of 'love of God', indeed it was a return of God's love through the believer.[17] I would challenge this view, seeing friendship as a fundamental expression of human love, with no exclusive link to a religious persuasion.

Considering St John's expression of the relationship between Jesus and his disciples – 'you are my friends' – it would be stretching credibility to imagine that Jesus is initiating an entirely new relationship which he chooses to name

'friendship', but actually means a different type of friendship from that which was known in his community. The friendship described in this text is explained in the terms of the day: love, self-sacrifice, and the revelation of intimate knowledge, beyond that which would characterize the relationship one would have with a servant (Jn 15.12–15). What is evident, and this is useful for re-thinking what friendship means in a Christian context, is that friendship is being 'trans-signified'. Its social meaning is being shifted or reworked, so that although what 'friendship' *means* is not being changed, what friendship means *in the network of Christian discipleship* is taking on a new significance. Thus, it points to something new; it speaks of a 'new way of being' towards each other in relationship. In this way, those who participate in it as friends are entering a relationship replete with new meaning. To be friends in this context means to be friends of God, friends of Christ, and also to be friends with each other. This added dimension does not alter what the word 'friendship' means, but invests it with a transcendental depth – an invigorated ontology.

Eating Together

There is little doubt that table-fellowship in first-century Mediterranean culture had deep social and religious import, from the purity codes associated with preparation of food, to the socio-political implications of sharing that food with another person of differing status. In Mt. 11.19 and Lk. 7.34, a scene is presented in which Jesus praises John the Baptist, and confirms his role and authority as a prophet. He then contrasts the receptions that he and John have had from their opponents. John's asceticism has led to an accusation of demonic passion, whilst his own social conviviality has led to accusations of being a drunkard and a glutton, the friend of tax collectors and sinners:

> For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' (Luke 7.34)

That Jesus in these portrayals (using the self-referential title 'Son of Man') has no objection to being identified as a friend of tax collectors and sinners (those whom 'respectable' people would shun) is important. The accusation extends not just to gastronomic over-indulgence, but to the social context in which it took place. In stark contrast to John the Baptist, who is portrayed not only as ascetic in his eating habits, but remote in his lifestyle, choosing to inhabit the wilderness outside the city (Mt. 3.1–5; 11.7; Mk 1.4–6), Jesus is 'plugged into' the local social scene.

In his 2001 article 'The Table Fellowship of Jesus with the Marginalised: A Radical Inclusiveness', Santos Yao finds Jesus' radically open table-fellowship to be one of the main contributory factors to his arrest and subsequent death, for it pushes the limits of Pharisaic tolerance beyond breaking point.[18] Yao suggests that 'by sharing a meal with the "sinners", God's love is vividly painted as condescending. It reaches down even to the lowest level of human society'.[19]

Why is this presented in these biblical accounts as being so problematic for the Pharisees? Because this 'marginalized' class of people are excluded from God's blessings due to their impurity. In sitting down to eat with them, Jesus is 'essentially extending peace, trust, brotherhood, forgiveness and acceptance'.[20] This of course circumvents the closely monitored methods for attaining such levels of acceptance, and those who diligently policed such methods were largely the offended Pharisees. Yet, there is more going on here than the giving of personal offence to a few egotistical community leaders. This monitoring of purity codes had to do with national acceptability before God: it was a deeply theological issue with implications for national identity, not in the sense of a modern notion of the nation-state, but in confirming a 'badge of identity'.

Openness to 'the Other'

Central to this understanding of friendship is the notion of hospitality. Friendship is not a closed relationship, in the sense that in marriage one has only one spouse – the expression of that particular love identified with one individual. Friendship is inherently open to others; one may have a particularly close friend, but that does not preclude the possibility of another joining that relationship, or indeed of one developing additional friendships. One would expect that one's friends are friends with others, as well as with oneself; friendship is open to others. So, hospitality reflects openness to the stranger; it is an expression of the open nature of Christian discipleship, in which it is God who calls his followers, not the church.

As we have seen, in Jesus' ministry radical openness to the marginalized seemed to provoke a consistently aggressive reaction from the religious leaders of the day. Table-fellowship, the act of engaging in communal eating, brings a person into the social sphere of the guest or host, and Jesus' apparent lack of discrimination levels religious leaders and the socially marginalized. So, being a friend of sinners has, at its centre, a challenging ethos: openness to the other, a willingness to be hospitable not to those who are 'like' but to those who are 'unlike' oneself. It could be argued that hospitality to the stranger is what the incarnation *exemplifies, offers and requests*: casting oneself on the mercy of those to whom one is not counted as kinsman or friend, in the hope that welcome and acceptance will be extended. If so, this is the method of the God who loves the stranger, and is the principle at work in Jesus' table-fellowship, as he offers and receives hospitality.

The Problem of Hospitality

Jacques Derrida, more explicitly than most, has highlighted a fundamental tension in the concept of hospitality. He points out that it is about total openness to 'the Other', allowing them to be who they are without imposing constraints or conditions upon them in order for them to be acceptable to us. Whilst this might be almost conceivable in one's behaviour towards another individual, the reality of being 'generally hospitable' to all is too enormous to contemplate. It would require

so much of a person (in that they would have to divest themselves of all ownership of possessions and identity) that the task is rendered overwhelming, requiring extreme altruism. Contrary to this, however, for hospitality to be truly hospitable, the host must be in a position of control; of 'being host' to the guests, of *offering* hospitality as a gift. For, if the guests take over the home against the will of the host, this is no longer hospitality, for control has been surrendered. So, hospitality requires a sense of control that tempers the claim of absolute altruism, and allows the host to establish and maintain boundaries. There is a tension here (which Derrida considers to be a creative tension), in that hospitable openness to 'the Other' requires acceptance without a 'demand to change'. This requires the host to abdicate the power to 'control the Other', which, in itself, is part of the characteristic of ownership and control that defines the status of host. Derrida holds that hospitality encompasses all relations to the Other; and it is about risk.[21] This has particular relevance in a consideration of the risk of divine hospitality. Evidenced in the life of Christ, and expressed in the eucharistic meal, it encourages a place for the hospitality of the church to be expressed in friendship.

The Surprise of Hospitality

The philosopher John D. Caputo asks for a reconsideration of what is meant when 'God' is talked of. In *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event*, he advocates a shift from thinking about God in terms of a name or concept, to the word 'God' as being the expression of an event. He rejects an understanding of God as omnipotent, in favour of seeing God as a 'weak force' in the universe, who, in the absence of physical or metaphysical leverage, nevertheless makes an unconditional claim on every person. Behind Caputo's terminology is perhaps Gianni Vattimo's notion of *pensiero debole*, 'weak thought', as a response to the 'strong thought' that asserts a reality based on everlasting transcendental structures of reason. Caputo seeks an open horizon of meaning, so that any attempt to 'encapsulate' God, in talk of God's nature or action, is rejected. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, Caputo spends no time exploring the Trinitarian nature of God but prefers to highlight his 'God without sovereignty', known in the events of vulnerable love, forgiveness, the pursuit of justice and, crucially, the offering of hospitality. Like Derrida, Caputo thinks that hospitality is a difficult and rare event, even amongst those who would claim to live according to the values of the Kingdom of God, for he argues that hospitality

> means to make the *other* welcome, which is very much the opposite of what hospitality means in the world. Outside the kingdom, hospitality means welcoming the same, even though it pays lip service to welcoming the other. The world's hospitality, which is carefully calculated and practiced under strict conditions, is extended only to those who are on the list of invited guests, which is made up of selected friends and neighbours who can be counted on to reciprocate. But that is precisely not the welcoming of the other, but rather staying precisely within the circle of the same.[22]

Caputo's prooftexts are those encountered earlier, the parable of the wedding feast in Mt. 22.1–14 and the great feast in Lk. 14.15–24. In the face of various excuses as to why his guests cannot attend, the host sends word to invite any who can be found to come in: the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame. On finding space still left at the table, the host dispatches his servants to find passers-by and compel them (of necessity) to come in. This compulsory hospitality to social outcasts 'has all the earmarks of the event, all the disequilibrium and excess of the event that stirs within the name of God and that mobilizes a kingdom exposed to God's rule'.[23] Again Caputo states, 'membership in the Kingdom is the work of the event, not of human admission procedures'.[24] The supreme generosity of the host in the parable of the feast provides for Caputo a model of Kingdom generosity, but, more than that, it retains a sense of the door to the Kingdom being wedged open so that no-one can say that the table has been filled, or that there is no more room, or that such and such a person is not welcome. In this regard, Caputo mirrors Derrida's sense of the *impossible*; his notion of God as 'event' prevents closure (at any time) on what God can or cannot do, and therefore of what (or whom) the Kingdom of God does, or does not, consist. So he asks, 'Does the kingdom even *have* borders or a border patrol'?[25] I believe his intention here is not to question the existence of borders as a challenge to *difference*, but as a challenge to *exclusion*. So he acknowledges the existence of boundaries, as does Derrida, for their existence allows them to be overcome, thus providing the energy (and indeed the need) for hospitality. Caputo argues that 'When we call for the kingdom to come, therefore, we are being called to push against these limits, to strain against these conditions, to practice a mad and unconditional hospitality, which is impossible'.[26] What is the boundary to which he refers? It is the calculated reciprocity of a closed group, one that operates only within its own borders, and whose understanding of alterity is a limited, safe and 'knowable' one.

What then is the relevance of this discussion around the open kingdom, and such radical hospitality as that suggested by the parables of the great feast and wedding feast? There is an important link to earlier thoughts on the Eucharist and friendship. If it is possible to re-think what the eucharistic celebration is doing in terms of trans-signification, and to see it as an opportunity to exhibit the radical openness of the Kingdom, then it can become an event that expresses a community characterized by friendship. This is not to say there are no boundaries to the community, but that the boundaries provide the thing that 'communicative praxis'[27] overcomes. The reasoning for this has become apparent: against the backdrop of a God who is known primarily in relational terms, it is possible to conceive of a community that primarily identifies itself relationally, in terms of a 'network of friendships' that are by nature open-ended, and thus have an unknown future. In this future, the community can grow through hospitality, which, by its nature, is the 'impossible' attempt to make welcome those who are 'other'. Thus, the call to become part of a kingdom, with boundaries that are not established or maintained by the church community, is a call to be 'friends of Christ'. This call however, is complex: (1) it is a call that comes from outside the community, for Christ is not contained by the Christian Church, though he is present in it; (2) it is also a hospitable invitation from those within that community; and (3) it perhaps

also contains an element of attraction, in that one might be drawn to join this community. What then can form the locus of such a community, and what can engender a sense of belonging robust enough to provide community identity, whilst also being energetic enough to fuel this 'impossible' task of hospitality? The answer may be found in the dynamic of eucharistic table-fellowship, in which the God who welcomes all shares and is shared.

This divine encounter becomes the sustenance of the community, who sit at table with one another and with Christ. In the breaking, sharing and eating together, the divided and reunited community is mirrored.[28] Relationship is expressed in communal terms, and the church sees itself not as the opportunity for simultaneous, privatized religious experience, but as a corporate encounter of hospitality received and offered. In faithfulness to the divine act of hospitality this community must be open to the event of sharing together, and to whatever may emerge from that. This is ably described by John Zizioulas:

> This kenotic approach to communion with the other is not determined in any way by the qualities that he or she might or might not possess. In accepting the sinner into communion, Christ applied the Trinitarian model. The other is not to be identified by his or her qualities, but by the sheer fact that he or she *is*, and is himself or herself. We cannot discriminate between those who are worthy of our acceptance and those who are not. This is what the Christological model of communion with others requires.[29]

This 'kenotic' or 'self-emptying' way of being reaches its climax in the Eucharist, where the emphasis and focus shift from recipient to source: the ultimate expression of self-giving for the sake of the other. In the shared feeding from Christ the church becomes the beneficial recipient of a crossing of the ultimate boundary of 'otherness'. Sharing in the eucharistic act of being sustained by God (who is Wholly Other) is thus consonant with sharing in the communal life of friendship and this is, in large part, the act of being sustained by the other. The outcome of a relationally based Christian faith, or 'friendship with Christ', must remain unknown and undefined, not because it is impossible to guess at its nature, but because it is in the 'impossibility' of such a community that the creative power of God is given opportunity to be experienced.[30] This is a community oriented towards the *eschaton*, not because it refuses to engage with the present (in fact exactly the opposite), but because its potency is in its becoming, and what it will be must remain unknown, for it is relational not structural.

Conclusion

In the relationship of friendship with God, whose plan is as yet unfinished, and in relationships of friendship with those encountered in and around a community which, by definition, is open to growth, a vibrant expression of church can develop. All this from eating at a table together? In a sense, yes; but of course table-fellowship in the eucharistic liturgical context, as in the domestic context, is not a solitary act; it is located in a web of connectedness making it more potent than the

mere mechanics of food consumption might suggest. Eucharistic table-fellowship can be 'trans-significational', and its vitality, I would argue, comes from (and is fed by) the status of its participants as 'friends of God'.

Notes

1. In the main, I address the UK ecclesial context, but may discussion obviously has much wider implications throughout the church.
2. Continuity with other meals that Jesus shared is the subject of John Henson's *Other Communions of Jesus* (Winchester and New York: O Books, 2006), in which he seeks, in popular fashion, to suggest that 'The whole atmosphere of Holy Communion undergoes a transformation the moment we begin to realize its origin is not to be found in the betrayal night alone' (p. 145).
3. Timothy Gorringe, *The Sign of Love: Reflections on the Eucharist* (London: SPCK, 1997), p. 72.
4. William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p. 280.
5. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, p. 234.
6. Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), p. 296.
7. They note that First World liberation theologies tend to come more from lay-led initiatives than the clerically driven traditional liberation theologies: Ann Primavesi and Jennifer Henderson, *Our God Has No Favourites: A Liberation Theology of the Eucharist* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1989), pp. 7–8.
8. There is a resonance here with Pauline accusations of exclusivity in the *agape* (1 Cor. 11.17-34).
9. Primavesi and Henderson, *Our God Has No Favourites*, p. 11.
10. Ibid., p. 15.
11. Ibid., p. 36.
12. Ibid., p. 47.
13. I use gendered language where 'he' is theological and symbolic, with no supposition that God is intrinsically gendered.
14. Behind Gorringe's stance is the discussion assisted by, on the Anglican side, Will Spens' suggestion that 'transvaluation' is an appropriate description of the eucharistic event, where bread and wine, through their natural properties and the significance attached to them, become effective and powerful symbols of Christ's presence. Similarly Piet Schoonenberg and Edward Schillebeeckx, on the Roman Catholic side of the debate, have proposed a 'transignificational' approach, where transubstantiation is 'updated' to encompass the recognition that any object has a place or significance that is more than its material construction. It has a totality of meaning supplied by its significance – this is what is changed in the Eucharist, as the sign-reality of bread and wine is changed for the recipient worshippers. This view is expanded by John Macquarrie in *A Guide to the Sacraments* (London: SCM Press, 1997), pp. 133–94, and in that regard is foundational for Gorringe.
15. Gorringe, *The Sign of Love*, p. 72.
16. Ibid., p. 10.
17. In *The City of God*, XI, 28, Augustine is clear that the human capacity for love sets humanity above other creatures, who respond only to their carnal senses. Human love may be a reflection of that divine love which grows and causes evil to decrease through its outworking, but ultimately humanity must worship God – that is the ultimate goal. However, pure love has only one source, God. There is a sense of tension in some of Augustine's comments on friendship love – appreciating its place in his pre-Christian existence whilst wishing to distance and differentiate his present life from that one. This is discussed by Carolinne White

in *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 200.

18. Yao addresses the 'feeding of the four thousand' in Mt. 15.32–39 and Mk 8.1–10, set in the Decapolis, as specifically reflecting the inclusion of Gentiles in table-fellowship.

19. Santos Yao, 'The Table Fellowship of Jesus with the Marginalised: A Radical Inclusiveness', *Journal of Asian Missions* 3 (2001), 25–41 (30).

20. Ibid., 31. The intimacy associated with table-fellowship in first-century Mediterranean culture appears to have no contemporary Western equivalent. It spoke of a deep acceptance and commitment between the diners.

21. Derrida offers some revealing comments in response to questions at the University of Sussex in 1997: Jacques Derrida, 'Politics and Friendship: A Discussion with Jacques Derrida', available at http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/frenchthought/derrida.htm. See also Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, tr. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), where he discusses this topic in more detail.

22. John D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 262.

23. Ibid., p. 260.

24. Ibid., p. 260.

25. Ibid., p. 266.

26. Ibid., p. 262.

27. This is not a new concept. Elaine Graham and others use this phrase, but behind it lies Jürgen Habermas' Communicative Action theory, as found in Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2, tr. Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), pp. 82–100. Jürgen Moltmann also deals with the concept of overcoming alterity in community in a chapter entitled 'The Knowing of the Other and the Community of the Different', in his *God for a Secular Society* (London: SCM Press, 1999), pp. 135–52.

28. The church local and universal pictured in the elements and participants.

29. John D. Zizioulas, 'Communion and Otherness', lecture delivered at the European Orthodox Congress in 1993, available at http://incommunion.org/articles/previous-issues/older-issues/communion-and-otherness.

30. 'Impossibility' here refers to the secular Derridean 'impossible' or Caputo's divine 'weakness'.

'By Schisms Rent Asunder, By Heresies Distrest': Anglicanism after the Windsor Report

Mark Chapman

The Colenso Affair

In 1866 Samuel John Stone, curate of St Paul's, Haggerston, published a hymn collection called *Lyra Fidelium.* It contains just one hymn which is still occasionally sung: 'The church's one foundation'. This has some particularly direct lines in verse 3:

> Though with a scornful wonder
> Men see her sore opprest,
> By schisms rent asunder,
> By heresies distrest,
> Yet Saints their watch are keeping,
> Their cry goes up, 'How long?'
> And soon the night of weeping
> Shall be the morn of song.

This hymn was written, as the author said, 'out of admiration for the opposition shown by Bishop Gray of Cape Town to Bishop Colenso's teaching'. So popular did it soon become that Archbishop Frederick Temple used to complain that he found it sung wherever he went – and always to the oompah tune Aurelia, composed by Samuel Sebastian Wesley originally for 'Jerusalem the Golden'.[1] While late-Victorian England was not noted for its sense of humour or frivolity, one can't help thinking that it might have occasionally been chosen to be sung before the aged archbishop as a less than subtle attack on a man whose own orthodoxy had been under question at exactly the same time as that of Bishop Colenso.

The church of the 1860s was one that was changing – seemingly novel ideas were being promulgated in far-flung parts of the world which seemed to be a direct assault on the teachings of the Church. And in the case of Bishop Colenso there was one colonial bishop (Bishop Robert Gray, a fine Tractarian) charging another with heresy. I am not sure that historical parallels are always particularly relevant, but there is undoubtedly some connection with what is going on today in the

Anglican Communion. I'll come to that later on, but first of all a few words about Colenso himself and his alleged heresy.

John William Colenso (1814–1883),[2] a Cornishman, was appointed to be the first bishop in the new diocese of Natal in 1853. Natal in those days was already a rather unusual place, even among missionary outposts in the British Empire – a mixture of Zulus, Boers and English settlers, all relatively secure in their own places. As a bishop of a new diocese, Colenso had to work out how best to exercise his ministry. So for a few months he toured the area and then came back to England to reflect upon what he had seen.[3] He was especially convinced that a new mission station was needed in Zululand – since up to that time there had been virtually no successful missions among the native peoples. All this was quite uncontroversial and he was able to raise money for his project from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. He went back to Africa and soon set about translating the Bible into Zulu, as well as lecturing and preaching – and that is where the problems began.

Colenso gradually became convinced that the sorts of customs he had seen among the Africans were not to be simply dismissed as empty superstitions – to him they seemed to express something genuinely religious. Africans weren't just heathen who had to be converted at all costs. Their culture and their way of doing things had to be understood sympathetically, and it was the duty of the missionary to try to find parallels and similarities between Christianity and the native religions, and not just arrogantly dismiss everything in sight. God's forgiveness, he felt, extended to everyone, Christian and non-Christian alike. Colenso spent a fair bit of time during these early years writing a commentary on Romans in which he expressed his ideas on the universality of redemption.[4] He was in today's terms a liberal – he quickly accepted the doctrine of evolution, but more importantly (and controversially) he suggested that polygamists were not beyond redemption if they did not dispose of all but one wife.[5] On practical grounds he recognized that all the wives needed to be cared for – he did not believe in polygamy but he felt it was better than destitution.[6] And if that wasn't enough, he stressed in his commentary over and over again the fact that no person can base his or her feelings of racial superiority on the Christian faith. God's love, he felt, was for all – his mercy was available for everybody regardless. If you will excuse the Victorian prose:

> [God] himself, the Father of Spirits, is everywhere enlightening and quickening the spirits of men. Every good thought, which has ever stirred within a heathen's mind, is a token of that work which God's good spirit is working within him, as one of the great human family, redeemed by the Love of God in Christ Jesus, and related all to the Second Adam by a second spiritual birth, (of which Baptism is the express sign and seal to the Christian).[7]

It may well be the case, he reasoned, that there was no other name under which we might be saved, but that name was of universal significance, whether it was known or not. He had a kind of theory of anonymous Christianity.

Now, this relatively moderate view of a universal salvation was as challenging at the time in South Africa as it was in England – after all, only a few years earlier the

great theologian F. D. Maurice had been dismissed from his post at King's College London for suggesting similar sorts of ideas. This was enough to provoke the high-church Bishop Gray into accusations of heresy and led to a complete estrangement of Colenso from the dean of his cathedral at Pietermaritzburg.

But Colenso was not one to be silenced. After the epistle to the Romans he turned to the Old Testament – and in particular to the Pentateuch. He was disturbed by much of what he read there, including the following passage:

> And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money. (Exod. 21.20–21 AV)

He wrote in the introduction to the first volume of his commentary on the Pentateuch in 1862:

> I shall never forget the revulsion of feeling, with which a very intelligent Christian native, with whose help I was translating these words into the Zulu tongue, first heard them as words said to be uttered by the same great and gracious Being, whom I was teaching him to trust in and adore. His whole soul revolted against the notion, that the Great and Blessed God, the Merciful Father of all mankind, would speak of a servant or maid as mere 'money', and allow a horrible crime to go unpunished, because the victim of the brutal usage had survived a few hours.[8]

As Colenso set about translating the Bible he became more and more worried about precisely what it was that he was translating. How did what seemed to him to be acts of gross immorality relate to the missionary situation? And it wasn't merely that some of the stories seemed quite immoral. He was just as worried about whether some of them were even true; as a mathematician he set about showing the implausibility of a number of the stories. Once again he claimed that it was a conversation with a Zulu that caused him to have second thoughts:

> While translating the story of the Flood, I have had a simple-minded, but intelligent, native, – one with the docility of a child, but the reasoning powers of mature age, – look up, and ask, 'Is all that true? Do you really believe that all this happened thus, – that all the beasts, and birds, and creeping things, upon the earth, large and small, from hot countries and cold, came thus in pairs, and entered into the ark with Noah? And did Noah gather food for them *all*, for the beasts and the birds of prey, as well as the rest?' My heart answered in the words of the Prophet, 'Shall a man speak lies in the Name of the LORD?' (Zech.xiii.3). I dared not do so.[9]

Modern studies, Colenso went on, had proved that a universal flood was quite impossible, at least according to the account in the book of Genesis, and, furthermore, the ark would never have been big enough to accommodate all the species of animals. He continued:

Knowing this, I felt that I dared not, as a servant of the God of Truth, urge my brother man to believe that, which I did not myself believe, which I knew to be untrue, as a matter-of-fact, historical narrative.[10]

As the years passed, Bishop Colenso went further and further into his studies, and gradually became convinced that much of what he had taken to be historical fact could not possibly have happened – the numbers simply did not add up.[11] And perhaps even more disturbingly, he came to the conclusion that the God presented in so much of the Bible was completely and utterly immoral. Christians, he felt, had a duty to the truth, to work out precisely *how* the Bible could be said to be the word of the Lord.

Most churchmen, however, could not look on the Bible in this way. Dean Burgon of Chichester, a leading churchman of the day, wrote this against Colenso:

> The Bible is none other than *the voice of Him that sitteth upon the Throne!* Every book of it – every chapter of it – every verse of it – every word of it – every syllable of it – (where are we to stop?) every *letter* of it – is the direct utterance of the Most High! The Bible is none other than the Word of God – not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike, the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the throne – absolute – faultless – unerring – supreme.[12]

On such a view the whole Bible was holy and sacred; it was literally the words dictated by God. With views like that in an English deanery it comes as little surprise to learn that Colenso's views soon upset leading figures in the English church; the church press was up in arms and there was a barrage of pamphlets. Had they had the Internet there would no doubt have been a nineteenth-century equivalent of Anglican Mainstream asking the question: what right had a bishop to be denying the truth of the Bible? What right had he to be defending even a modest form of polygamy? How could a bishop claim that the Christian God could be found everywhere – even among the so-called primitive religions of Africa? We should break communion and refuse his ministrations. Things soon got quite sticky for Colenso, and in 1865 Gray deposed him and charged him with heresy, formally excommunicating him the following year. There was a lengthy legal process, Colenso refusing to accept Gray's authority. After the long and very technical case was heard in London before the Privy Council, Colenso managed to hold on to the endowments of his diocese and he remained Bishop of Natal; but it was only the redoubtable A. P. Stanley, Dean of Westminster, who held out in his favour. Colenso was even estranged from his friend and sometime mentor, F. D. Maurice. In the end, the South African church created a new diocese of Maritzburg, and after Colenso's death there were parallel jurisdictions.

Now, many myths have grown up around Colenso and a great deal of the writing is hagiographical; he certainly wasn't all sweetness and light, and he was undoubtedly provocative and was a virtual Erastian in his understanding of the relationship between church and state. He was prepared to use what seemed to many to be a very secular court to defend his claim. And it is rather ironical that a deeply conservative and almost wholly white church, the Church of England in

South Africa, owes its origin in part to Colenso's church (although its later bishops derive from the arch-conservative diocese of Sydney). The rehabilitation of Colenso only began in the 1970s when a ghastly new and very large brick cathedral was built in the shadow of the old. The old cathedral now symbolically contains two pulpits that I suppose could be labelled 'truth' and 'error'. Which is which would no doubt be a debatable question. But it is true to say that Colenso remained very popular among a significant portion of the Zulu people and is still fondly referred to as Sobanthu – Father of the People. He was a pioneer of black education and he and his daughters spoke out against the policies of the colonial government, which can be seen as early forms of apartheid.

But it wasn't just from the conservatives that Colenso received criticism. There is a remarkable and very strange debate between Colenso and Matthew Arnold, the great Victorian poet and early post-Christian. He was almost as disturbed as Bishop Gray by Colenso's actions. Surely, he held, a bishop should be there to edify his flock, not to challenge what they held dear. Admittedly, he thought, it was right to question the Bible and to approach it with a critical spirit, but this was to be the preserve of the scholars and those who stood above the *hoi polloi*. It would be highly dangerous, he felt, for a bishop to meddle in questions of truth, since it might upset the apple cart and get people thinking for themselves. For Arnold it simply wasn't clear for whom the bishop was writing:

> The Bishop of Natal does not interest [the higher culture of England and Europe], neither yet does he edify the unlearned. Fulfilling neither of these conditions, the Bishop of Natal's book cannot justify itself for existing. When, in 1861, he heard for the first time that the old theory of the verbal inspiration of Scripture was untenable, he should, instead of proclaiming this news (if this was all he could proclaim) in an octavo volume, have remembered that excellent saying of the Wise Man: 'If thou hast heard a word, let it die with thee; and behold it will not burst thee.'[13]

What Arnold is effectively saying is that only those who are members of the elite have the right to disseminate critical scholarship – bishops, on the other hand, should have little interest in truth or at least keep it to themselves. Instead they should simply edify their flocks and not rock the boat. Arnold puts this rather more elegantly but less tersely:

> [Colenso] finds the simple everyday Englishman going into church, he buries him and the sacred fabric under an avalanche of rule-of-three sums; and when the poor man crawls from under the ruins, bruised, bleeding and bewildered, and begs for a little spiritual consolation, the bishop 'refers him' to his own Commentary on the Romans, two chapters of Exodus, a fragment of Cicero, a revelation to the Sikh Gooroos, and an invocation of Ram. This good Samaritan sets his battered brother on his own beast (the Commentary), and for oil and wine pours into his wounds the Hindoo prayer, the passage of Cicero, and the rest of it.[14]

For Arnold, as for many others, the duty of bishops is to build up and unify rather than to disturb and challenge for the sake of the truth.

All this points to the main question that seems to me to emerge from this discussion of Colenso: in what ways is unity more important than truth and how does one manage the relationships between the two? One of the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference of 1920 put this clearly:

> The Churches represented [in the Anglican Communion] are indeed independent, but independent with the Christian freedom which recognizes the restraints of truth and love. They are not free to deny the truth. They are not free to ignore the fellowship.[15]

When the Colenso affair was going on there was a call for some sort of settlement of this problem. It was obviously closely related to the issue of authority between and within the emerging new provinces of the Church, what soon became the Anglican Communion – and the Colenso affair was one of the major impetuses behind the calling of the first Lambeth Conference by Archbishop Longley in 1867 (although he would not allow it to be placed directly on the agenda). Now it doesn't take much effort to realize that the same sorts of issues are being raised once again, albeit in a completely different context. Disputes these days are not going to be decided by the Privy Council – and very few bishops see themselves, like Colenso, as the Queen's bishops. But the question still revolves around issues of unity and truth and the sort of authority required to decide on questions of truth.

The Windsor Report

This brings me on to some reflections on the lessons that might be learnt from Colenso and the management of conflict in the contemporary schisms and heresies of the Anglican Communion. First of all, I think that the Windsor Report[16] is a fairly impressive piece of work and would certainly be awarded a master's degree if it were submitted (I speak as an external examiner), but whether that would be a master's in theology is altogether another question, which I will come back to. And secondly, I think, given the heat of debate, it could have been far less eirenic. Nevertheless, I have several immediate criticisms of the sort of method embodied in the Report.

First, as is usual with reports like this, it is almost wholly self-referential and consists of many footnotes referring the reader to statements produced by the various bodies of the Anglican Communion. It is as if the Church started in 1867 and has no history or existence beyond this – methodologically it is a somewhat narrow piece of reflection. Almost the only other sources are from Scripture. It is as if nobody else outside the Anglican Communion was ever faced with the same sorts of problems of heresy and disunity. But the real issue which the Report was commissioned to address – that of provinces doing their own thing whatever the consequences for unity – has very many parallels through Christian history (even though these were not about consecrating an openly practising homosexual as a bishop). In earlier periods of Anglican history it was not unknown for Anglican

theologians to look back to the early church for theological resources rather than to gaze in on one another. I will briefly look at a few of these resources later.

Secondly, the fairly lengthy discussion of *adiaphora* in the Report (§§87–96) – of things indifferent to salvation – rather misses the point. For the most part, it seems to think that things which are indifferent to salvation are simply those things that don't really matter and are relative to culture. That is patently untrue if one looks simply at the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth I. Arguments over what constituted, and who decided what counted as, *adiaphora* led to some of most bitter disputes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which is conceded at §§88 and 94.[17]

Thirdly, the analysis of the concept of development, which is seen to be of vital importance and which is stressed at §32, has very little assessment of the understandings of theological development accepted in the formative years of the Church of England. There is little discussion of the relationships between Scripture and tradition and the formation of adequate criteria to discern whether or not something is an authentic development. It is not clear to me, as the Report says, that tradition consists primarily 'of the recollection of what the Scripture-reading church has said' (§59). Tradition – that which is handed over from one generation to the next, the *paradosis* – is identified with the message of the good news of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is a rather different and far more dynamic thing than a collection of the teachings of the Church.

Furthermore (and rather bizarrely), the Reformation is virtually ignored – issues of the relations between national churches and the proper sphere of the national and the international as these developed in history are scarcely discussed. Similarly, while there is a fair amount in the Report about the office and function of the bishop, there is remarkably little about how these are related to the *source* of episcopal authority in the living voice of Christ himself.

A fundamental question is almost completely overlooked: how do the developing 'Instruments of Unity' of the Anglican Communion – i.e. the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Primates' Meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council (§65) – relate to a collection of independent national churches which owe their existence to the unilateral action of one church in breaking with Rome on the grounds of the dispensation of canon law, and the growing belief that what it was doing was grounded in truth? This leads on to a set of related questions, all of which are discussed in the Report, but none in the context of this fundamental question: is the Anglican Communion one church (like the Roman Catholic Church) or is it a collection of churches most of which owe their ultimate origins to the national Church of England, but which have developed autonomously? Is, for instance, the Church of Canada an independent church attempting to achieve an expression of catholic Christianity appropriate for the Canadian context? Or is there somehow an 'international' context (the worldwide context of the Anglican Communion) which necessarily limits any unilateral action by a national church? The problem is discussed briefly and implicitly in the context of 'Communion-wide dimensions of theological discourse' at §41, but how these relate to the national and provincial context which was central to the formation of the Church of England is not tackled in

detail. This leads on to a final pair of questions. In what sense is communion determined by 'authoritative mutual relationships' (§49) which transcend the national and provincial, as the Report seems to presuppose? Or is communion a far vaguer and more elusive idea which is focused on a communion with Christ?

My main criticism, however, is that the whole Report is not really a piece of sustained theological reflection at all. It is worth noting that not a single academic theologian was on the commission (although it must be said that Tom Wright is an important New Testament scholar, but one with singular opinions). While the Report admittedly contains a few nice theological turns of phrase and a bit of purple prose here and there, as well as some passages of biblical exposition characterized by the usual superficial attack on the Enlightenment (see e.g. §60), there is remarkably little theology.[18] Although there are admittedly occasional forays into the history of theology, the Report uses for the most part a legal rather than theological method – statements from the 'Instruments of Unity' of the Anglican Communion are treated as a kind of statute law which is then used as a basis for appeal. What should be borne in mind is that the method of law is quite different from that of theology (at least in the Anglican Communion). Statutes have an authority conferred by royal assent, and case law is given an authority determined by an authoritative interpreter – the judge. But to treat Anglican Communion documents as authoritative in this sense is to misread the nature of the Anglican Communion, at least historically. In the Report such documents gain the status of magisterial texts and thereby become authoritative, despite the fact that their status has always been questionable and has never been regarded as authoritative where churches do not wish to accept them as authoritative. It is crucial to remember that there is no Anglican Communion statute law (and no executive power), but merely resolutions, reports and suggestions made by advisory bodies, all of which are accepted (or rejected) simply on a take-it-or-leave-it basis by the member churches. Indeed it is perhaps precisely because they have not been authoritative and have not had the same status as a definitive pronouncement of the papacy that they have often been particularly consensual and impressive. Authority in Anglicanism has to be earned rather than presupposed: where there is no God-given sovereign power, authority has to be negotiated.

In so far as I have been able to assess it, what emerges as the central theme of the Report is the focus on unity (e.g. §65) and communion, as well as the search for decisive standards of authority. In terms of the dichotomy mentioned earlier, however, what is conspicuously lacking is much mention of truth when it is in conflict with unity. Through the history of the church, and particularly at the time of the Reformation, however, it is because some things were seen as true that they were done, even when that shook or even destroyed the unity of the church. If some things can be determined to be true and right on good theological grounds, using good (and catholic) methods of discernment in Scripture and tradition, then there may be times when it is important to act as a witness to the truth even when this might lead to disunity. The problem that a 'rich mutual accountability' might stifle truth through the imposition of uncritical prejudice is scarcely addressed in the Report. The tacit assumption is that truth will only be reached through consensus: the model that is upheld is that of the autocephalous churches of the

East, where so much agreement is required that there is not really any mechanism for change at all. However, it is important to note that such a high doctrine of accountability might never have allowed orthodoxy to develop in the fourth century; indeed, had there been no singular witnesses to the truth (like Athanasius) who reacted against the consensus, then Arianism might have won the day.

And it is that sort of witness to the truth that provides the basis of provincial autonomy (§73) and the occasional need to act despite the consequences for maintaining communion and despite a lack of consensus – it is a risky and a rare business but the alternatives are more risky. It is crucial to remember that if we had waited for consensus there would be no women priests. Without unilateral action there might be a denial of the truth. That is what it means to belong to a reformed church – the gospel as a witness to truth is ultimately more important than visible unity. How this fits in with the bold assertion at §69 that 'No province, diocese or parish has the right to introduce a novelty' is again questionable in relation to the very foundation of the Church of England, and more broadly of the Reformation itself. Luther's 'Here I stand, I can do no other' was hardly likely to strengthen communion, or indeed to be open to a process of episcopally dominated reception, another presupposition of the Report.

In the Windsor Report unity is seen to be of far more importance than truth (as it was for Matthew Arnold in his comments on the Colenso affair). It thus ends with a piece of rhetoric taken from the Primates' Meeting of 2000: 'to turn from one another would be to turn from the Cross' – but in these circumstances, one might say, it may rather be to turn *to* the cross. To turn towards one another might sometimes be to turn away from Christ; our focus on visible unity can perhaps prevent the truth emerging from its invisible source. As that great Protestant catholic, Michael Ramsey, put it wonderfully in *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*: life in the church is about an 'agonizing death to pride'. And such a church life can never be static: as one pride is annihilated so another takes its place. It is thus through the process of criticism, or constant efforts to unveil the truth by moving beyond the visible, that the church is delivered 'from partial rationalisms' into an 'orthodoxy which no individual and no group can possess. ... As he receives the Catholic Sacrament and recites the Catholic creed, the Christian is learning that no single movement nor partial experience within Christendom can claim his final obedience, and that a local church can claim his loyalty only by leading him beyond itself to the universal family which it represents'.[19] The Windsor Report, it seems to me, often confuses the partial rationalism of the Anglican Communion with the universal church: the Anglican Communion is not the same thing as that universal family, and neither is any other visible church. Indeed I would suggest that the joy of national churches is that they cannot claim finality – and neither can their assemblies or their instruments of unity. Indeed to strengthen the Instruments of Unity might create greater coherence and greater unity but it might also be simply an assertion of an authority which is nobody's to assert.

Instead the church, as Michael Ramsey reminds us, again and again pauses to ponder the word of God, the grace of God; it is forced to be a church constantly under judgement, constantly open to reformation, a church which subjects its

pride to the humiliation of the cross. For, says Ramsey, 'these are Catholicism's own themes, and out of them it was born. But they are themes learnt and relearnt in humiliation, and Catholicism always stands before the Church door at Wittenberg to read the truth by which she is created and by which she is to be judged'.[20] That is the method, it seems to me, which is rather lacking in the Windsor Report. At Wittenberg, at least as Luther saw it, truth was more important than unity – and unilateral action, Luther's version of 'provincial autonomy', lay behind the Reformation. Without that sort of action there would have been no Anglican Communion. Leaving aside the rights and wrongs of the particular sexual matters under consideration in the Report, one might have expected rather more reflection on the doctrine of provincial autonomy. It is, after all, a far more venerable doctrine than the Instruments of Unity of the Anglican Communion so emphasized in the Report.

The Anglican Communion has developed piecemeal and without a coherent ecclesiology. About that the Windsor Report is clear. Furthermore, given the strange history of mission and the partisan character of the Church of England, particularly as it established provinces overseas, the Communion is almost bound to be a collection of diverse churches loosely united around certain fundamentals. According to Henry Chadwick, the Anglican Communion is 'a fairly loose federation of kindred spirits, often grateful for mutual fellowship but with each province reserving the right to make its own decisions'.[21] The Report finds it surprising that 'inter-Anglican relations are not a distinctive feature of provincial laws' (§116). Why this should be a surprise is beyond me – where there is no authority there can be no law.

The marks of ecclesiastical party and diversity are clear in the ways in which the different national churches have developed – and, while that goes unmentioned in the Report, it ought to provide a subtext and is surely relevant to questions of unity. For many Anglicans, communion with other churches in the Anglican Communion will matter less than union with other Christians of their own persuasion – this is left unsaid in the Report, but is surely one of the most pressing issues in Anglicanism. To acknowledge the often diametrically opposed methods of church parties is to acknowledge that unity will always be loose and sometimes non-existent. To hope for more, it seems to me, is completely unrealistic.

It is perhaps not surprising therefore that the nature of the unity of the Anglican Communion has been from its very beginnings something inherently more problematic than that of the monolithic Roman Church with its far more clearly defined structures of authority. As the 1930 Lambeth Conference Report suggested: 'Just because we unite so many types of Christian experience, this unity [of the Anglican Communion] is difficult to maintain and of special value when secured'.[22] That weaker understanding of unity, however, is not the sort of vision in the Windsor Report. Let me illustrate this through the writing of one of the formative figures behind the development of the Anglican Communion, Edward White Benson, who, as Archbishop of Canterbury, presided over the 1888 Lambeth Conference.[23]

Archbishop Benson, St Cyprian and Provincial Autonomy

E. W. Benson undertook one of the most comprehensive appraisals of the nature of provincial autonomy as the basis for Anglican polity. Provincial autonomy, he felt, was founded on a shared perception of a higher truth which was not something possessed by any one church, or indeed by all of them together, but was something which stood out ahead as the goal of the church's mission. On Benson's account, the unity of the church was not to be founded on gradually extending the list of non-essentials (*adiaphora*), which could never be anything but a dilution of the gospel, but on a recognition of the essential truth to which all churches bore witness, yet each from its own perspective and in its own cultural setting.[24] Agreement in fundamentals meant that non-essentials could be seen in due proportion. Benson's most important point, however, was in seeing the unity of the church, not as located in any set of existing structures or teachings, but as something *yet to be achieved*. Truth in its fullness could never be possessed but stood out ahead. 'We cannot', he maintained, 'recur to the past for unity. External unity has not existed yet, except superficially. Unity is not the first scene, but the last triumph of Christianity and man.'[25] The responsibility of the Church was thus not merely maintenance of a revealed truth but expansion into truth, as history was continually 'purified' and 'deepened'.[26] Only then would unity be attained. Truth and unity were closely connected yet neither was to be seen in their fullness this side of the second coming. In distinction to Benson's understanding, the kind of unity presupposed in the Windsor Report is an altogether more visible and realized unity.

From Benson's scattered remarks on the nature of the Anglican Communion a conception emerges of a unity which cannot be imposed by a magisterium but which arises in response to the need to find an outward and visible expression for the ultimate unity of Christ. This unity is alone the criterion of faith; nevertheless it is something which will be fully revealed only at the end of time. For Benson, the organic unity of the Anglican Communion is not founded simply on the pragmatic need to live and work together, but on the very nature of truth itself, which all glimpse from their own perspective but to which nobody has complete access. The unity of Christ thus serves to relativize all human attempts to build ecclesiastical structures, which in turn leads to a tolerance of other attempts to give expression to the gospel from different perspectives. Truth has a past, present and future dimension, yet it is to the future that a doctrine of provincial autonomy points. This leads on to the realization that all efforts to build a church on earth are no more than the first tentative steps towards the Kingdom of God. Fifty years after Benson, Michael Ramsey re-emphasized the point that the Anglican method depends on the assertion that the completeness of the truth is not accessible to any person or church, but always lies beyond: 'Hither alone the church shall point; and here men shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make them free.'[27]

In so far as all provincial churches are to recognize their own particularity and are to be relativized by reference to this goal, then no one expression of Christianity is to be given priority: there can be no decisive authority. Here there

are close parallels to be drawn with St Cyprian, my second example of a bishop dealing with disagreement. It is interesting to note that Archbishop Benson was described by his son and biographer as quite obsessive in his fascination for his Carthaginian predecessor: 'At home, when at work, at Lambeth and Addington, he had a "Cyprian" table'.[28] On completing his massive study of Cyprian in 1896 within months of his death, the archbishop wrote in his diary: 'I pray God bless this *Cyprian* to the good of His Church. If He bless it not, I have spent half my life in building hay and stubble, and the fire must consume it. But please God, may it last.'[29] As he pointed out, there was a parallel between his own understanding of unity and that of Cyprian's response to the Novationist heresy, which emerged after the Decian persecution of AD 249–50. It is indeed not surprising that Benson should have been so attracted to St Cyprian, who is surprisingly reminiscent of Benson himself: a bishop threatened with disunity, trying to understand the nature of his authority, and all the time refusing to submit to any extra-provincial authority. Against the authority of Pope Stephen, Cyprian held that it was wrong to admit those who had received schismatic baptism without rebaptising them. For Cyprian (at least on Benson's typically Anglican reading),[30] no particular bishop, including the Pope, had absolute authority: instead all bishops exercised the authority granted to Peter.

It was this aspect of Cyprian's theology that was capable, as Benson recognized, of providing a basis for further development. Indeed he felt there was a direct application of Cyprian's principles of church government to the circumstances of his day.

> Unity was a practical unity, a moral unity, held together by its own sense of unity, by 'the cement of mutual concord'. As problems arose they were to consider them each by itself. The first thing was that they should, with as deliberate consultation as could be had, state their several opinions without fear or favour.[31]

Cyprian could thus quite easily be brought up to date: his was not a centrally imposed unity but a unity arising from a mutual respect between bishops who held very different opinions. Although this principle is seemingly anarchic it nevertheless implies a toleration of all bishops for one another, as each exercised the further duty of submitting to the higher authority, the judgement of Christ. In the words of Cyprian:

> No one of us sets himself up as a bishop of bishops, or by tyrannical terror forces his colleagues to a necessity of obeying; inasmuch as every bishop in the free use of his liberty and power, has the right of forming his own judgement, and can no more be judged by another than he can himself judge another. But we must all await the judgement of our Lord Jesus Christ, who alone has the power both of setting us in the government of his Church, and of judging of our acts therein.[32]

What is crucial here is the clause 'by tyrannical terror forces his colleagues to a necessity of obeying'. Ultimately judgement resided with Christ and not in the authority of the Pope, or as Anglicans later suggested, in the Instruments of Unity.

Benson consequently believed this passage from Cyprian's speech to the Seventh Council of Carthage to be 'lit and fired by that sense of Love and feeling after Unity which seemed to Augustine the most special characteristic of the man'. This was neither a coerced unity nor a legalistic authority. Instead a bishop was free to disobey, and if he did, he was 'unassailable unless viciousness or false doctrine were patent in his life or teaching'.[33]

Conclusion

What I hope that some of these wanderings through history have shown is that attempts to reconcile truth and unity are far from new and present us with serious problems. Furthermore, they point to the relationship between the present unity and authority granted to the visible church and its institutional and legal structures, and the sort of unity and authority which derive from Christ, who stands beyond the church – even the Anglican Communion. The ultimate truth and grounds for the authority of the church rest beyond any church: consequently, as Stephen Sykes maintained (before his elevation to the episcopate), Anglican authority is not about weighing up one authority (Scripture, tradition, or reason) alongside another, but rather everything is concentrated on 'one source of authority which is the freedom and love of the Triune God ... In human life, in scripture, in the creeds, in the decisions of councils, in the liturgical order and canon law, in church leadership, there is only the discovery of authority, not its embodiment.'[34]

It might thus be said that, whatever its inelegance and inherent instability, Cyprian's understanding of collegiality as developed in Anglicanism is perhaps a better starting point for an ecclesiology than any conceivable alternative, since rigidity without what Lambeth 1948 called 'suppleness and elasticity'[35] (echoing words of Benson) leads inexorably either to schism, as it did for Novatian, or alternatively to a coercive authoritarianism which ultimately denies human diversity. The 1948 Lambeth bishops went on to say 'that authority of this kind is much harder to understand and obey than anything of a more imperious character'. Nevertheless, they continued, it was 'true and we glory in the appeal it makes to faith'.[36] And surely, we might add, when it comes to the development of ecclesiology, it is this humble lack of imperiousness that needs to be borne in mind in any attempt to erect a new 'house of authority' through the elevation of the 'Instruments of Unity' into some sort of quasi-magisterium. We have seen that sort of authority, at various points of time, elsewhere – and I for one prefer a degree of anarchy and even schism to an imposed and centralized unity. In this context, Richard Hanson's judgement of Cyprian is surely pertinent:

> Cyprian held most passionately that it was a gravely wrong policy to admit heretics to the Church without rebaptizing them; but he was prepared to allow Stephen to continue in what was, in Cyprian's eyes, a disastrously false custom. Modern theologians who find it difficult to envisage reunion with people of different ecclesiastical traditions would do well to consider this.[37]

The case of Cyprian and Stephen demonstrates that there can be massive and bitter hostility within one and the same catholic church: yet each is part of a greater whole, which is itself but a glimpse of the ultimate unity of Christ which is possessed by no church, not even all clubbing together. Reconciliation might take a long time to emerge. In recognizing human diversity and finitude, the inelegance and incoherence of provincial autonomy allow for adaptation and experiment, against the rigidity and exclusivism of any alternative; and in this it perhaps allows for a dim vision of Jerusalem the Golden. It does not strike me as inherently wrong or indeed uncatholic for one province to ordain gay bishops while another does not. Had he been offered it Stephen might well have refused communion from the Bishop of Carthage. Both no doubt thought that what they were doing was right. And ultimately both were vindicated as members of the one, holy catholic church. That ultimacy is not ours to possess, which means that there will be inevitable conflicts – but until such time as Jerusalem the Golden descends, this might be more desirable than an imposed unity. Unity may be less important than truth – but truth will always be relative to its context, which is what the doctrine of provincial autonomy really means. Truth (and sometimes schism) might in the end be more important than a superficial unity.

Notes

1. On 'The church's one foundation', see Percy Dearmer (ed.), *Songs of Praise Discussed* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 147.
2. On Colenso see the standard biographies by George W. Cox, *The Life of John William Colenso, D.D., Bishop of Natal* (London: W. Ridgway, 1888); Peter Hinchliff, *John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal* (London: Nelson, 1964); and Jeff Guy, *The Heretic: A Study of the Life of John William Colenso, 1814–1883* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1983). A collection of essays was published to mark the 150th anniversary of his consecration: Jonathan A. Draper (ed.), *The Eye of the Storm* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004).
3. He offered his reflections on his visit in *Two Weeks in Natal: A Journal of a First Tour of Visitation among the Colonists and Zulu Kafirs of Natal* (London: Macmillan, 1855).
4. John William Colenso, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, Newly Translated and Explained from a Missionary Point of View* (London: Macmillan, 1863). This has been republished in a new edition by Jonathan A. Draper: *Commentary on Romans* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2003).
5. On this, see J. W. Colenso, *A Letter to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury upon the Question of the Proper Treatment of Cases of Polygamy* (London: Macmillan, 1862).
6. This understanding was eventually adopted at the 1988 Lambeth Conference (Resolution 26).
7. Colenso, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 107.
8. J. W. Colenso, *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, 1862), p. 9.
9. Ibid., p. vii.
10. Ibid., p. viii.
11. Owen Chadwick, in *The Victorian Church* (London: A. and C. Black, 1970), vol. 2, p. 91, is unduly critical of Colenso's method, giving the impression that he remained little more than a mathematician, despite his broad reading in German higher criticism.

12. John William Burgon, *Inspiration and Interpretation, 7 Sermons, an Answer to 'Essays and Reviews'* (Oxford etc.: n.p., 1861), p. 89; quoted in Colenso, *The Pentateuch*, p. 6.

13. Matthew Arnold, 'The Bishop and the Philosopher', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 7 (1863), 253–4.

14. Ibid., 245.

15. 1920 Encyclical Letter, in *The Six Lambeth Conferences 1867–1920* (London: SPCK, 1929), app., p. 14.

16. Lambeth Commission on Communion, *The Windsor Report 2004* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2004).

17. For further criticism of the Report's discussion of *adiaphora*, see T. W. Bartel, 'Adiaphora: The Achilles Heel of the Windsor Report', *Anglican Theological Review* 89 (2007), 401–20.

18. Where it does venture into theology it can be highly dubious. At one point it adopts a highly conservative hermeneutical principle which reads the Bible as 'constrained by loyalty to the community of the church' (§60) – there are shades of the Colenso case here. What this means and who might constitute the constraining church is open to question.

19. Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (London: Longmans, 1936), p. 135.

20. Ibid., p. 180.

21. Henry Chadwick, 'Making and Remaking the Ministry', in Sarah Coakley and David Pailin (eds), *The Making and Remaking of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 21. See also my essay 'Catholicity, Unity and Provincial Autonomy: On Making Decisions Unilaterally', *Anglican Theological Review* 76 (1994), 313–28.

22. Roger Coleman, *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1992), p. 122.

23. His clearest statement on the nature of church unity is in his sermon preached as Archbishop of Canterbury at the consecration of Truro Cathedral in 1887, entitled 'Growing Unity', in Edward White Benson, *Living Theology* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co., 1893), pp. 131–45.

24. For Benson, unity did not imply uniformity, and it is for this reason that he criticizes the failings of 'Roman Unity': ibid., p. 139.

25. Ibid., p. 133.

26. Ibid., pp. 136–7.

27. Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, p. 135.

28. A. C. Benson, introduction to E. W. Benson, *Cyprian: His Life, his Times, his Work* (London: Macmillan, 1897), p. iv.

29. A. C. Benson, *The Life of Edward White Benson* (London: Macmillan, 1900), vol. 2, p. 707. Perhaps rather hearteningly W. H. C. Frend comments that Benson's *Cyprian* 'remains a key work': *The Rise of Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), p. 358.

30. In particular, Benson was interested in countering the variant reading in Cyprian's *On the Unity of the Church* which traced apostolic succession solely to Peter and consequently to Rome.

31. Benson, *Cyprian*, p. 195.

32. Speech at the Seventh Council of Carthage, in J. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius* (London: SPCK, 1987), pp. 243–4.

33. Benson, *Cyprian*, p. 195. On this see my essay 'Cyprianus Anglicus: St Cyprian and the Future of Anglicanism', in Robert Hannaford (ed.), *The Future of Anglicanism* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1996), pp. 104–17.

34. Stephen Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1978), p. 98. Compare Stephen Sykes, 'Authority in the Church of England' in Robert Jeffery (ed.), *By Whose Authority?* (London: Mowbray, 1987), p. 22.

35. *The Lambeth Conferences (1867–1948)* (London: SPCK, 1948), p. 85.

36. Ibid.

37. Richard Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 156.

CHURCH: LAW, COMMUNITY AND WITNESS

George Pattison

The aim of this paper is to scratch an itch. Although this is usually a bad thing to do, I hope that in this case it will help me to articulate a hunch that, if I am correct, might offer further insight into a central problem of contemporary Anglican identity and, perhaps, help us avoid steps that will make the role of the Church of England even more difficult in the future than it is in the present. Insofar as the central problem I hope to uncover is a problem associated with the very existence and meaning of a Christian church, I hope that although my starting point is confessional, the issue will be significant for non-Anglican Christians also. However, whether I shall succeed in getting to that point I am not entirely sure.

The itch was originally produced by a couple of paragraphs buried deep in the Windsor Report of 2004, the report that, emphatically declaring itself to be *not* about gays, was an attempt to find a way of keeping the Anglican Communion together in the face of the simmering crisis brought to a head by the consecration of Bishop Gene Robinson, an openly and openly active gay man, as Bishop of New Hampshire. I quote:

> Recent years have seen a revival of interest in, and the academic study of, the Canon Law of Anglican churches (their constitutions, canons and other regulatory instruments). In particular, the Primates' Meeting at Kanuga 2001 considered acknowledgement of the existence of an unwritten *ius commune* of the worldwide Anglican Communion, and initiated a process leading to the Anglican Communion Legal Advisers' Consultation in Canterbury (March 2002). The Consultation concluded: there are principles of canon law common to the churches within the Anglican Communion; their existence can be factually established; each province or church contributes through its own legal system to the principles of canon law common within the Communion; these principles have a strong persuasive authority and are fundamental to the self-understanding of each of the churches of the Communion; these principles have a living force, and contain in themselves the possibility of further development; and the existence of these principles both demonstrates unity and promotes unity within the Anglican Communion.[1]

And:

> At their meeting in Canterbury, April 2002, "[t]he Primates recognized that the unwritten law common to the Churches of the Communion and expressed as shared

principles of canon law may be understood to constitute a fifth 'instrument of unity'…to provide a basic framework to sustain the minimal conditions which allow the Churches of the Communion to live together in harmony and unity".[2]

Let me spell out the sequence of events and add some more detail. In 2001 the Anglican primates, meeting at a conference centre at Kanuga, North Carolina, raise the question of an unwritten *ius commune* of the worldwide Anglican Communion. The question is then referred to a specially convened group of legal advisers to 17 provinces of the 44 Anglican Churches, which, under the title 'Anglican Communion Legal Advisers' Consultation', meets in Canterbury between 6 and 13 March 2002, producing a report that claims to have established the principles of canon law common to the churches within the Anglican Communion.[3] This report is then considered a month later by the Anglican primates, also meeting in Canterbury, who now move on from raising the question to asserting that there exists an 'unwritten law common to the Churches of the Communion and expressed as shared principles of canon law' that they understand 'to constitute a fifth "instrument of unity" to provide a basic framework to sustain the minimal conditions which allow the Churches of the Communion to live together in harmony and unity'.

Now, the Windsor Report itself immediately acknowledges that such an 'unwritten law' is not juridically enforceable in any church within the Communion. In fact no Anglican Church has explicit laws dealing with 'its relationship of communion with other member churches'.[4] Given that it would be virtually impossible at a practical level to steer an identical law 'unscathed' through the law-making bodies of 44 churches, the Report recommends a covenant between the churches which would enshrine these principles and 'would make explicit and forceful the loyalty and bonds of affection which govern the relationships between the churches of the Communion'.[5]

Notice several things about this process.

To start with, the Legal Advisers' Consultation was initiated by the primates in 2001 with a brief to comment on the primates' collective view that there was 'an unwritten *ius commune* of the worldwide Anglican Communion'. When the primates met again in 2002 with the legal advisers' report in front of them, they asserted that this unwritten law identified by the lawyers could be expressed as shared principles of canon law, and this was reaffirmed in the Windsor Report itself. This is, of course, already a clear case of finding what you're looking for, and although this may not always be evidence of malpractice, such a find always benefits from a second look. More significantly, the primates slur over two distinctions that are both present in the legal advisers' report and, to its credit, acknowledged in the Windsor Report[6]: that principles of law are not the same as enforceable laws, and that, although laws may not always be written down, *they should be*, especially when disciplinary matters are at issue. When we look further into the methodology of the legal advisers, we also note the following. What they have, in fact, done is to have compared actual laws or legally binding formulations as found in a variety of churches in the Anglican Communion, such as the differing versions of the oath of canonical obedience, and shown that these can be

understood in the light of common principles. In other words, the principles are established empirically, in the light of actual practice, and are by no means subject to anything resembling theological scrutiny. This clearly has the virtue of helping make sense of a wide range of practices, but it has the defect of implicitly allowing 'what is' to have perhaps too large a role in determining what ought to be. (Once more to their credit, the lawyers themselves do not give an unqualified 'Yes' to the proposition that 'Law assists the church to fulfil its mission', so they are not saying that identifying something as a law or principle of law is to be identified with endorsing its theological legitimacy.) To the extent that all that is being done here is to report on the current state of affairs, this 'defect' might seem only marginally important. However, it acquires considerably more significance in the light of one principle that seems not to be argued for but assumed, namely, that 'these principles have a living force, and contain in themselves the possibility for further development.' This is, of course, extremely vague, but that is itself troubling, since there is something of a leap from the kinds of principles that can be identified by the process of empirical comparison, to the assertion of a principle that has 'living force', which, at the very least, suggests that it has or could acquire prescriptive authority. Certainly, the response of the Windsor Report is precisely to seek to give these principles living force, whether or not they already have it! And one might say that this just proves the lawyers' point: that once a certain principle is identified and named, even if it is neither written down nor immediately produces enforceable laws, then it becomes a factor in the production of such enforceable laws. However, whether it has intrinsic living force (like a Coleridgean 'Idea') is another matter.

But note also the Windsor procedure. Recognizing that the kind of instrument for enforcing certain features of unity across the Communion could never be agreed by the separate law-making bodies of that Communion, it proposes a covenant that all would have to sign up to if they wanted to continue to be 'Anglican'. That, I suggest, would be rather like the European Commission, having recognized that the proposed new European Constitution would never get through the parliaments of all member states, therefore resolving to take it directly to the European Parliament itself, cutting out the hard slog of actual democracy. To their credit, that was not the route taken by those proposing the constitution and, in this regard, they show themselves to have a better sense for democracy than the Windsor signatories. But then they are democratic politicians, not church 'men'.

But what kind of law would any 'covenant' resulting from this process be?

It would clearly be a 'law' of a very different kind from the canon law of each separate Anglican Church. Canon law, as that functions today, can only operate within boundaries allowed for by the prevailing law of the land. The space of canon law is prescribed by secular law. Canon law, for example, can only determine conditions of employment that do not contravene the general conditions of employment in a given society – or where they do, the Church has to have an explicit opt-out, an opt-out itself determined by the law of the land. As things stand, an Anglican Church in Europe that refuses to ordain women or to consecrate women as bishops cannot be prosecuted under the Convention on Human Rights – but it would, at any time, be open to the secular power to

discontinue that particular opt-out (at the moment of writing there is intense debate regarding the right of churches in England and Wales to an opt-out from proposed legislation concerning the employment rights of homosexual people). Clearly the borderline between human rights legislation regarding the employment rights of individuals and the rights of religious organizations would, in such cases, be very complicated, but my point is that, in principle, canon law does not constitute a sphere sufficient unto itself; the church can only enforce its laws by means allowable by the surrounding society. Even if it wanted to, it could not, today, burn heretics.

This, I suggest, puts canon law in a fix as regards its ultimate basis. If we were to argue that the laws governing the life of the church reflect or put into effect divine laws, then, whether we conceive of these divine laws as being knowable only through revelation, as per the Mosaic Law, or as universally accessible through 'natural' reasoning, it would be entirely fitting for the church to regard the boundary between church law and law in general as purely temporary, tolerable only on the basis of expediency. Clearly, there have been many historic instances where these two forms of law have been conflated, or where the attempt has been made to conflate them, as in Calvin's Geneva, the English Revolution, or the medieval papacy's attempts to subordinate imperial authority to that of the church.

With specific regard to the current Anglican debate about the ordination of homosexual people, however, the situation is very different. I assume that all but a very insignificant minority of those who, in this country, oppose the ordination of homosexual people would, at the same time, affirm that homosexual people have the same legal rights as all other citizens in the secular domain. No one is proposing the reintroduction of criminal penalties for gay sex. Even if we redefine the issue in terms of unrepented homosexual activity being regarded as a bar to the worthy reception of communion, a negative position would not necessarily involve demands for changes to the secular law, and almost certainly wouldn't. It would simply be one example of religion and ethics making demands on individuals of a purely voluntary kind on the basis of their membership of a voluntary association.

But there's the rub. For it is not only a matter of the individuals concerned being challenged to make voluntary acts of (in this case) renunciation. What the case shows is that the society that makes this demand must itself be of the nature of a voluntary society, i.e. a society whose members are free to join or to leave as they wish. If this is not so, if individuals are obliged by virtue of their citizenship of a nation to be members of this society, or to the extent that they are so obliged, then its demands must be enforceable by civil law. The case of the Church of England is, of course, unique within the Anglican Communion as regards the extent to which its life is embedded in the law of the land, but as things stand today, it is not so different from other Anglican Churches in actual practice. That the procedures governing the employment and dismissal of clergy are enshrined in statute law in a way that is different from that of the procedures for Catholic or Methodist clergy is interesting, but ultimately national and European laws and conventions set the boundaries for all church law, whether that is the law of established or non-established churches.

As regards any legally enforceable rules governing an association such as the worldwide Anglican Communion, however, it is clear that the way in which these laws would be enforceable in the Church of England, in the Anglican Church in Iran, or in the United States would be very different. But even in the Church of England, enforceability is entirely dependent upon voluntary participation in the enforcing body and is only going to arise as a special issue in relation to situations created by the self-understanding of the ecclesiastical society concerned. The 'legal' relationship, in other words, is merely the regulation of relationships within a community based on voluntary participation. As such it will, in any given context, be scrutinizable by and subject to the law of the society in which it operates. In our society, of course, that would (I hope) mean its subjection to principles of common justice, whether or not these are enshrined in statute law. In other words, the processes of selection, employment and discipline of those who work for the church in any capacity, paid or unpaid, need to be just according to the best available human standards of justice. This, I would also suggest, is *mutatis mutandis* just what the Reformers were calling for in arguing for the subordination of the church to the civil power. I think they were, in fact, right to do so: the problems have come where the nature of the civil power has itself changed in such a way as to render sixteenth-century models of subordination dangerously anachronistic. In a democratic society, where laws are developed through public debate, the language of participation is certainly to be preferred to that of simple subordination. Where everyone is arguing, the church can argue too about what, in any given case, is 'fair' – but its criteria and methods of arguing must be recognizably on a continuum with those of the wider society.

Now, as the legal advisers to the primates observe, law is not always written down. In this sense we might say that a group of friends who meet regularly to play charades acknowledge, in practice, a 'law' regulating their meetings. Communities invariably assume or impose rules of conduct. If you don't play the game, you're not one of us. What the legal advisers have done is to make clear some of the rules by which (up until now) the community called the worldwide Anglican Communion has been playing, whilst what the primates now want is to make them enforceable. The aim of the process is to make explicit and enforceable the practice of the community, which, as articulated by the primates, is to make it 'legal'. Law, in this context, is being understood in what could be called a communitarian way: it is neither law as 'right', nor as 'natural justice', nor even as the interpretation of the divine will. It has no ultimate criterion outside the actual life of the community. Law is what 'we' do or what 'we' want to do. Were such a model to be applied in civil society, I suggest, we would find it deeply unpleasant.[7]

It might be objected to what I have just said that the earlier designation of the church as a voluntary society actually makes all the difference because, after all, if you don't like it you can go and play another game. No one has to be a member. If you don't like charades, you can go and find someone else with whom to play quoits. Yet, in a purely recreational voluntary society, such as that of friends who meet to play charades, the coercive force of these laws may be weak (although it may, even in such a case, be experienced as psychologically powerful by members). Any 'community' has a collective 'we' that limits and constrains its members, but

the broader and deeper the range of activities characterizing a given community, the more coercive those laws are likely to be. In these terms the case of a church *qua* voluntary society will be very different from that of charades players. This is in a sense recognized in the proposal to make explicit and enforceable what is already implicitly there in the Anglican Communion, since it suggests that an ecclesial community, *qua* community, is the kind of body whose implicit practices can appropriately be reformulated as laws. In the case of charades every family or group of friends probably develops its own way of playing the game, possibly even changing the rules each time it plays – and the suggestion that no one could play charades unless they accepted a common set of 'laws for charades' would seem laughable. Of course, there are formal and informal 'rules' for charades and similar parlour games – but the point is precisely that these rules cannot be turned into laws without destroying the fun of the game. In deciding that the unwritten rules of church life can be turned into explicit and enforceable laws, a decision is already being made about the kind of community that the church is, i.e. that its unconscious life is teleologically related to law and law-making.[8]

For a long time now, there has been both a strong theological and a strong popular tendency to emphasize the 'community' dimension of church. We have become used to hearing ourselves spoken of as 'the people of God', 'a holy people', 'the community called church'. I suggest that, to the extent to which we identify the actual contemporary and historic church in community terms, and weaken the sense that that community is regulated by principles external to its own concrete life, we are exposing ourselves and the church to a heteronomy of the 'we'.

There are, of course, powerful and instantly recognizable ways of dealing with this in traditionalist theological circles: in Protestantism the church is subordinated to Scripture, in Catholicism to the teaching office (i.e. the magisterium). Truth is not whatever we collectively take it to be at a particular historical juncture. This is not the place to go into why neither Scripture nor the magisterium is entirely trustworthy as a regulator of the life of the actual ecclesial community and, as such, is not an appropriate foundation for the community's 'legal' framework. Let me briefly suggest an alternative. In doing so, I focus on the question of the sacraments. An analogous argument could be made in relation to preaching, a no less fundamental feature of the life of the church than the sacraments. We could even go further in the same vein *vis-à-vis* the teaching and pastoral life of the church. Why I wish to focus on the question of sacraments, however, is precisely because – to an extent that has not occurred in relation to preaching – the function of sacraments as expressing, nourishing and forming community in the church has been especially prominent in recent times.

In his epochal *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Albert Schweitzer opposed to the liberal teacher of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man an apocalyptic Jesus, a figure alien to the values and worldview of cultured European Protestants. Amongst the other contributions of this remarkable study was to draw attention to the eschatological interpretation of the sacraments. The feeding of the multitude in Mark's version is, Schweitzer says, 'more than a love-feast, a fellowship-meal. It was from the point of view of Jesus a sacrament of salvation'.[9] And 'The Last Supper at Jerusalem had the same sacramental significance as that of

the lake ... In Jerusalem, however, they understood what was meant, and He explained it to them explicitly by telling them that He would drink no more of the fruit of the vine until He drank it new in the Kingdom of God.'[10] And Schweitzer offers many more examples, culminating in the assertion that 'we may think of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as from the first eschatological sacraments in the eschatological movement which later detached itself from Judaism under the name of Christianity. That explains why we find them both in Paul and in the earliest theology as sacramental acts, not as symbolic ceremonies, and find them dominating the whole Christian doctrine.'[11]

More recently, Geoffrey Wainwright's absorbing study *Eucharist and Eschatology* extends the story into the liturgies of the early church, showing how powerful the eschatological theme would continue to be for many centuries.[12] Gradually, however, the theme was lost or weakened. Historical memory and metaphysical presence obscured the dynamic future-orientation of the original sacramental action. (As Wainwright shows, the idea of 'anamnesis' was not originally tied exclusively to the memory of the past: some liturgies in the East spoke of remembering the future resurrection.[13]) Whether our own liturgical reformers have done well in using the acclamation that 'Christ will come again' as a way of re-introducing a dimension of eschatological expectation to balance the retrospective emphasis in the idea of 'remembrance' as commonly received, they have at least seen the issue and wanted to act on it.

Of course, there are many variations to be played upon the theme of eschatology, and it can be worked in more or less millenarian, more or less 'realized' forms, as we know. Some of these are doubtless unhelpful. But to the extent that we allow our thinking about the church to be shaped by the principle of eschatological hope, to the extent that we allow our experience of what the church 'is' to be subject to the hope of what the eschatological community *will* be in the justice of God, then we will have a powerful counter to the otherwise centripetal pressures of ecclesial communitarianism. The church as is can and should be no more than a sign, a sign, most explicitly articulated in its preaching and sacramental life, of the universal justice of God anticipated in the earthly ministry, suffering and death of Jesus of Nazareth. But although a sign may be effective in pointing beyond itself to what it signifies, neither the particular signs used within the church nor the totality of the ecclesiastical semiosphere can guarantee the presence of that to which, *qua* signs, they point. In these terms, the true life of the church cannot be defined merely by the reservation of itself as sign or a complex of signs, but is only truly lived wherever, whenever, those signs become effective. In these terms also, it becomes proper to conceive of the church as a 'wonderful and sacred', even a 'supernatural' institution, since it exists as, and only as, a sign of what is not yet present, or present only 'in a glass darkly'. Its being is elsewhere. It lives only as witness, not as realization – something I think Karl Barth understood in his meditations on the pointing finger of John the Baptist.[14] If, however, the attributes of sacrality and supernature are applied to or claimed by the community in its present historically existing form, then we are in the gravitational field of the demonic, the Grand Inquisitor's takeover and makeover of the Master's calling.

It may be objected that in our fragmented and anomic society the experience of community is a powerful and important human good. The lack of community, whether in leafy suburbs or in impoverished estates occupied by the socially excluded, is, it will be said, a major source of social ill and individual misery. I am sure that is true. In these circumstances the creation of community, and all the sometimes heroic work put into that by clergy and laity, will be justified as making possible the effectiveness of the supernatural signs that the Church is charged with communicating to the world. And, of course, even apart from its value in this regard, the creation of community will often be an important goal of the purely human aspiration to social justice.

Another objection to the argument I have developed is that it is internally contradictory, since in the first part of the paper I move to the conclusion that church law should position itself on a continuum shared with the law of its surrounding society, whilst I then go on to attack the communitarianism involved in the Windsor proposals and seek to re-envision the church in a radically eschatological perspective. In one place I seem to be calling for the co-ordination of church and society, in another to be calling for a break with all existing models of society, basing the life of the church on a kind of thoroughgoing exceptionalism. But that, as I see it, is not so much a contradiction as the familiar tension between the Christian life as a life lived by those who are citizens of one or other earthly city and yet, at the same time, in hope, having their conversation in heaven. It is a pattern of accepting worldliness, accepting the secular in its own terms, whilst counterposing the incalculable transcendence of what shall be. The church lets the world be world and submits to its laws, because it knows that it is a kingdom not of this world. And that pattern, I take it, is both Pauline and Reformed.

To sum up: I am arguing that what makes the church the church is not, fundamentally, the laws that regulate its life in the world.[15] Accepting that the church must always exist in a determinate time and place with a specific historical inheritance and an equally specific contemporary context, and also accepting that its life in the world will require legal regulation, I am suggesting the following: to the extent that the church requires legal regulation, that regulation should, as far as is compatible with the fundamental freedom of faith, be co-ordinated with the secular law prevailing in its social context. There will, of course, be situations in which that 'law' is itself of questionable legality, and it may be that the extreme experiences of totalitarianism in the twentieth century have made the churches rather more cautious about underwriting (or appearing to underwrite) the claims of a tyrannical state by accepting its terms of reference. However, both the freedom of faith just mentioned, and the concept of law itself, provide some scope for moderating such anxieties. It might also be worth questioning the tendency to ponder and determine such matters in the light of extreme cases, remembering the old dictum 'Hard cases make bad law'. No less important, however, is the following point: in what makes the church the church, i.e. in what pertains to its proclamation of the gospel, its life of worship and prayer, it should aspire to minimize the regulation of its life by legal means. 'Bonds of affection' will always serve the church better *qua* church than regulation and once these bonds are broken, regulation will only enforce the bitterness caused by that break.

We may seem to have come a long way from the Windsor Report, but if that is so, and if I am correct, then that only shows how far the Windsor Report itself promotes a fundamental model of church, community and law that at key points is at odds with our call to live as witnesses of the eschatological truth. I have elsewhere commented on the triumphalist tone of the Windsor Report and its representation of Anglican history as a history of powerful Christian witness.[16] I do not wish to belittle the self-sacrificial heroism of many Anglican Christians through the ages, but whether Anglican, Catholic, Reformed, Orthodox or any other kind of Christian, it is not ourselves we proclaim. If we make ourselves the matter of our proclamation, then, in the negative sense popularised by Paul, we will indeed, implicitly or explicitly, be a church of law. The virtue of the Windsor Report, of course, is that it makes the issue explicit and calls us to decision.

Notes

1. Lambeth Commission on Communion, *The Windsor Report 2004* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2004), §114.
2. Ibid., §114.
3. This untitled report is available at http://www.acclawnet.co.uk/report.pdf.
4. Ibid., §116. Norman Doe, whose understanding of canon law is widely reported as having been especially influential on the Windsor Report, is somewhat sharper in his study of *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion*, in which he states that 'the Anglican Communion is one in which there is no formal universal law applicable to all member churches. Each church is, in legal terms, autonomous' – to which he adds that the Lambeth Conference itself 'has no competence to function as a legislative Synod – its competence is merely to recommend': Norman Doe, *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 372.
5. *Windsor Report*, §118.
6. Ibid.
7. Doe acknowledges the problems of what he calls a 'majoritarian' approach, although he doesn't seem, ultimately, to be very troubled by them: *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion*, p. 375.
8. It is revealing that in the opening paragraph of his magisterial work on *The Legal Framework of the Church of England*, Norman Doe acknowledges the existence of 'many regulatory instruments governing the church [that] exist outside formal texts legislated by the church and state' but nevertheless immediately classifies them as 'quasi-legislation': Norman Doe, *The Legal Framework of the Church of England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 7. What I am suggesting is that we don't need to understand these 'instruments' in terms of 'quasi-legislation': there are all kinds of social 'rules' that do not or need not tend in the direction of law at all. When the authors of the Windsor Report speak of 'the loyalty and bonds of affection which govern the relationships between the Churches of the Communion', they may well be referring to something real and effective – but it by no means follows that 'loyalty and bonds' of this kind are appropriately reformulated as 'laws'. Indeed, there seems to be a logical slip in the Windsor recommendations since, if the implicit *ius commune* of the Anglican Communion is to be the basis for future explicit law-making in that Communion, the covenant proposals would seem to involve overturning what Doe himself states to be one of the clearest of the currently existing implicit *ius communes*, namely the autonomy of each of the Anglican churches.
9. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 3rd edn (London: A. and C. Black, 1954; repr. London: SCM Press, 1981), p. 375.

10. Ibid., p. 378.
11. Ibid.
12. Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (London: Epworth Press, 1971; new edn London: SCM Press, 2004).
13. Ibid. (1971 edn), pp. 6–68.
14. From the Isenheim Altarpiece by Mathias Grünewald; see e.g. *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, p. 112.
15. Something, I should say, that is clearly recognized by theorists of canon law such as Doe.
16. George Pattison, 'The Rhetoric of Unity', in A. Linzey and R. Kirker (eds), *Gays and the Future of Anglicanism: Responses to the Windsor Report* (Winchester and New York: O Books, 2005), pp. 141–5.

III

CONSTRUCTIVE EXPLORATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

This page intentionally left blank

Should the Church Change?

Bernard Hoose

An initial response to the question, 'should the church change', might well be: 'Why not? Why change the habit of two thousand years?' After all, over the course of the last two millennia, there have been innumerable changes of various types: changes in how the church is run; changes in attitude; changes in moral quality; changes in teaching; and changes in style. Indeed, one might suggest that change is an important aspect of the church's nature. The answer to the question set, then, could be a simple 'yes'. It may, however, be useful to ask more precisely *which* changes should be made. Looking at some of the changes that have already been made could perhaps help us at least to think about which changes are needed today. The church is, of course, immense and complex. In what follows, therefore, I shall restrict my discussion, for the most part, to that sector of Christianity which I know best, the Roman Catholic Church.[1]

Changes in Governance

It would probably be an exaggeration to say that the general running of the church has always been *confined* to the people that we generally describe as ordained ministers. I suggest it would be an exaggeration because there are numerous examples in our history books of interference and perhaps even welcomed participation by emperors, kings, queens and other rich and powerful laypeople in the running of the church. Monarchs and other leaders of governments, for instance, have often had a controlling interest in the appointment of bishops. Emperors were involved in convoking several councils of the church. There have also been cases of laypeople owning church buildings and having a say over who the incumbent should be. In spite of all this, however, it does seem to be the case that, for the most part, governance has been in the hands of the clergy. That said, it is worthy of note that, at one stage in the church's history, many of those who had clerical status had not been ordained. Hugh Lawrence notes that, in this period, clerical status was achieved simply by receiving a tonsure from the bishop. 'In the medieval centuries', he writes, 'many of the tasks that were integral to the governance of the church were discharged by men who were simply clerks or clergy in this technical sense rather than men who had been ordained to major, or even

minor, orders.'[2] This, of course, is far removed from our present-day understanding of 'the clergy'. In short, then, we have already seen change from the sort of thing just described to what we have today. What has not changed, however, is the notion of a clerical class or caste, a matter to which we shall return in due course.

As for the shape and mechanics of governance adopted by those who *were* ordained, we find that, not long after the church came to be regarded as part of the establishment in the Roman Empire, imperial ideas swept into the clerical world:

> The ecclesial hierarchy assumed many of the attributes of secular government. The Council of Chalcedon (451) decreed that the priest of every town that had the status of an imperial *civitas* should become a bishop. A bishop whose see was located in the capital of an imperial province became a metropolitan, with jurisdiction over other bishops of the province, including the duty of confirming their election.[3]

This tendency of the institutional church to imitate to some degree the governance patterns in vogue 'in the secular city' continued in later periods. Ladislas Orsy notes that

> In the early centuries the church in its organization copied the structures of the Roman Empire; in the Middle Ages it accepted the ways and means of the feudal order; in modern times it received procedures, customs and symbols from the absolute monarchies.[4]

As it is clearly the case, then, that the form of governance we have inherited developed over a considerable period of time, it would be strange indeed to claim that there is anything 'set in stone' about how the church is run. It follows that, if what we have now does not function well, there is a case for changing it. I would venture to suggest that, in some ways, it does indeed not function well. Certainly, as things stand, it seems that, for most Catholics in my own country, Britain, and, I think, in numerous others, the bishop is a largely insignificant figure. Commenting on a study of 12 British parishes, Michael Hornsby-Smith comments: 'For many parishioners, the diocese was substantially squeezed out of consciousness between the parish and "Rome", in spite of the theology of the church gathered round the bishop.'[5] Is there, then, something about the diocese (or about the various roles a bishop has) which will have to change if bishops are to play a more significant role in the church? Or, more radically, do we need to revise our ideas about the priesthood? We shall return to this question in the section on changes in attitude and moral quality.

As for the bishops themselves, it seems that, from the point of view of many of them, one of the most contentious issues concerning governance in the church at the present time is the Roman Curia and the increasing centralization of things. In 1999, Cardinal König of Vienna wrote in *The Tablet* that 'intentionally or unintentionally, the curial authorities working in conjunction with the Pope have appropriated the tasks of the Episcopal college. It is they who now carry out almost all of them.'[6] A particularly ludicrous example is provided by Archbishop Quinn:

'Under present provisions, an alcoholic priest, who cannot take even the modicum of wine used in the celebration of Mass, must apply directly to Rome for permission to use what is called *mustum* as a substitute. The bishop, who knows the priest and the local situation, cannot give such permission.'[7] This excessive centralising of power was highlighted for this author a few years ago, when he was attending a meeting of theologians in the United States. An archbishop who was present commented that there is a tendency for bishops working in the Vatican to be regarded as in some way superior to the ordinary diocesan type. There is, however, some controversy about precisely how those who work in the Curia exercise the function of bishop. The main point of controversy is the fact that they usually have only titular Sees, that is, Sees that once flourished but no longer exist. Taking up this theme, Richard Gaillardetz writes:

> Granting titular sees to bishops who will not serve as pastoral leaders to local churches obscures an authentic theology of the episcopate in two ways. First it trivializes the relationship between a bishop and his local community, which, from the perspective of a *communio* ecclesiology, is essential to episcopal identity. How can one speak meaningfully of a bishop's 'communion' with a nonexistent community? Second, it transforms what is properly a sacramental ministry within the Church into an honorary or administrative title. Furthermore, the theological and sacramental structure of the Church as a *communio hierarchica* risks being eclipsed by a bureaucratic or administrative structure. This eclipse reinforces the impression, widespread in many quarters, that such ecclesial structures are more concerned with rank and domination than with ecclesial service.[8]

Some reforms to the Curia were proposed at the Second Vatican Council, and a certain (although not a huge) amount of change has since taken place. One change has been greater internationalization. Quinn notes, however, how curial officials from countries other than Italy can lose their national identity and become 'Romanized'.[9] The same kind of phenomenon is witnessed often in other organizations around the world. As an illustrative parallel, we could take the example of the notable increase in the number of women in the British House of Commons in 1999. Much was expected of them. However, it was the political commentator Andrew Marr, I think, who expressed the disappointment that many British people felt a few years later, when he remarked that most of them had gone native. In short, it seems to be the case that, when it becomes obvious to them that the task is extremely complicated and difficult, many would-be reformers of organizations gradually come to accept and even embrace the existing culture that they had once hoped to change.

The degree of governance from the centre that we experience today in the Church has been made possible largely by the ease of modern communication. The same improvements in communication could instead have contributed to the exercise of collegiality, and many feel that developments in collegiality would have been generally more beneficial than the present trend toward ever greater centralization. On the surface, the introduction of the Synod of Bishops looked like a major advance in that direction. What materialized, however, was more control from the centre. Quinn writes:

The tendency since the council would appear to be to restrict the synod as much as possible. For instance, the synod is called by the Pope; its agenda is determined by the Pope; preliminary documents of Episcopal conferences are not permitted to be shared with other conferences or made public but must be sent directly to Rome; the synod is held in Rome; prefects of the Roman Curia are members; the Pope, in addition to the Curial members of the synod, appoints an additional fifteen percent of the membership directly; the synod does not have a deliberative vote; its deliberations are secret, and its recommendations to the Pope are secret; the Pope writes and issues the final document after the synod has concluded and the bishops have returned home.[10]

Since Quinn wrote, some changes have been introduced into the way the synod itself is organized. There is now, for instance, more opportunity for the bishops to discuss matters raised. Critics argue, however, that much more far-reaching reforms are needed. Collegiality must surely be more than a catch phrase.

It seems, however, that in certain powerful quarters within the Roman Catholic Church, there is a felt *need* for centralized control. Outsiders might interpret it as an obsession with control. Indeed, many *insiders* make the same interpretation. Whatever we call it, this tendency to centralize control – indeed, this tendency to control – could be said to be at the heart of everything that has been touched on so far in this chapter. It may, then, be more useful to go straight to the heart of this matter. Is this the area in which change is most needed? Here, however, we may no longer be dealing merely with questions of governance. We may be moving into the zones of attitude and moral quality.

Changes in Attitude and Moral Quality

There has been a good deal of unpleasantness in the history of control within the church. When we examine some of the more shameful episodes we find that at least part of the problem seems to have been directly related to the corruption that came from confusing state and church. In such a situation of confusion, some things that were thought to threaten the state could easily be thought to threaten the church, and vice versa. This may explain in part certain reactions to threats to uniformity, one example being the deeply negative (indeed, we would now say un-Christian) attitude towards Jews, Muslims and, eventually, certain other groups of people – who were usually not of European stock. Among the more spectacular fruits of this attitude were the ghettoization of Jews, the decision of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) that Jews and Saracens should wear distinctive clothing, and, of course, the persecution of so-called heretics and alleged witches through, among other things, torture and execution.

Excessive control has also been used to preserve intellectual niceties. The obsession with intellectual niceties accounts in part for the fact that the ecumenical movement got off the ground rather late in the day, and much of what hampers progress in ecumenism even today appears to be what some might regard as unnecessary argument about creedal and doctrinal formulae, together with questionable stances on certain moral issues. I shall leave aside the moral issues, concerning which an enormous amount of ink has been spilt in recent years. Some

readers may feel that creedal and doctrinal matters are of a different order to moral ones – more concerned with the essence of Christian faith. It can be revealing, however, to ask ordinary Catholics whether it would matter to them if 'proceeds from the Father and the Son' were changed to 'proceeds from the Father through the Son'. One answer I have received is: 'Well, as I don't know what either of them means, a change from one to the other is going to have no significance whatsoever for me.' I venture to suggest that such ignorance is not rare. Indeed, one imagines that some of those who are listed among the formally canonized had little or no knowledge of processions in the Trinity. Did that matter?

Whilst this particular issue has been at the heart of disputes between Orthodox and Catholic Christians, one of the areas of disagreement between the Roman Catholic and other Western churches has been that of defining or describing how Christ is present in the Eucharist, other than in the congregation and in the words of Scripture which are read. Again, one imagines, if one were to ask all the Catholics present at Mass in many of our churches to explain their understanding of this matter, one would hear a number of definitions and descriptions which did not coincide with official statements about transubstantiation. In view of the fact that Jesus himself does not seem to have explained things in the kind of detail that some theologians and bishops find important, many are left wondering if such precision in definitions really matters. After all, we are dealing with mystery. This notwithstanding, disagreement concerning these two issues, and a number of others, has provided a poor excuse for indulging in name-calling, violence and the issuing of bulls of excommunication. It is not at all clear, however, that the defining or catcalling on either side has contributed in any way to the preaching of the gospel, in which the church is supposed to be engaged. A passion for definitions, of course, fits comfortably with a passion for control. There are, however, reasons for doubting its ability to promote truth and love.

The use of the expression 'laypeople' highlights something concerning control which we began to touch on when we discussed governance. That is the existence of a caste system within the church. Sometimes this caste system appears to be quite complex – Pope, higher clergy (with some distinctions among them), lower clergy, members of religious orders, ordinary layfolk – even though *all*, including clergy, are members of the *laos* of God. For the most part, however, the issue is about just two castes: the ordained and the others. It is not that all laypeople and all clergy behave as though they were members of different castes. This layman is fortunate enough to have several members of the clergy among his closest friends, and he has encountered a number of bishops who have treated him as nothing less than an equal. Some other individuals from both camps, however, appear to be deeply affected by the caste system, which is embedded in the structures, systems and institutions of the Church. No matter how well particular individuals may behave, the fact remains that, within the Church, we have institutionalized 'caste-ism'. And control is effected through the caste system.

Earlier, we noted that the image portrayed by the Second Vatican Council of the bishop as the person with the fullness of the priesthood gathering his flock around him is rarely encountered in practice, and we asked why. One reason might be that the notion of the bishop as the man with the fullness of the priesthood is

meaningless to many of the faithful. The New Testament *presbyteros* (elder) is surely supposed to be a different sort of entity to the Old Testament *kohen* (priest). It seems, however, that unnecessary sacerdotal elements crept into the presbyterate at a fairly early stage. In books about church history, moreover, we read that among the *presbyteroi* there were, eventually, overseers known as *episkopoi*, a word which has been translated into English as 'bishops'. (Earlier, it seems, the two words *presbyteroi* and *episkopoi* had been used synonymously to mean 'elders'.) These bishops are said to be the heirs of the apostles – the Twelve, one assumes, St Paul being excluded. Only the overseers, not the presbyters, it is claimed, are such heirs in the full sense. In most human endeavours involving more than a few people it is, of course, easy to see the need for overseers. Somebody has to organize things and ensure that things are done properly and efficiently. We are told, however, that bishops are much more than that. They are not merely bosses or managers among the clergy. They are, as we have already had reason to note, those with the fullness of the priesthood.

But what does that mean? Even if we only talk of one level of ordained priesthood, in what sense or senses is the priesthood of the ordained radically different from the priesthood of all the other faithful? It is easy to see the sense of appointing or ordaining certain Christians to perform certain tasks (e.g. presiding at the eucharistic celebration). It is not, however, clear that there is a Christian source for the notion of the priest as someone who has received special powers to be a kind of intermediary between ordinary Christians and God.[11] What might be seen by some as Jesus' words of ordination at the Last Supper (1 Cor. 11.24) could be interpreted differently. The notion of priests as intermediaries, moreover, has an Old Testament ring to it. And, if we go beyond the Judaeo-Christian tradition, we find the notion of the priest as someone with special powers in certain other religions. Some years ago, Peter Harvey argued that, in the letter to the Hebrews, Jesus' priesthood is described as rendering any other priesthood redundant, while, in the book of Revelation, because of Jesus we are all priests. The fact that, in spite of this, we have priests might, he suggests, be 'a concession to our paganism. The revival and spread of priestcraft within the Church would on this view', he says, 'be accounted for by saying that the freedom of Hebrews and Revelation could not, or at least was not, sustained. Priesthood came in as a manifestation of the incompleteness of the Church's conversion. Something indomitably pagan seems to have declared itself symptomatically in this way.' A little further on he writes: 'It could even be argued that the thesis of Hebrews and of Revelation was premature, or that it never in practice was obtained. It is very unsettling to live in the free play of the Spirit.'[12] Even Protestant churches, which have ostensibly rejected 'Catholic sacerdotalism', are, he writes, 'no freer than the rest of us of the compulsion to envisage church life as dependent upon, and revolving around, the full-time professional set-apart God-person'.[13]

Whatever we make of Harvey's ideas about our paganism, by which he means 'not quite Christian', it seems to me that one of the radical changes that are long overdue is a move away from the caste system, which is a major feature of the control system. We are *all* supposed to be continuing the work of Christ. Another long-overdue change is the development of a different attitude to the Holy Spirit.

These two changes are intimately connected. An indication of the tendency to trust human control above the Spirit is found in the description, often heard in the 1960s and 1970s, of the so-called Third Person as the forgotten member of the Trinity. There was a great new surge of interest in the Holy Spirit in that period. Some sober souls, however, warned against emotionalism, and those who were adherents of the so-called 'charismatic movement' were reminded of St Paul's caution concerning glossolalia (1 Corinthians 14). St Paul does seem to have had a point worth making concerning that matter. We should note, however, that he was not opposed in principle to manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit. Nor would we expect him to have been so. Moreover, long before the 1960s, meeting in groups for discernment in the Spirit had already produced an interesting history of remarkable achievement among Quakers. They have been outstanding among Christians in the struggle to abolish slavery, in the search for peace, in the movement for women's rights and in the campaign to abandon capital punishment. Moreover, when one reads about the Great Famine in Ireland during the nineteenth century, one learns how the Irish were abandoned by people across the water, but one also learns that the English Quakers were a notable exception. David Chandler comments that

> Quakerism arose in England as the most radical expression of the Protestant reformation. Quakerism must be understood as a product of reformation: a stripping away of the layers of institutional Christianity that were seen as non-essential or even hindrances to faith. When Luther broke away from the Catholic Church he stripped away the authority of the Pope. Luther asserted the 'priesthood of all believers,' but Lutherans retained the clergy and the sacraments. Other Protestant groups stripped away more. Most Protestants retained, or even promoted, the authority of the Scriptures to the extent that the Bible has been called, by some, the 'paper Pope.'[14]

It might seem odd, of course, to suggest that the Roman Catholic Church should itself become the most radical expression of Protestantism. It is not at all odd to suggest, however, that the Catholic Church might learn a good deal from a group of people who fit that description. In fact, noting the openness to the Spirit of some members of the Society of Friends concerning slavery in the early eighteenth century, and the great influence they had on other Quakers and on Protestants concerning that matter, John Maxwell, himself a Catholic priest, says that one of the reasons for the long delay in the correction of Catholic teaching about slavery appears to have been 'that the use of charismatic gifts by the Catholic laity has normally not been accepted as a means of putting right social injustices and providing a remedy for unjust pharisaism and legalism'.[15]

It is important at this point to highlight the fact that the need for a change in attitude towards control by humans from the centre, on the one hand, and an openness to the Spirit, on the other, is evident in *both* of the main castes within the Roman Catholic Church. There are some among the ranks of the laity whose interpretation of collaborative ministry involves the priest stepping aside while they take over. Many other laypeople have no such ambitions, but are also negatively affected by prevailing attitudes towards control within the Church.

They are content to let decisions be made for them. This tendency to take a back seat, so to speak, can amount to an abdication of responsibility within the Church. Are we not all given the job of continuing the work of Christ?

Changes in Teaching

Turning to the subject of changes in teaching, it is easy to list some changes that have already been made in the sphere of teachings about morality: the issues of slavery, burning at the stake, torture and, of course, usury. The change in teaching about the last of these resulted from a development in knowledge about the nature of money. In fact, some of the original teaching remains. There are forms of lending at interest which are immoral. Usury exists, and is forbidden.[16] Changes in teaching about the first three items, however, were fruits of a recovery from moral blindness. At various stages in history there were people who pointed out the wrongness of such activity.[17] Somehow, it seems, those in authority could not see the wisdom of what those prophets were saying. Again, even when talking about changes in *teaching* within the Church, we see the importance of changes in attitude and moral quality. There was an urgent need to learn to listen and to learn to see.

Outside the purely moral domain, we find Boniface VIII declaring in *Unam sanctam* (1302) that, in order to attain salvation, one should be subject to the Bishop of Rome. In the final sentence of this Bull the pope declares that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human being be subject to the Roman pontiff. In *Lumen gentium*, however, we read:

> 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 in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal 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, and who, not without grace, strive to lead a good life.[18]

Bearing all this in mind, it would be easy to suggest a few possible changes in teaching that might be made in years to come. To many people changes in moral teachings concerning contraception and homosexual partnerships are long overdue. There are also many who argue for changes concerning divorce and second marriage. Modifications in this last sphere, however, would involve more than statements about the morality of such activity. There would also have to be changes in teaching about the allegedly unbreakable bond that, it is claimed, exists when two Christians have taken part in a valid wedding ceremony and their marriage has been consummated. The notion that a marriage continues to be a sign of Christ's love for the church when the two people concerned hate each other strikes many as plainly ludicrous. The issue of women priests is also more than just a moral issue, but here too, as in the case of second marriage after divorce, many

would say that changes in teaching are long overdue. The list could be lengthened. However, rather than attempt to compile such a list, it seems to me more useful to go again to the heart of the matter. There is a tendency in Rome to try to settle controversial questions by declaring certain teachings unchangeable when it is not at all clear that they are unchangeable. It might also be claimed by those advocating change that the 'unchangeable' teaching does not reflect the belief of the Church, and surely Rome should teach only that which the Church believes. Once again, perhaps, control is rearing its head when it would better for it not to do so. In short, it would seem that certain changes in teaching are likely to come about only as a result of changes in attitude and/or moral quality.

Changes in Style

During and after the Second Vatican Council, a number of changes in style appeared on the scene. There were numerous liturgical changes, including a widespread use of local languages and a decision that priests should face their congregations rather than away from them. Another change that has resulted has been the tendency for most bishops to behave more like ordinary men than princes whose bejewelled hands people should kiss. A complete casting aside of aristocratic ways, however, should surely also involve the abandonment of aristocratic titles, which are leftovers from another age and fit uneasily into the church of the Galilean carpenter and his fishermen friends. Examples of such titles still encountered are 'My Lord', 'Your Eminence' and 'Excellency', as well as the title 'Princes of the Church', which is occasionally applied to cardinals.

   A change that appeared on the scene in the 1960s, however, and which was widely viewed in a positive light, may, in practice, have contributed to a strengthening of the caste system which, in the opinion of this author, should find no place in Christianity. That change was a move towards concelebration of the Eucharist, a move away from a gathering at which one person presides, and towards a separation of those gathered into two very distinct groups. Just how divisive this could be was made very clear to me some years ago, when I was a postgraduate student at the Gregorian University in Rome. A Mass was arranged for all the members of my seminar group. The seminar leader and all of my fellow students had been ordained, and the Mass was concelebrated. As I was the only person present who had not been ordained, I alone was the congregation. It was a very strange experience. As I said earlier, there are good reasons for choosing someone to preside at the Eucharist. I can see no good reason, however, for having a priestly caste that separates itself off in certain ways from everybody else. In short, this particular change in style does not appear to this writer to have been a beneficial one.

   Changes in style, it seems to me, are beneficial only if they reflect or express the right kind of changes in attitude and moral quality. We could perhaps go a little further, and say that the most important changes to be considered *are* changes of attitude and moral quality. It should be noted, however, that included here are attitudes to matters of faith, indeed, attitudes towards faith. Some years ago, when

I was living in Rome, I heard a papal secretary describe a visit by some young people to the Vatican. Their faith, he said, was remarkable: 'All they wanted was to see the Holy Father.' A few years later, I was working in a refugee camp in Rome. One of the refugees was a Muslim who had a burning ambition to see the Pope, an ambition he fulfilled, of course, very easily. His wish to see the pontiff, however, appeared to have nothing to do with Christian faith, which he had no wish to embrace. The tendency to confuse interest in (and attachment to) personalities and structures of the institutional church with Christian faith is fairly common. It seems to me that a move away from that tendency is one of the more urgent changes needed in the church. No such move will be possible, however, if we continue to downplay the importance of, or simply ignore, the Holy Spirit in our efforts to control.

A point that it is important to make is that institutions can go awry as institutions without all of their members necessarily going the same way. This has been made very clear to us in recent debates about institutionalized racism and institutionalized sexism. It seems to be possible for most members of an institution to be neither racist nor sexist while the institution itself continues to exhibit both attributes. In spite of the caste system, many individual laypeople, priests and bishops have risen above it. In spite of the tendency towards central control, huge numbers of Catholics over the centuries, including, I am sure, numerous popes, have experienced a highly developed relationship with the Spirit who lives within us. We need to be made aware of institutional problems in order for us to realize that we need to do something about them. We always have to be on our guard to spot those elements that we and/or our ancestors have allowed to enter into the church that in any way hamper its mission. We need to get out of the habit of reaching for the implements of control every time we hear a voice of criticism, and we should instead consider the possibility that, no matter how good or bad the critic may appear to be, his or her words of criticism may well be prophetic.

Notes

1. Though what is discussed here has obvious and analogous implications for other churches as well.
2. Hugh Lawrence, 'Ordination and Governance', in Bernard Hoose (ed.), *Authority in the Roman Catholic Church: Theory and Practice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 76.
3. Ibid., p. 39.
4. Ladislas Orsy, 'In Dialogue: Avery Dulles and Ladislas Orsy Continue their Conversation about the Papacy', *America*, 25 November 2000, 15.
5. Michael Hornsby-Smith, 'Findings from the Parishes', in Noel Timms (ed.), *Diocesan Dispositions and Parish Voices in the Roman Catholic Church* (Chelmsford: Matthew James, 2001), p. 144.
6. Franz König, 'My Vision for the Church of the Future', *Tablet*, 27 March 1999, 434.
7. John R. Quinn, *The Reform of the Papacy: The Costly Call to Christian Unity* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), p. 158.
8. Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Teaching With Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1997), p. 279 n. 17.
9. Quinn, *The Reform of the Papacy*, p. 163.

10. Ibid., 111.
11. This notion of the special powers is, of course, highlighted in the debate about the suitability of women for the priesthood. Some people doubt that humans with two X chromosomes are ever recipients of such powers. Hence the fear that the words of consecration during the Eucharist 'will not work' if pronounced by a female.
12. Nicholas P. Harvey, 'Women's Ordination: A Sideways Look', *The Month*, June 1991, 233.
13. Ibid.
14. David Chandler, 'Who are the Quakers?', available at http://www.quaker.org/visalia/subpages/WhoAreTheQuakers.html, accessed 4 January 2008.
15. John F. Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church: The History of Catholic Teaching Concerning the Moral Legitimacy of the Institution of Slavery* (Chichester: Barry Rose, 1975), pp. 20–1.
16. For more information about the history of this subject see John T. Noonan Jr., *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957) and Albert Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 181–94.
17. For more information see Bernard Hoose, 'Intuition and Moral Theology', *Theological Studies* 67 (2006), 602–24.
18. *Lumen gentium*, 16. For a positive reformulation of the claim that there is no salvation outside the Church, see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§846–8.

The Church Theologian and the Kingdom of God: An Uneasy Relationship? Some Musings

David McLoughlin

My focus in this essay is not on the academy as the locus of theology, although that is where I find myself and where I earn my keep. Rather, I want to focus on the *ecclesia*. The theologian in the academy has certain privileges but also constraints, since most academies are secular and theology has to defend its right to be there alongside chemistry and business studies. In the Church the theologian is *expected* to be there but it is often suspected by the authorities and indeed the faithful that the theologian is doing her own thing. Indeed the lot of church theologians in recent years has not always been happy: one thinks of Leonardo Boff, Jacques Pohier, Edward Schillebeeckx, Roger Haight and most recently Peter Phan. Significant numbers have had their licence to teach taken away from them, especially in Germany, France and Austria, with serious consequences for themselves, their families and the visible integrity of the Church in society.

A Little Context

It is a commonplace of postmodern discourse that meta-narratives, as systems of absolute truth, are consistently used to underpin forms of totalitarianism.[1] I was brought up within the meta-narrative of pre-Vatican II Catholicism, with the Church understood as the Barque of Peter sailing on the troubled waters of history but with all those on board safe! To experience contemporary postmodernity is to live among the ruins of 'isms', e.g. existentialism, structuralism, Marxism. It is to see such meta-narratives as all too often ideologies within human history, culture and politics; as, in Lyotard's famous expression, examples of 'impure reason'.[2]

A Return of the Repressed

This is not a totally negative process. Modernity had excluded whatever did not fit in with its systems as irrational or unscientific. The irony of modernity was its claim to universal reason and understanding and yet always it ended up excluding and repressing what lay outside it, thus calling its very claim to total comprehension into question. Sadly in the nineteenth century the church, in

particular Catholicism, defined itself against modernity. All too often it allowed the questions and certainties of modernity to define the shape of its response, as in the teaching of Vatican I on revelation, where the perceived attack from modern rationalism dictates and drastically limits the treatment of the Council's teaching.[3]

Postmodernity however revalues the plural, multiple and previously repressed, indeed all that which antecedent systems had left out or marginalized, as in religion, faith and spirituality. It is in this context that Emmanuel Levinas develops his ethics based on respect for the irreplaceable other. Whereas modernity tends to absorb the other into comprehensive systems, Levinas insists the other must be let be and not cast in our image.[4] In his hands ethics takes on the irreducibly particular and the different rather than attempting to construct moral systems. In the gospel accounts the teaching of Jesus prioritizes the other. The gospel narratives of healing, debate and teaching all bear witness to this. In teaching in this manner Jesus reawakens the pure deuteronomic strangeness of God, of Yahweh the indefinable One – and of the particularity of the curious people of God, Israel. Once no people, these twelve gangs of migrant workers in Egypt become a sign of liberation and potential to all peoples. This original strangeness in revelation and its emphasis on the free presence of God to the other has often been lost in Christian reflection and practice, especially around the question of what is the relationship between the church and the strange Kingdom of the strange God that Jesus inaugurated.

Modern Theology

The determinant of much modern theology has not been revelation but modernity itself.[5] Modern theologians all too often gain legitimacy by buying into modern discourse at the expense of the particularity/specificity of the biblical narrative and of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Tillich's famous method of correlation and Bultmann's demythologization allowed modern culture to set the agenda that theology then responded to. Their various existentialist frameworks meant they interpreted the Bible in symbolic rather than historical terms. The *logos* of modernity swallowed the *mythos* of the Bible. The 'isms' of modernity tend to think within their own categories and leave the 'other' unthought or reduced to categories modernity can handle.

In this paper I want to explore the tension that emerges when the church theologian remembers the strangeness of Jesus' stories of the Kingdom rather than an ideology of the church, whether Christendom, Barque of Peter, People of God, etc. To focus this tension initially I would like to turn to the work of Edward Schillebeeckx. His work is always ecumenical but of course he comes out of the Roman Catholic tradition, with its emphasis on the need for centralized orthodox statements of faith.

Edward Schillebeeckx on Orthodoxy

The particular focus of Schillebeeckx's thinking I want to reflect on is the translation of Christian experience from one historical era to the next. This translation of experience in the church is often reduced to the line of Apostolic continuity as the bearer of orthodoxy. In *The Understanding of Faith* he gives three criteria of orthodoxy:

1.   The criterion of the proportional norm.
2.   The criterion of orthopraxis.
3.   The criterion of reception by the whole people of God.[6]

The criterion of the proportional norm assumes that a purely theoretical understanding of faith is an impossibility within the conditions of human historicity since orthodoxy can never be purely theoretically verified. Orthodoxy, in other words, does not refer to some essence of faith or a theoretical construct that can be re-clothed in different concepts and language. Continuity in understanding of faith, for Schillebeeckx, lies in the act of faith itself. Faith here is primarily a 'doing', an engagement. It is the one saving mystery of Christ that elicits the inward act of faith, but the saving mystery itself is expressed, received and understood throughout the church's history in different contexts and a variety of 'structurising elements'.[7] He explores this in depth in his book *Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World*, where there is an exhaustive treatment of the diverse ways the New Testament texts express and understand the mystery of salvation in Christ as their authors respond to the context of the different communities they address.[8]

   Note his emphasis: orthodoxy is not dependent simply on the act of faith, nor simply on the context, but rather on the proportional relationship between the two. The maintaining of an identity of common meaning takes place in the relationship between tradition and situation. This dynamic is reduced in such a static term as 'deposit of faith', as though faith could be placed in some safe deposit box and occasionally taken out and then returned in pristine condition to its container. In his Nijmegen retirement lecture of 1983, as yet unpublished, Schillebeeckx says:

> That identity-of-meaning is only to be found *on the level of the corresponding relationship between the original message* (tradition) and the *situation*, different each time, then and now. That is what is meant by what used to be called the 'analogia fidei'. The fundamental identity-of-meaning between the successive periods of Christian understanding of the tradition of faith does not refer to corresponding *terms*, for example, between the situation of the Bible and our situation … but rather to corresponding *relationships* between the terms (message and situation, then and now). There is thus a fundamental unity and equality, but this has no relationship to the *terms* of the hermeneutical equation, but to the *relationship* between those terms.[9]

He compares the relationship between Jesus' message and his socio-historical context as proportionately equal to the New Testament and its socio-historical

context. This co-relation between message and context has to obtain in every new situation if the understanding of faith is not to become frozen. So for Schillebeeckx Christian identity is only to be found in this relationship and its continual translation. Hence it is not a simple equality between one message and another but a proportional equality between message and context.

The second criterion, orthopraxis, emphasizes that this translation is not merely at the level of meaning, not merely the hermeneutical exercise of retranslating the tradition for a new context. Rather, orthopraxis is part of the translation of a true faith understanding. Christianity is about the realizing of the *humanum*, something we find constantly threatened and diminished in history yet proclaimed and promised in Christ. Here the gospel can be seen as an ongoing critique of church and religion, something acknowledged at the Reformation and more recently at Vatican II but conveniently forgotten again and again. There is an element of 'future promise' here. The Kingdom proclaimed and conceived by Christ, and partially realized in him and promised by him, invites the believer within the church into a necessary dialectic between past event, present actualization and future promise of fulfilment. This fulfilling of the vision of the human in Christ remains for the believer an ongoing task in the present. This gives orthodoxy a more *dynamic* quality than is often acknowledged. As Schillebeeckx says,

> The object of Christian faith is, of course, already realized in Christ, but it is only realized in him as *our promise* and as *our future*. But the future cannot be theoretically interpreted, *it must be done*. The humanum which is sought and which is proclaimed and promised to us in Christ is not an object of purely contemplative expectation, but also *a historical form which is already growing in the world*: at least this is what we have to do, in the perspective of eschatological hope. Christianity is not simply a hermeneutic undertaking, not simply an illumination of existence, but also a *renewal of existence*, in which 'existence' concerns man as an individual person and in his social being.[10]

The final criterion of orthodoxy is acceptance or reception by the people of God. This has been a key theme in ecumenical theology in the last thirty years. Using themes from the ecclesiology of Vatican II, Schillebeeckx suggests that the church as the whole people of God is a community of shared discourse and communication. So the subject sustaining orthodoxy is not the theologian, pope or bishop first and foremost *but the whole Church community*. This process of maintaining orthodoxy involves a tested dialectical process within a community of multiple roles, a process that still causes problems with many of our church leaders.[11] It involves a series of relationships, between theologians and magisterium, between our church and other local churches, and between local churches and their leaders, including the pope. And while the particular local church must always see itself in relation to the wider church – hence the use of the bishop's name in the eucharistic prayers – the local church can itself be a source of new interpretation of faith for the whole church (one thinks of Athanasius and the

church of Alexandria on *homoousios*, or more recently of Helder Camara and the church of Recife on the 'preferential option for the poor').

This is a theme John Henry Newman had worked over long before Schillebeeckx in his reflections on the *sensus fidei* of the community of faith, realized above all in the 'amen' of worship. Schillebeeckx takes up this theme as follows:

> Acceptance by the community of faith or, seen from a different point of view, the sensus fidelium or consciousness of faith of a community, thus forms an essential part of the principle of the verification of orthodoxy. Because this orthodoxy is, as I have said, the theoretical aspect of the Christian praxis, the 'acclamation' or 'amen' forms an essential part of the structure of the Christian liturgy in which orthodoxy is above all to be found: lex orandi, lex credendi.[12]

But like the other criteria, this one of acceptance is not an absolute in itself, nor can it alone guarantee orthodoxy. Acceptance or reception still needs the mutual criticism of, and recognition of, the Church's teaching authority, including its theologians as long as they are in tune with the people's faith. But Schillebeeckx would go further and say that both *communities* and *leaders* still stand under the normative memory of Jesus and its eschatological perspective. However authoritative the mandate may be, if in some way it clashes with the authentic memory of Jesus or closes off further development in some definitive or absolute way, then it is open to rejection.

For Schillebeeckx the key underpinning of orthodoxy, the means of its preservation, is the community's ongoing translation and re-enactment of the previously accepted understanding of faith within its own era. The real centre of orthodoxy is not an ivory tower of clarity able to name the true in the midst of what David Tracy calls post-modernity's inability to name itself.[13] Orthodoxy is not about one definitive expression of Christian experience but rather the church's continuing entrance into and engagement with the history of human suffering and human hope and human attempts to overcome suffering, opening up the memory and hope of liberation that Christ brings.

So for Schillebeeckx at the heart of orthodoxy is what Johan Baptist Metz famously called 'the dangerous memory of the freedom of Jesus Christ'.[14] For me the heart of this is the keeping alive of Jesus' message and his practice of the Kingdom of God, seeing this as anticipated and begun in Jesus but still to be realized. The rest of this chapter will explore the tension one encounters as a theologian within the church when one does not simply identify the Kingdom with the church, as one is often expected to do by magisterium and faithful.

A Kingdom of the Living Dead

Jesus invited the people of his time to accept and enter what he called the *malkut Yahweh*, or *basileia tou theou*, the reign of God. At the heart of his teaching are a series of sayings which we now group together as the Beatitudes. The familiar

received translation of the first of these (Lk. 6.20) goes something like: 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.' But the Greek word *ptochoi*, so simply translated as 'poor', is not simply 'poor'. Poor and rich define our status within the same world but at different ends of a sliding scale. *Ptochos* is someone outside the scale, a destitute person, without family or social ties, a wanderer. Indeed it is derived from the classical Greek word for a corpse. Jesus' kingdom is not a kingdom of the poor but of the destitute, of the living dead. The Kingdom is not primarily the milieu of the worthy peasant or artisan class but of the unclean, the degraded, the expendable, the powerless – all too often, then as now, children. This is still capable of shocking its audience and can set up a tension for the church theologian, who often functions at the centre of her community and yet is aware that those at the margins and the outsiders have perhaps more in common with those to whom the gospel was first addressed.

The Kingdom as Mission Going Out to the Other

Jesus speaks of himself as one sent. He speaks little of his feelings, his inner life; he points not to himself but to his mission: 'to do the Father's will'. There is little navel-gazing in the gospels. The Kingdom of Abba is revealed in Jesus' words and acts. In great part it can be described as a certain style of life. Even John, who focuses not on the Kingdom but on the person of Jesus, refers 40 times to his mission. The verbs *come* and *send* occur again and again:

> The truth is I have not come of myself. I was sent by the one who has the right to send, and him you do not know. I know him because it is from him I come, he sent me. (Jn 7.28–29)

The same language is used elsewhere to sum up the Christ event:

> When the appointed time was come he sent his only son (Gal. 4.4)
> God's love was revealed when he sent his only son (1 Jn 4.9)

The coming of God is revealed as part of God's being. God is 'he who is, who was and is to come' (Rev. 1.4). So the object of Jesus' coming, his mission, is to reveal the Father: 'My doctrine is not my own; it comes from him who sent me' (Jn 7.16). But sent to whom? To the sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the little ones, the powerless; all who are less than fully alive: 'I came that they may have life and have it to the full' (Jn 10.10). The same mission is given to the disciples in Matthew 10 and has been passed on by and in the company of disciples we call church.

Theology all too often clouds this by turning the coming of Jesus – to reveal the Father and to enliven the dead, the dull, or the dying – into the doctrine of the incarnation. In formal theology this becomes the entrance of the eternal into the temporal at the birth of Jesus and the return at the death and resurrection. The stress of the gospel of coming, going, sending – a dynamic continuous movement

out through human lives to other human lives that is the sacrament of the coming close of God – is all too often lost in the theological act of distancing that can happen through doctrinal formulation.

Let us stay with this idea of mission as movement. The gospels are not abstract. They speak of meetings and encounters between Jesus and working people, their leaders, their elites, their traitors, their sick, their black sheep. He meets them, summons them to deeper, richer life, and all this takes place in the encounter. The disciples are sent to serve the same cause – to prolong Christ's invitation to life.

Jesus' encounter with others was unsettling. He awoke hope in life and its possibilities, which is always unsettling, but he also encountered resistance. He challenges the way things are, the status quo, for which we, like the scribes and Sadducees before us, all too easily settle. He invites change. The parables provoke movement outwards into the new space that is the Kingdom and sometimes the reaction is fear, panic, resistance, rejection – the classic example being Matthew 19, the story of the rich young man. But let's not fool ourselves: in the end, all his followers handed him over, apart from the women! The deadening reality Jesus revealed, the sin, is woven into the texture of our world. It is collective as well as personal. Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Roman imperial officers had group mentalities. They read the equivalent of the *Telegraph*, the *Mail*, the *Guardian* or the *Star*. Jesus confronted the narrow group mentalities, the structures that limited and enslaved. The gospel and its remembered dangerous teaching of Jesus provokes the church theologian to do the same.

But there is always a risk. How does a missionary community do the same for its members? The story is an old one. It is the preference of the false security of the slavery of Egypt over true freedom under God. True freedom with its concomitant personal responsibility is rarely wanted. It involves risk and the trust that life has purpose. Jesus' stories and encounters broke open the narrow perspectives of his time and revealed what was at their heart; he made people aware of the unsatisfied depths within each of them.

One of the best examples is the encounter with the woman at the well in John 4. He awakens the deeper desires beneath the carnal desires of her promiscuous relationships. Women were ignored in public, Samaritans hated. He asks her for something she can give. He is fraternal, he places himself on a par with her – the equality of the sons and daughters of the living God. She should have made him unclean. His presence is natural, affectionate; he enables her to feel her own dignity and worth. Her replies become almost cheeky. He enters her life, her mind, starts from where she is, the ordinary world of thirst and the need for water. The final result is that she forgets the jug and goes and tells the others. She is the first apostle, the first effective missioner of John's Gospel.

The church is called to the same mission – to go out to be alongside men and women oppressed and enslaved and limited by structures, peer pressure accommodations, low esteem. In going out to the other the church has always to free itself of structures that once served the mission but now limit it. It must not place anything in the way of those who would meet Christ now, yet do not share the church's past. We can't ask them to learn all our customs and hymns before they can feel at home. An African student once said to me, 'We were happy to

receive the Christian gospel but did you have to infect us with your Reformation?' The mission has constantly to be re-expressed in new circumstances. The temptation, of course, is to settle for orthodox statements, positions that members must sign up to. But over-concern for orthodoxy can kill mission as, for example, in the tragic story of the Jesuit mission to China under Matteo Ricci in the sixteenth century. After decades of careful work entering into Chinese culture and restating the gospel in Chinese categories, and having won the interest of the Emperor and his court with an account of the life and teaching of Jesus in classical Chinese, the mission was completely undermined by rivals in Rome who suggested to the central authorities that the Jesuits had sold out to a pagan culture and its alien categories.

The danger is always that we allow the pilgrim community to settle down, become rooted in one spot, closed in on itself, a ghetto. The mission is lost sight of and the missionaries become administrators of established institutions. When the Church becomes a fixed point in society it can easily become manipulated and used, the instrument of men and not God.

The book of Revelation sees this happening at the end of the first Christian generation. Its author summons the communities to conversion:

you have turned aside from your early love (2.4)
you are neither hot nor cold (3.15)

They have stopped moving outwards towards others; they have become synagogues, reintroducing laws, rules and works of piety. They have become closed. Corruption happens when the church adapts to the customs and pattern of society. It can be reversed by moving out again to the stranger and the outsider. The gospel mission of Jesus is essentially dynamic, a movement out through one human life to another – a movement that is the sacrament of God's coming close.

The Church and the Kingdom

At this point I would like to identify a tension underlying much of the present difficulties the church theologian faces. How she interprets the whole gospel will depend on how she deals with this tension. Put simply, this is whether or not the church and the Kingdom of God are identical. Is the church identical with the Kingdom of God in history or is the Kingdom broader than the church but present within it? It is a commonplace of much post-Vatican II ecclesiology that the Kingdom as preached by Jesus is for the world and that the church serves the mission of the Kingdom. The Kingdom then is the future of the church *and* the world. This is clearly explored in one of the seminal early works of Yves Congar, where he says:

In God's unitary design the Church and the World are both ordered to this Kingdom in the end, but by different ways and on different accounts. Church and World have the same end, but only the same ultimate end. That they should have the same end is

due to God's unitary plan and the fact that the whole cosmos is united with man in a shared destiny. That they should have only the same ultimate end prevents a confusion that would be bad for the Church, as raising a risk of dissolving her own proper mission in that of history, and bad for the world, as raising the risk of misunderstanding and hindering its own proper development.[15]

Something of Congar's thought seems reflected in *Gaudium et spes*, where it is implied that Christ's mission of service is continued by the Church.[16] The focus turns the church's attention outwards to engage the world in transformative and liberative action. Here the church is a pointer to Christ and his inaugurated but still-to-come Kingdom. The vision implies that all work for justice, truth, peace and unity builds the coming Kingdom. The vision sees the church's service/ *diakonia* and proclamation and worship as part of its struggle for a better world. In all of this, then, the Kingdom is the wider reality of transformed humanity with the church as an agent of change.

Here Vatican II echoes the gospels, which do not identify the community of disciples with the Kingdom. The disciples are not an exclusive society. Membership of the Kingdom implies radical solidarity with the excluded and discriminated against wherever they may be.

The church has in its history and through its theologians fallen for various reductionist temptations – for example, that the Church manages the Kingdom; that the church is the realized Kingdom in the world. But the Gospels do not say the Kingdom is the Kingdom of Christ's disciples but the Kingdom of God. And the God of Jesus' parables has a curious way of breaking out of any limiting and excluding categories. Vatican II reaffirms that the Kingdom happens in history through the life and praxis of Jesus and is fully inaugurated through the act of God which is the paschal mystery inaugurating a presence in history directed to a future eschatological fullness.[17]

While the texts of Vatican II can clearly be read in this way, there are other church theologians who read *Lumen gentium*[18] as implying that the Kingdom is identical with church either actually here in history or in the eschaton. Such ideas are clearly stated in the 1985 document of the International Theology Commission on 'The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and his Mission'.[19] There the Kingdom of God in history is identified with the pilgrim church and the fullness of the Kingdom with the heavenly church:

> It is clear that in the Council's teaching there is no difference so far as the eschatological reality is concerned between the final realization of the Church (as *consummata*) and of the Kingdom (as *consummatum*).[20]

However, Pope John Paul II's encyclical on mission, *Redemptoris Missio*, actually goes against the Theology Commission on this point, emphasising, in the light of the reality of the many religions, that the Kingdom in history is broader than church and can embrace other religions.[21] Such an admission does not take away from the church's privileged role:

> Between Church and Kingdom there is a unique and special relationship which, while not excluding the action of Christ and the Spirit outside the Church's visible boundaries, confers upon her a specific and necessary role.[22]

And John Paul emphasizes that the Church serves the Kingdom of God by spreading gospel values and by bearing witness through dialogue, human promotion and working for justice and peace.[23]

In other words, at the heart of the Catholic Church there is still a battle going on which requires theologians to return to the praxis of Jesus once more. It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus saw his mission primarily, and indeed at first exclusively, within Israel. Early in the mission he tells the disciples to 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Mt. 10.5–6). The original mission is of restoration of the original, pure Deuteronomic covenant of God with God's chosen covenant partner.[24]

The encounters that Jesus has with strangers and outsiders lead him beyond Israel. He makes the Kingdom/reign present through healings and exorcisms: see the aftermath of the healing of the blind and mute demoniac (Mt. 12.25–28) and the opening declaration at the synagogue in Nazareth claiming the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled (Lk. 4.16–22). In the process he heals non-Israelites (e.g. the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman: Mt. 15.21–28; Mk 7.24–30). So the reign of God 'works' among the Gentiles too. Jesus makes no exclusive identification of his 'movement' (which becomes church) with the Kingdom.

In Paul's writing the Kingdom is present under the kingship of the risen Christ. But the vision in Paul clearly goes beyond Church to the whole world; for example, of the risen Christ he says, 'And you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority' (Col. 2.10), and again, 'as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth' (Eph. 1.10). For Paul the risen Christ is the head of the world and the Church, although only the Church is his body:

> And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Eph. 1.22; see also 4.15; 5.23)

> He is the head of the body, the Church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. (Col. 1.18–20)

Christ, church, and world are interconnected but not reducible to each other, a bit like Venn diagrams in logic. Rudolph Schnackenburg, who wrote one of the first ground-breaking biblical reassessments of the idea of the Kingdom of God, was very clear on the implications:

Christ's rule extends beyond the Church … and one day the Church will have completed her earthly task and will be absorbed in the eschatological Kingdom of Christ and of God.[25]

In other words, in heaven the church, like the sacraments, will cease to be as a particular reality. This is very different to the International Theological Commission's position on the 'heavenly Church'.

Tensions in the New Testament

In the New Testament there are two major strands of thought relating to the reign of God. The first emphasizes God's sovereignty over all, but especially the end. Implicit in this is a clear universal saving intention towards humans and creation – notably the unique text in Mark:

> He also said, 'The Kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes with his sickle, because the harvest has come'. (Mk 4.26–29)

This parable, of the sheer gratuity of God's Kingdom, is dropped very quickly in the emergent church. It is followed by the parable of the mustard seed (Mk 4.30–32), which again is a parable about a Kingdom without boundaries. The mustard shrub is open to all the birds of the air!

This first emphasis is contrasted with a spatial metaphor, as though the reign was a realm or territory. We can enter it:

> Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. (Mt. 5.20; see also 7.21; 18.3)

But we can be also be thrown out of it:

> I tell you, many will come from East and West and will eat with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, while the heirs of the Kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Mt. 8.12, after commending the faith of the centurion)

And of course there are keys to it; as Jesus says to Peter,

> I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Mt. 16.18–19)

Notably followed, but rarely alluded to, with:

Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block for me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things. (Mt. 16.23)

So the fundamental tension between reign and realm, kingship and community, is located even in the New Testament itself. It is the Kingdom that created the church, which is the result of the work of the Spirit, who makes God's intention or rule present as the source of its common life. This is clear in the post-resurrection accounts. But the question remains: how is the Kingdom found outside the church?

The dynamic of resurrection faith suggests a way forward here. With the resurrection of the body Jesus participates in and inaugurates the life of the world to come, a life without limits. Beyond the limits of time and space he has a new relationship with reality as a whole and is present to creation in a new way. He is our future and the future of our present material world. So we are related to him not just through creation, as in the hymn in Colossians (1.15–20) or the prologue of the Gospel of John (1.1–14); rather, through the transformation of his body, that is the resurrection, we are involved in a new creation. And this new creation is not an ecclesial reality but a dimension of universal history. This is the dynamic recognized in *Redemptoris Missio*:

It is true that the inchoative reality of the Kingdom can also be found beyond the confines of the Church among people everywhere to the extent that they live 'Gospel values' and are open to the working of the Spirit who breathes when and where he wills.[26]

The Relationship of Church to World and to Other Religions

These distinctions are potentially important for a renewal within the church of its own sense of mission and of the theology of religions. If the above comments are reasonably accurate then the historical liberation of the oppressed is connected to the fullness of the Kingdom still to come, whose goal is the transformation of all reality. That is a project still in the making, not something completed into which we are invited to enter.

If the reign is the intention of God for all reality then the issue is not the relation between church and religions but the identification of how the Kingdom is concretely present in other religions. This goes against a trend among some church theologians and authorities, including the present pope, to insist on a tighter link of church and Kingdom in the face of trends in liberation theology and the theology of religions which distinguish church and Kingdom.

A renewed sense of the reign of God offers opportunities to relate positively to the world and to enter into dialogue creatively with other religions and ideologies. The emphasis then becomes: 'The church's mission is to serve the Kingdom, not take its place.'[27] The inability to see this relationship between Kingdom, world, and church leads to a series of what Leonardo Boff calls 'pathologies' at the heart of the church.[28] The first pathology sees the church and Kingdom as too close, as

virtually identical. The result is an abstract, idealistic church removed from history, which, more recently, we have seen arise in new forms typical of some of the earlier work of John Milbank and 'Radical Orthodoxy'.

The second identifies the church and the world. Here the church is merely one power among many in constant conflict with world powers. This is the danger of the nationalism that has often distorted the ecclesiology and the understanding of mission in the autocephalous churches of Orthodoxy.

The third sees the church turned in on itself rather than remaining world- or Kingdom-focused. The result is the creation of a self-sufficient, triumphalist, perfect society with no recognition of the world's autonomy.[29]

A Twofold Mission

If the Kingdom is operative outside the church then the church's mission can be understood as serving the Kingdom and leading humanity to its ultimate destiny inaugurated in the risen Christ. Wherever the signs of the Kingdom are revealed in the world the church must promote them and enable them to come to their fullness.

This can indeed be done by making the Kingdom present by proclamation through word and sacrament in Christian communities, where the Kingdom is anticipated and revealed especially through inclusive table-fellowship and Eucharist. But it can also be done by highlighting the presence of the risen Christ and the Spirit as universally present. Here the church is called to go outwards to serve and promote collaboratively God's continuing action in the world among those who do not share its faith. I remember the extraordinarily positive reaction of the Italian Communist Party to John Paul II's first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis.* The Communists could not accept the origin, or the ultimate end, of the vision that John-Paul mapped out; but they assured him that if he was serious about the present struggle to realize the Kingdom they would join him in the process.

This quality of engagement requires the promotion of real encounter with those of other races and cultures in compassionate, life-enhancing celebratory relationships. In these God's Kingdom is experienced and felt in human affairs prior to being reflected upon. The fruits of the Kingdom are universally appreciated: reconciliation, forgiveness, healing, affirmation, open table-fellowship. The Church's mission in great part is to witness to the presence of the Kingdom wherever the signs are manifest, to identify the movement of the Spirit and to raise awareness of it and celebrate its presence. In doing this the Church itself will truly become a sacrament of the Kingdom and not its landlord.

Notes

1. See, for example, K. J. Vanhoozer, 'Theology and the Position of Postmodernity: A Report on Knowledge (of God)', in K. J. Vanhoozer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 11.

2. Ibid., p. 16.

3. See N. P. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), vol. 2, p. 806.

4. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (1961; ET Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987); and *Ethics and Infinity* (1982; ET Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985).

5. See David Tracy, *On Naming the Present: God, Hermeneutics, and Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), p. 41.

6. Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Understanding of Faith* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1974), pp. 55–72. Compare Nicholas Lash's four factors in his *Change in Focus: A Study of Doctrinal Change and Continuity* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1973), p. 175: (1) the unchanging reference of Christian doctrine to certain historical events; (2) the pattern of the church's liturgical worship; (3) the fact that the church has always been a structured community; (4) the fact that there has been a continuity of Christian meanings which is to be looked for, not so much in what has been said in the church at different periods, but rather in the concern or intention which has given rise to successive doctrinal statements.

7. Schillebeeckx, *The Understanding of Faith*, pp. 60–1.

8. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World* (1977; ET London: SCM Press, 1980; publ. in US as *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1980).

9. Edward Schillebeeckx. 'Theologisch Geloofsverstaan anno 1983', 14–15; I am grateful to Daniel P. Thompson for this translation, in his excellent article 'Schillebeeckx on the Development of Doctrine', *Theological Studies* 62 (2001), 310.

10. Schillebeeckx, *The Understanding of Faith*, p. 65 (emphases mine).

11. See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1990), and Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, 'Magisterial Documents and Public Dissent', *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 January 1997.

12. Schillebeeckx, *The Understanding of Faith*, pp. 71–2.

13. Tracy, *On Naming the Present*, p. 3.

14. Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society* (London: Burns and Oates, 1980), p. 88.

15. Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church* (London: Bloomsbury, 1957), p. 58.

16. *Gaudium et spes*, 3, 92.

17. *Lumen gentium*, 5, 9.

18. Esp. ibid., 3, 5, 9, 48.

19. See Michael Sharkey (ed.), *Texts and Documents, 1969–1985* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), pp. 305–18.

20. Ibid., p. 302.

21. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 20, available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio-en.html (accessed 31 July 2007).

22. Ibid., 18.

23. Ibid., 20.

24. Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community* (London: SPCK, 1985), pp. 75–6.

25. Rudolph Schnackenburg, *God's Rule and Kingdom* (New York: Herder, 1968), p. 301.

26. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 20.

27. John Fuellenbach, SVD, 'The Church in the Context of the Kingdom of God', in Daniel Kendall and Stephen T. Davis (eds), *The Convergence of Theology: A Festschrift Honoring Gerald O'Collins, S.J.* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), p. 232.

28. Leonardo Boff, *Church, Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church* (London: SCM Press, 1985), pp. 1–2.

Dialogue as Tradition: The Collective Journey towards Truth

Jayne Hoose

Christianity arises out of a Jewish tradition which is seen to be in constant dialogue with Scripture. We see Christ engaged in this process at a very early stage in Luke's Gospel. His parents, having lost him, find him involved in discussions in the Temple: 'After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions' (Lk. 2.46). Three official documents of the Roman Catholic Church, namely, *Gaudium et spes*, *Ecclesiam suam* and *Laborem exercens*, each call us all to follow Christ's example and involve ourselves in this tradition of dialogue.[1] *Gaudium et spes* states that

> the Church sincerely professes that all men, believers and unbelievers alike, ought to work for the rightful betterment of this world in which all alike live; such an ideal cannot be realized, however, apart from sincere and prudent dialogue.[2]

Gaudium et spes 'deliberately set out to engage in dialogue with the contemporary world and, within that process, attempted to read the "signs of the times"',[3] which, as identified by the moral theologian Kevin T. Kelly, involves 'intelligently listening to the deepest hopes and desires, sufferings and anxieties, of the human family today'.[4] We should perhaps also include interpretations, opinions and beliefs, encouraging the broader reciprocal education to which Vatican II calls us.

Vatican II reversed the tendency towards drawing ideas for respectful living principally from religious leaders, particularly the pope and the bishops, who had been assumed to have special gifts of wisdom and love. It pointed us back towards God's invitation for all to share in God's work through the wisdom of personal experience and love. This relies upon human persons treating themselves and others with respect. Such respectful behaviour 'can often only be discovered by a wise and loving heart as it learns from experience, listening to other wise and loving hearts.'[5] We are thus required to engage seriously in dialogue with the whole church.

This draws upon the concept of the *sensus fidelium*,[6] which sees dialogue as a prerequisite of a living faith and church. The *sensus fidelium* leads to reciprocal recognition of truth and reciprocal discernment. It recognizes the need for the person teaching to understand the position of those they are teaching, and the need

for continued mutual learning. The *sensus fidelium* is the means by which we acknowledge that the whole church needs to be given a voice.

For Paul Valadier, the failure to take note of the *sensus fidelium* leads to official teaching becoming sterile and non-credible and, in turn, leads to dissent because of a lack of recognition by the faithful.[7] Faith is not about consuming what is given out. Respecting the *sensus fidelium* and promoting dialogue is important in preventing us from falling into the trap of seeing the members of the Church as consumers. Debate and dialogue are essential in making it possible for the faithful to express consent because they recognize what they believe in the message. They recognize the message as a reflection of the gospel and their faith.

We need to promote a process which facilitates the recognition of the 'signs of the times' and the expression of a gospel of love and life in Christ in the current time and culture.[8] This is about respecting and valuing the living of the gospel by all, where they are. It means engaging in a long and constant process that places the institution of the church at the service of truth and love, and developing the responsibility of the faithful by promoting their 'need to understand their faith and take seriously the charisms of intelligence, knowledge and faith'.[9]

The fact that we are human means that we are all part of the teaching ministry and, hence, also all part of the learning ministry. A teaching church by its nature must be a learning church. The church can only stay credible as a teaching authority if it is centred on learning. Effective learning and teaching occur through dialogue, which is a vital part of the teaching tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. A teaching church, moreover, cannot be credible if it does not understand the wider society. Dialogue with *today's* society is therefore essential.

Those in teaching roles within the church can only teach what is truly the faith of the church when they are genuinely engaged with where the church is in the context of today's society. It is when there is a lack of dialogue that we are likely to see questions arising regarding the credibility of what the church teaches, and an increasing need to use the authority of governance to enforce teaching.

Recent Events

Recently, however, the approach to dialogue has been of particular concern because of a seemingly increased tendency for the magisterium[10] to exercise control over or even close down certain areas of dialogue in the name of preserving and protecting tradition. Some recent events have led to questions regarding the magisterium's commitment to dialogue.

One of these is that of the forced resignation of Thomas Reese SJ, editor of the US Catholic journal *America*, in 2005. It appeared to many that this resulted from the Vatican's finding inappropriate an approach which invited dialogue on disputed issues. It seemed that discussing key contemporary issues facing the Church by publishing articles expounding different viewpoints was not acceptable.

Following the resignation of Reese, Robert Mickens wrote: 'And truth, it seems, has become a casualty in a clash of views between the Vatican and the Society of Jesus over what is open to discussion among ordinary Catholic believers and what

is not'.[11] Jose de Vera (Chief Press Officer for the Society of Jesus in Rome) indeed said that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith wanted Jesuits to write articles 'defending whatever position the Church has manifested, even if it is not infallible'.[12] Paul Baumann challenged this approach, stating that

> It's hard to imagine how any Church authority can shut down the sorts of debates that thinking Catholics are engaged in. What's most troublesome is that for the ordained, for those theologians who are priests, and for people working in Catholic universities, this will inhibit the honest exchange of views.[13]

It is true that some of the issues debated in *America*, including AIDS prevention, homosexuality and same-sex marriage, and religious pluralism (the subject of *Dominus Iesus*), cause great difficulty for many. Simply preventing questions being asked and debate taking place, however, will not change this. These difficulties will only be resolved when the questions raised by current doctrines are adequately addressed. A move to prevent such dialogue, which publicly engages with all sides, will simply mean that such dialogue will take place outside of the Catholic institutions which apply such restrictions.

As Pat McCloskey observed:

> I'm afraid a move like this one will cause more and more Catholic thinkers to say that they want to write for publications that are not identified as Catholic and to teach at schools not identified as Catholic, because there is more freedom there.[14]

The Thomas Reese affair has damaged the teaching credibility of the magisterium, giving rise to such questions as: How can we be open to the church and to revelation today in the absence of such dialogue? If the alternative positions put forward are so contrary to the truth, then why not simply resolve the debate by clearly outlining the flaws in the positions being proposed? If the church's teaching does not stand up to such scrutiny, then why not?

A second recent example where the magisterium stepped in to halt debate is on the issue of women priests. In response to the dialogue taking place within the Church, John Paul II issued the Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, in which he states:

> Although the teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal Tradition of the Church and firmly taught by the Magisterium in its more recent documents, at the present time in some places it is nonetheless considered still open to debate, or the Church's judgment that women are not admitted to ordination is considered to have a merely disciplinary force.
>
>   Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk. 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer ordination on women and that this judgement is to be definitely held by all the Church's faithful.[15]

The final part of this statement caused confusion as to whether 'is to be definitely held by all the Church's faithful' was to be understood as 'belongs to the deposit of faith', and led to the release of a statement by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

> This teaching requires definitive assent, since, founded on the written Word of God, and from the beginning constantly preserved and applied in the Tradition of the Church, it has been set forth infallibly by the ordinary and universal Magisterium (cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* 25, 2). Thus, in the present circumstances, the Roman Pontiff, exercising his proper office of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk 22:32), has handed on this same teaching by a formal declaration, explicitly stating what is to be held always, everywhere and by all, as belonging to the deposit of the faith.[16]

Such statements, however, must be recognized for their truth by the Church as a body. As long as many of the faithful still harbour reservations about these statements, continued dialogue is a requirement for a sound *sensus fidelium* and for *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding). The whole body of the Church must be allowed a voice and respectful engagement where genuine dialogue is sought. Doubt is not removed by using the authority of governance where genuine questions are not addressed.

Moreover, had this approach been taken in the cases of slavery and religious liberty we would not have rectified the errors in these areas. We would still allow slavery and deny religious liberty. Similar arguments could also be made where teaching has changed on issues like torture and burning heretics at the stake.[17]

It is, indeed, stated in the Pontifical Council for Social Communications document *Communio et progressio* that 'Catholics should be fully aware of the real freedom to speak their minds which stems from a "feeling for the faith" and from love'.[18] It seems that the sense of the faithful, for example, regarding the issue of women priests and the need for a vehicle where open and honest debate can be pursued, has at best been misread. If there is continued debate within the Church to such an extent as to attract institutional attention and require an authoritative statement to close it off, it would seem that there are still genuine questions to be explored and answered before the teaching on such a matter can be declared to be 'set forth infallibly by the ordinary and universal Magisterium'.

Denying the tradition of dialogue through closing debate discredits the teaching authority of the magisterium and appears at odds with its own teaching. It removes all credible grounds for claiming women priests to be against tradition and damages teaching credibility through opting out of the learning process. As Archbishop Weakland pointed out in 1990: 'listening is an important part of any teaching process; the church's need to listen is no exception'.[19]

Without this there is an inevitable weakening of the moral position of the church and its moral teaching. The omission of such dialogue also seems to confirm the observation of some theologians that the concept of the *sensus fidelium* has come to be treated with suspicion, and validates the call for a reinstatement of this concept recognizing that the faith is shared by all the faithful. Without this

reinstatement there is no acknowledgement of the requirement for the teaching church to be a learning church which needs to be informed of all the complexities of a problem and engage in addressing such complexities.

In order to understand and be understood we need both to listen and be listened to. We need time to work through issues. There is often a need for a long mutual work of exchange to take place in order to facilitate understanding.[20] A lack of acceptance of an area of teaching does not necessarily mean that the teaching itself is in error but may mean that the process of teaching has been inadequate. A message may still contain truth but may have been badly expressed. When a message is poorly accepted we need to take note and try to establish why. To close the debate, however, prevents us from recognizing and rectifying any errors in either approach or teaching. Surely the most effective way of safeguarding and promoting church doctrine is to allow it to stand the test of the broadest and widest scrutiny.

Effective Dialogue: Some Pointers

> The normal flow of life and the smooth functioning of government within the Church require a steady two-way flow of information between the ecclesiastical authorities at all levels and the faithful as individuals and as organized groups.[21]

Dialogue should not, however, be for the sake of dialogue but a genuine searching and seeking, a genuine pursuit of discernment of right from wrong. It is vital that dialogue be pursued not simply as a process but as a process with clear intent. This includes respecting the virtues of truth-telling and honesty and hence requires transparency. Without this the essential element of trust is no longer present and dialogue becomes an issue of control and power-play, as opposed to a process of mutual exploration and discovery.

Dialogue, including dialogue with *today's* society, is essential. The church cannot be a credible teaching church if it does not understand society. Tradition must engage in dialogue with what is contemporary in order to be credible. We can only maintain (preserve and protect) the integrity of tradition if we continue the common search on which it is based. This is a search which recognizes the wisdom of personal experience and love. It acknowledges the humanity of the church and continues to seek out that which, through a previous lack of discernment, is built upon a lack of wisdom and love. In this way we continue to discern the movement of the Spirit and remain alive as a church. This requires that we respect the Spirit's moving through the whole family of the church.

We need to respect the equality of status of all as God's children, showing equal respect for different forms of expertise and learning. Expertise should not be viewed from a limited perspective as lying in the hands of the church hierarchy and academia. This can lead to the very real expertise of experience being overlooked. Experience, as well as qualifications and status, needs to be respected. This is essential if we are genuinely to discern the 'signs of the times' by being in touch

with the issues raised through the different circumstances in which individuals are called to live the gospel. Ability to engage in such a dialogue, which respects where others are, is identified by *Ecclesiam suam* as proof of 'Consideration and esteem for others, understanding and kindness. It shows the detesting of bigotry and prejudice, malicious and indiscriminate hostility and empty boastful speech'.[22] Such an approach helps to avoid the human temptation for power-play:

> Our dialogue must be accompanied by that meekness which Christ bade us learn from Himself: 'Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart'.[23] It would indeed be a disgrace if our dialogue were marked by arrogance, the use of bared words or offensive bitterness. What gives it its authority is the fact that it affirms the truth, shares with others the gifts of charity, is itself an example of virtue, avoids peremptory language, makes no demands. It is peaceful, has no use for extreme methods, is patient under contradiction and inclines towards generosity.[24]

It is tempting to consult with groups we know to be broadly in agreement with us and which we expect to confirm a viewpoint already held. Confining dialogue within a certain school of thought or elite group does not honestly respect the intent to explore the issues fully in a bid to discern the truth. We also need to avoid 'dialogue' as a public relations exercise which seeks to add weight to a position already decided upon – that is, dialogue is not dialogue without a genuine openness in its pursuit. Dialogue does not start with a point to prove, and seek confirmation. It is not about confirming expectations.

While there is a need to seek consistency of outcome and agreement, this does not mean that lines of argument must be incorporated without being challenged or dismissed without genuine explorations. It means that different viewpoints and lines of argument must be genuinely engaged with:

> Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political, and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them.[25]

There is also need to avoid a dialogue within a dialogue. We must avoid a private dialogue among the privileged few which is fronted by a public relations exercise to the many. This is disrespectful of the church as one body. At best, it patronises 'the many', who are excluded from such private dialogues. At worst, it leaves problems of conscience for 'the many' which the few privately resolve within such dialogues. Alternatively there may be a hidden resolution of conscience which results in both parties holding the same position but not publicly acknowledging the fact. This leads to the practice of deception between different groups within the church and lacks the openness and honesty required to discern what is truly the movement of the Spirit.

The need for genuine dialogue therefore means eradicating the practice of saying one thing in certain contexts whilst publicly saying another, avoiding the issue, avoiding publicly saying quite the same thing, or playing verbal gymnastics in public. Transparency is essential and requires us to avoid the mental and verbal

gymnastics used either to avoid public acknowledgement of what is spoken in private, or to enable things to fit (however uncomfortably) in order to convince the church of the existence of an unbroken tradition. Contrived arguments and the use/misuse of language to deceive or hide true meaning are both dishonest and contrary to the tradition of seeking the truth through genuine dialogue.[26] How can we discern what the church believes if beliefs are not openly and clearly expressed? As Paul VI says,

> Clarity before all else: the dialogue demands that what is said should be intelligible . . .
> It is an invitation to the exercise and development of the highest spiritual and mental
> powers a man possesses.[27]

This requires a different approach to those who in good conscience question the church's teaching. We need to start from the point of view of simply regarding such questions as part of a continuing and essential dialogue. Surely a living church could not continue as such without this input to dialogue. Where the truth is genuinely discerned it will stand up to scrutiny and the arguments will speak for themselves.

At times there may be a need to admit publicly that, at present, there is no clear answer because of a lack of knowledge. This means a different education process which avoids the temptation to tell individuals exactly what is required when this is not clear – even if that is what they want and find easiest. There is a need to invest in an education process that draws all into the dialogue, despite its difficulties, and gives individuals the confidence as adults to make decisions, given the current knowledge, conflicts and contradictions. We all need to face and accept the fact that honestly held differences of opinion can occur even between individuals with the same value systems.[28] Dialogue is not easy and strong feelings will be involved, but we must not let these facts obscure our perception of the need to respect each individual in the process of dialogue.[29]

When genuine dialogue leads us somewhere uncomfortable it is not sufficient simply to close the debate or ignore it in preference for the safety of history. Simply resorting to pointing to a long-standing tradition and the deposit of faith in a purely historical sense does not respect the need for the past to engage in dialogue with the present. Such an approach is, therefore, contradictory in denying the tradition of dialogue and the need to be continually open to discernment through the Spirit. Dialogue allows us to stay open to revelation in the present:

> This free dialogue within the Church does no injury to her unity and solidarity. It
> nurtures concord and the meeting of minds by permitting the free play of variations of
> public opinion. But in order that this dialogue may go in the right direction it is
> essential that charity is in command even when there are differing views. Everyone in
> this dialogue should be animated by the desire to serve and to consolidate unity and
> cooperation. There should be a desire to build and not to destroy. There should be a
> deep love for the Church and a compelling desire for its unity. Christ made love the
> sign by which men can recognize His true Church and therefore His true followers.[30]

A living church can only continue to exist through dialogue, revelation itself being the result of dialogue between God and humanity.

We cannot close our eyes and minds to what may be a need for change due to development of understanding. We must be constantly on the alert, challenging and being challenged to address this shadow side. Admitting error and apparent lack of consistency is not contrary to and disrespectful of tradition. Indeed, it is an important part of respecting tradition, particularly the tradition of dialogue, and being continually open to revelation. We must engage with the deposit of faith in order to achieve a full, open and honest dialogue. Simply to accept historical interpretations of the deposit of faith without question denies the need for the continuing search for truth and the possibility of error. Change is about continuing the journey, not about denying the past. Tradition does not lie in consistency of outcome but in the process and intent of dialogue and engagement with the past, present and future.

Conclusion

> By virtue of her mission to shed on the whole world the radiance of the Gospel message, and to unify under one Spirit all men of whatever nation, race or culture the Church stands forth as a sign of the brotherhood which allows honest dialogue and gives vigor.
>
> Such a mission requires in the first place that we foster within the Church herself mutual esteem, reverence and harmony, through the full recognition of the lawful diversity. Thus all those who compose the one People of God, both pastors and the general faithful, can engage in dialogue with ever abounding fruitfulness. For the bonds which unite the faithful are mightier than anything dividing them. Hence, let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case.[31]

If we accept human experience as an 'indispensable and fundamental source' of developing moral knowledge,[32] how can we not regard dialogue as essential? This does not mean that morality is an entirely moveable feast. There is at its heart the unchangeable feature of the dignity of the human person. This is not the easy option. It means that we must all take responsibility for placing the church in the service of truth and love, recognizing not only the validity of our own personal experience but also that we are part of a wider teaching and learning community. Those with teaching authority in the community have a particular responsibility to value this as a gift, and to recognize that they hold only a partial truth. Such a gift must be exercised in a way which respects the need for the learning and listening essential to credible teaching, and respects the involvement of the whole family in the process of maintaining a living tradition. Humble recognition of our own humanity and our lack of the whole truth should lead us to search together in gentleness and respect.

Dialogue should not be about 'watering down or whittling away'[33] the truth but about establishing it and moving towards it together:

Truth, however, is to be sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and his social nature. The inquiry is free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue, in the course of which men explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest of truth. Moreover, as the truth is discovered, it is by personal assent that men are to adhere to it.[34]

Tradition must hold dialogue with what is contemporary in order to be credible. We must face the changes required by advancing knowledge and be open to the movement of the Spirit in recognizing that which has been historically accepted through a previous lack of discernment and has been built upon a lack of wisdom and love. Challenges to church teaching need to be made and addressed openly through genuine dialogue, which forms a key part of tradition.

Notes

*   An earlier version of this paper first appeared as ch. 5 of a collection of essays in honour of the moral theologian Kevin T. Kelly: Julie Clague, Bernard Hoose and Gerard Mannion (eds), *Moral Theology for the 21st Century: Essays in Celebration of Kevin Kelly* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008) pp. 57–66.

1.   *Ecclesiam suam* is discussed later in this chapter. *Laborem exercens*, when addressing the issue of new social groups, particularly women in work, calls for 'Movements of solidarity in the sphere of work – a solidarity that must never mean being closed to dialogue and collaboration with others': John Paul II, *Laborem exercens* (1981), 8.

2.   Second Vatican Council (1965), Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, 21.

3.   Kevin T. Kelly, *New Directions in Moral Theology* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), p. 21.

4.   Ibid., p. 22.

5.   Ibid., pp. 1–2.

6.   The *sensus fidelium* ('sense of the faithful') refers to what the faithful believe and profess.

7.   Paul Valadier, Intercontinental Panel II, *Sensus Fidelium and Moral Discernment: Papers & Discussion*, Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church, International Conference, Padua, Italy, 8–11 July 2006.

8.   Ibid.

9.   Ibid.

10. The word 'magisterium', unless otherwise qualified, is used throughout this text in the narrow sense of the official teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church, as represented by the pope and the bishops.

11. Robert Mickens, 'The Thomas Reese Affair', *The Tablet*, 14 May 2005, 8.

12. Ibid.

13. Quoted in Michael Poulson, 'Editor's Ouster Worries Catholic Publications', *Boston Globe*, 10 May 2005.

14. Ibid.

15. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* (1994), 4.

16. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'Responsum ad dubium Concerning the Teaching Contained in Ordinatio Sacerdotalis' (1995).

17. For further details see Bernard Hoose, *Received Wisdom? Reviewing the Role of Tradition in Christian Ethics* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), pp. 4, 20, 63; and John F. Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church* (London: Barry Rose Publishers).

18. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Communio et progressio* (1971), 116.

19. Archbishop Rembert Weakland, 'Listening Sessions on Abortion: A Response', *Origins*, 31 May 1990, 35; quoted in Kelly, *New Directions in Moral Theology*, p. 69.

20. Intercontinental Panel II, *Sensus Fidelium and Moral Discernment: Papers and Discussion*.

21. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Communio et progressio*, 120.

22. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam suam* (1964), 79.

23. Mt. 11.29.

24. Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam*, 81.

25. *Gaudium et spes*, 28.

26. Kelly, *New Directions in Moral Theology*, p. 18.

27. Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam*, 81.

28. See Kelly, *New Directions in Moral Theology*, pp. 17–19 for further discussion of dealing with disagreement.

29. Ibid., p. 65.

30. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Communio et progressio*, 117.

31. *Gaudium et spes*, 92.

32. Kelly, *New Directions in Moral Theology*, p. 66; see pp. 66–9 for further information on the importance of human experience.

33. Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam*, 88.

34. Second Vatican Council, Declaration on Religious Liberty, *Dignitatis humanae*, 3.

A Question of Balance: Unity and Diversity in the Life and Mission of the Church

Ola Tjørhom

Already Blaise Pascal observed that the relationship between unity and diversity – in the church's life as well as generally – requires a proper balance. More specifically, he argued that while diversity without unity promotes confusion, unity without diversity may lead to tyranny.[1] Significant parts of church history can actually be understood as more or less explicit, if not always successful, attempts to identify and secure this crucial balance.

When the problem at hand imposes itself particularly firmly today, there are three main reasons. First, many churches are involved in an intense struggle to safeguard this balance in their own lives. Second, there are indications that our commitment to visible unity has recently been considerably weakened. And third, we live in a world that desperately needs concrete signs of unity as well as ample space for constructive and fruitful diversity.

In this chapter I shall address the question of the interconnection between unity and diversity within an ecumenical and ecclesiological framework. Here the key question is: how can we profit from the many ways of living the gospel of Christ without undermining our fundamental unity? And how can this experience be transformed into a viable witness to the necessity of unity and the benefit of diversity in today's world? My intention is to provide a basic overview in this field, without referring directly to the many ongoing church debates.

The Present Ecumenical Situation: A Brief Look

Most churches possess tools that are helpful in identifying a well-balanced perception of the interrelation between unity and diversity. In the confessional writings of the churches of the Reformation a distinction is made between what is sufficient for true church unity and what is not necessary. On the Roman Catholic side the concept of a hierarchy of truths – as developed in *Unitatis redintegratio* from Vatican II – has converging connotations.[2] This concept means that magisterial doctrines, while true, must be related among themselves according to their inner logic and their centrality in the order of divine revelation. In practical terms, the current model implies that some teachings can be seen as less essential in

regard to our faith. Thus room is made for a substantial, if not always fully utilized, flexibility. To a certain extent the Orthodox notion of a doctrinal 'economy' points in a similar direction. All these models are compatible with the ecumenical concept of a differentiated consensus, i.e. a consensus which embraces a fundamental agreement as well as remaining and enriching differences.

However, in spite of the evident potential of the approaches just mentioned, the churches still struggle to locate and maintain a proper balance between unity and diversity. The distinction between what is sufficient and what is not necessary in order to realize community is today often interpreted in a minimalist and reductionist way. Occasionally, this distinction has also been turned upside down, with a call for uniformity in church order as an effort to compensate for doctrinal confusion. Among Roman Catholics there is still a proclivity to ignore the flexibility of the *hierarchia veritatum* concept and the need to differentiate within the *depositum fidei*. When this is coupled with a tendency to attach the goal of unity too strongly to the institution of the Catholic Church, uniformism is a predictable outcome.

In the present ecumenical situation similar problems emerge. Some keep insisting on what can be characterized as an 'all-or-nothing' approach, where it is argued that we either have full communion or no communion whatsoever – and the latter view is frequently chosen. Thus intermediate ecumenical measures and a process-oriented approach towards the goal of unity through successive steps and stages are ruled out. Others move towards the opposite extreme, confusing ecclesial diversity with static, stagnant pluralism. This often goes together with a muddling of the preliminary steps towards community and the ecumenical goal. The result of this attitude is that the classical vision of the ecumenical movement – a visible, structured communion – is marginalized or even relinquished to the benefit of what can be labelled as 'pluralist ecumenism'.

As opposed to the strong commitment of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) to the goal of visible unity, the view just mentioned has been pursued most insistently within parts of continental European Protestantism – evidently with the Evangelical Church in Germany and the Leuenberg Fellowship as its chief proponents. Lately, however, one might be tempted to suggest that even the World Council of Churches has been exposed to pluralist ecumenism. Since its General Assembly in Harare in 1998 the WCC has often been referred to as a rather loose 'forum of churches'. In this connection the idea of 'ecclesiological neutrality' has been reintroduced, not least due to pressure from Orthodox churches that feel compelled to distance themselves from current developments within the organization. The result is a body that may seem to have departed from the vision of an organic and visible fellowship between truly united local churches, as it was seen when this vision launched at the New Delhi Assembly in 1961.

Today it is often argued that we find ourselves in an 'ecumenical winter'. Compared to the progress of the 1970s and 1980s – particularly in the doctrinal dialogues – this bleak observation comes across as true. The causes of the 'winter' that seems to have hit ecumenism are numerous. Both the readiness to settle for invisible unity and neo-confessionalist currents play a central role. Another cause is the emergence of ecclesial parochialism in the shape of 'independent' congrega-

tions or 'mega-churches' that are mainly preoccupied with their own particular identities. This had led to a fragmentation of the church, while neglecting that ecclesial identity is best defined in community.

Beneath all these things, however, lies the fact that we have been unable to maintain a properly balanced relationship between unity and diversity. And as the examples above indicate, static pluralism appears to be an even bigger challenge today than uniformity. Anyway, these shortcomings seriously jeopardize our witness in a world that needs a basic unity as well as scope for fruitful diversity.

Visible Unity: The Key Concern

There are several reasons why communion is absolutely essential and indispensable in the church. First, unity is firmly anchored in God's will for and calling to his people. Ecclesial fellowship actually corresponds with God's own unity: since there is only one God, there can only be one church. Second, unity belongs inherently to the church's nature. In the Nicene Creed we confess our faith in the church that is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Here catholicity, apostolicity and even holiness contribute to the fundamental oneness of the church. Third, unity is a crucial part of the church's mission. In confronting the massive divisions of the world, we are called to be an effective or sacramental sign of unity. All this makes it abundantly clear that unity cannot be seen as an optional extra in the church's life.

However, we neither can nor shall create communion on our own. A fundamental unity is already given in Christ and nothing can destroy it. Yet, community cannot be reduced to an abstract idea. And even if our fellowship in Christ is real, it is obscured and wounded by our divisions. We therefore face a most specific challenge in this area – namely to make our given unity concretely visible in and for the world, over and over again and more and more clearly. This focus on visibility does not depend on high-church fancies or an exaggerated preoccupation with what Yves Congar has described as 'hierarchology'.[3] The point is simply that people will be able to see our unity and thus believe. And this concern is primarily anchored in the basic visibility of the church as the place of salvation.

In exploring this topic further, it must be underlined that several factors contribute to the visibility of community. Since faith is essential to Christian life, a basic unity in faith as it is grounded in Holy Scripture and in the creeds of the ancient church is crucial in this field. The sacraments and sacramentality in a broad sense are fundamental to our Christian existence. Unity thus requires a communion in sacramental celebration and life. Within Christ's body God has instituted ministries and offices that are called to serve and lead his people, pointing towards a fellowship in ministries and ordination. Moreover, a common mission and service in the world must be seen as an indispensable sign or mark of church unity. Underneath all these visible expressions of communion lies the primary bond of unity within the people of God, namely the love which firmly 'binds everything together in perfect harmony' (Col. 3.14).

Visible unity is not identical with ecclesial structures. But it requires such structures as an important element and tool. Here Edmund Schlink's distinction between parochial structures – which may impede fellowship – and structures that are capable of sustaining communion is most helpful.[4] One important unifying structure is the bishop's ministry, grounded in episcopal collegiality. Bishops represent the local church universally and the universal church on the local level. At least humanly speaking, the church might not have survived as one throughout its first centuries without bishops coming together at councils and providing appropriate spiritual leadership. In today's situation it can be argued that if the principle of one bishop in each city cannot be realized personally, then let it be exercised within a collegial framework. On the Roman Catholic side we need to rekindle this type of collegial leadership.

According to the New Testament the church is chiefly local and universal. Therefore structures which fall between these two levels – such as national and denominational bodies – are of less ecclesiological significance. This does not necessarily mean that confessional identities are contrary to unity. Moreover, a national church can to a certain extent be seen as a 'local church', even if in my view this concept should not be associated with excessively large units. But it does imply that parochial and particular identities must be subordinated to the catholicity of the church. Here it should be noted that just as the pastoral and episcopal ministries are essential to the local church, the universal church also requires structural expressions. In this connection the office of the Bishop of Rome is an option. As acknowledged by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Ut unum sint*, this office has not always been exercised in a way which is consonant with its ecumenical potential.[5] Yet, examples of abuse do not annul this potential. This will especially be the case if the papal ministry is placed more clearly within the framework of episcopal collegiality. In my view the key challenge at this point is not infallibility, but the universal jurisdiction. However, since such jurisdiction must not necessarily be seen as an obligatory part of the office of the Bishop of Rome – at least not in its origins – modifications should be possible in order further to facilitate the pope's service to unity. This will require that the statements of Vatican I on papal authority be read in the perspective of *Ut unum sint*.

Generally, the ecumenical goal should not be confused with mere co-existence or a 'reconciled denominationalism' where the churches remain as they are. René Beaupère is clearly correct in arguing that the reunited church lies beyond all existing ecclesial realities.[6] Furthermore, communion implies a constant growth in unity. At the same time, it must be stated that unity is not primarily a question of structures and forms. What is at stake here is a common life in love, solidarity and mutual accountability; a life where each member serves the body of Christ as a whole, and where we fulfil the law of Christ by bearing each other's burdens. The best way of expressing this is offered by the ecclesiology of communion in its many and diverse forms. Here the foundation is our vertical *koinonia* with the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. However, this participation with and in the Triune God by necessity incorporates a horizontal communion with all the faithful across time as well as space. It also points towards our union with all human beings and God's creation as a whole. This is the unity we seek – a full,

inclusive, sacramentally anchored, mutually committed and eschatologically directed *communio* life; a life where the sharing of spiritual resources and temporal goods are seen as two sides of the same coin.

Enriching Diversity: Integral to Unity

Unity is not uniformity. Quite the contrary: communion must include a rich diversity – a diversity that reflects the abundance of the church's *depositum fidei* as well as its existence as a variegated fellowship. According to the Catholic – Lutheran dialogue text *Ways to Community*, 'unity does not exist despite and in opposition to diversity, but is given in and with diversity'. Moreover, 'living unity in Christ is essentially manifold and dynamic'. And our expressions of diversity should not be 'dimmed, but highlighted and thus made beneficial'.[7] This indicates that diversity cannot be understood as a purely practical concern or as a tactical concession to low thresholds within the church. In belonging intrinsically to unity, diversity must rather be seen as an entity of crucial theological and ecclesiological significance. In the final analysis true ecclesial diversity is a manifestation of God's generous gifts to his people in the Holy Spirit. And none of us – let alone the church – can afford to neglect any of these gifts.

The theological importance of diversity shows that this matter is indispensable in regard to our ecumenical reflection and practice. Ecumenism does not mean that one church is to absorb the others. Openness to diversity has by and large played a central role within the Reformation and post-Reformation churches. But on the Roman Catholic side this has also become an increasingly important matter, at least as far as Vatican II is concerned. An affirmation of this can be found in the famous *subsistit in* of *Lumen gentium*.[8] The point here is that the *una sancta* 'subsists in' the Roman Catholic Church, without being identical with this institution. This does not mean that the one church of Christ is reduced to an abstract idea – as suggested in the recent 'Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine of the Church' from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.[9] It rather means that the *una sancta* takes concrete shape within different ecclesial bodies, in varying ways and at different levels. According to Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, the *subsistit in* 'allows emphasizing both the conviction that the one and genuine church of God is found in the Catholic Church and the certitude that it nevertheless extends, though lacking its fullness, beyond this church'.[10]

A crucial consequence of this is reflected in *Unitatis redintegratio*, where it is made clear that the Reformation churches function as effective means in the conferring of salvation: 'the separated churches and communities have been by no means deprived of significance in the mystery of salvation', since 'the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation'.[11] Heinrich Fries claims that this statement must be seen as *geradezu revolutionär* – clearly revolutionary.[12] And in the next paragraph of Unitatis redintegratio it is maintained that 'while preserving unity in essentials, let everyone in the Church . . . preserve a proper freedom in the various forms of spiritual life and discipline, in

the variety of liturgical rites, and even in the theological elaboration of revealed truth'.[13] In the wake of this, it can be argued that the so-called *defectus ordinis* – a defect in regard to sacramental ordination – can and should be interpreted as a lack of fullness and not as a complete absence of anything that is imperative in the Church's life.[14] And surely, until the unity which belongs to God's people has been restored, all churches are somehow deficient. These concerns correspond with the model 'united, but not absorbed' as it was developed in the talks between Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey in 1966.

What actually occurs when we engage in the building of communion is that we grow together towards the fullness that God has meant for his people. This growth takes place within a dynamic process, through interconnected steps and stages that aim at realizing unity. One such intermediate step would be to allow for at least occasional eucharistic sharing within so-called inter-church families, as it was already practised in the Roman Catholic diocese of Alsace, France in the early 1970s. The significant results of our dialogue on the Eucharist provide the foundation for this practice. The ultimate aim of our gradual or process-oriented growth towards unity is that we will be able to 'comprehend . . . what is the breadth and length and height and depth' and 'be filled with all the fullness of God' (Eph. 3.18, 19).

Yet, diversity should not be confused with theological reductionism. The insistence on a least common denominator cannot even remotely encompass the vast richness of our faith across time as well as space. On the one hand, the possibility of being enriched by the witness and experience of our sisters and brothers in Christ is essential to our ecumenical enterprise. On the other hand, ecumenism represents by far the best access to the abundance of the church's treasure of faith. Here it must be stated that the meaning of our ecumenical efforts is not that we shall become poorer in faith, but considerably richer. Furthermore, the *sola* principles of the Reformation should rather be used as angles that help us to understand, handle and appreciate the abundance of our faith – and not as instruments that cut us off from this treasure.

In exploring diversity it must also be taken into account that we are today confronted with approaches in this area which deviate significantly from ecclesial diversity. This is the case with so-called 'postmodern' pluralism. There is much evidence that to a notable degree the pluralist nature of postmodernism lies behind what I have described as pluralist ecumenism. Moreover, it should be noted that while modernity – despite a certain distance from the church – is marked by a commitment to mutually binding truths, such commitment increasingly appears to be lacking within postmodernity. Accordingly, the proclaimed postmodern openness to religion may easily turn out to be a Phyrric victory for the churches. Let me add at this point that one of the great ironies of quite a few versions of postmodern pluralism is that while insisting on diversity, one often only seems to end up with more of the same.

At any rate, there are obvious indications that diversity has its limits within the church. An insurmountable borderline is represented by regular heresy. Heresy is always divisive. It can be minimalist – accounting for too little of the church's faith – as well as maximalist – claiming too much in this area. In both cases it threatens

the church's calling as a pillar of truth. Another limit is represented by a diversity which promotes doctrinal confusion and sloppiness. In this connection it is important to emphasize that the *depositum fidei* is a whole or an entity. If we meddle with one of its key articles, this is likely to have serious repercussions in regard to the total *corpus* of our faith. And finally, a pluralist ecumenism which obscures and jeopardizes communion must be avoided. Against this background, it can be argued that the care for living fellowship constitutes the ultimate borderline of ecclesial diversity.

Unity in Diversity: The Need for Balancing Links

I have so far concluded that both unity and diversity are crucial in the life of the church. Yet, the key question remains: how can these two concerns – at least occasionally appearing as divergent – be properly balanced? In my opinion the primary challenge here is to identify connecting, integrating and balancing links between unity and diversity that will help us to interpret them within a dialectical framework. Three such links are of special importance.

The first one is found in pneumatology, particularly as it is developed in 1 Corinthians 12. I have already indicated that ecclesial diversity can be seen as a pneumatological or charismatic entity in the sense that it is anchored in the many spiritual gifts that God gives to his people. Through these gifts the Holy Spirit adds vitality and dynamism to the church. Simultaneously, the Spirit holds or binds the different members of the body of Christ together. This is done through outwardly or empirically perceptible means, especially baptism and the Eucharist. And it aims at keeping the church together as a fellowship of love and solidarity where all members serve each other and thus the body in its totality. I once more refer to *Ways to Community*: 'The one unifying Spirit of God ... creates and maintains diverse realities ... in order to lead them into the unity of love.'[15] This is precisely what happens – the 'Spirit of convergence' causes and upholds diversities, but at the same time unites them and facilitates their growth towards each other within the context of a caring and compassionate community.

The second link is connected with the concept of catholicity in its function as a mark of the church. Here I would like to reiterate two crucial definitions of catholicity. The first one is the famous statement of Vincent of Lérins from the mid-fifth century that 'catholic' is what is believed everywhere, in all times and by everyone – *quod ubique, semper et ab omnibus creditum est*. Another, more implicit but just as pertinent, account can be found in Holy Scripture: 'Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things' (Phil. 4.8). These accounts at least implicitly reflect three things which belong – or at least should belong – to catholicity: inclusiveness and comprehensiveness, a substantial amount of human generosity, and the beauty of an open mind. True catholicity is qualitative as well as quantitative. It has a centre which points to Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of the church. But this core cannot be isolated – it is always the centre of *something*,

namely our rich treasure of faith as it is grounded in scripture and further developed by God's continual revelation to his people and his creation. Thus catholicity can hardly survive without being firmly anchored in a diversity which is directed towards unity.

The third connecting link is taken from the ecclesiology of communion. As Jean Tillard in particular has shown, the care for fellowship is an essential constituent of this ecclesiology.[16] I have already mentioned that our *koinonia* is vertical as well as horizontal. And these two dimensions can never be separated – vertical communion necessarily points towards a living fellowship between human beings. Here unity is the basic concern. Still, community cannot be achieved without a notable degree of diversity – a diversity that can be seen as corresponding with the relationship or interaction between the three persons of the Holy Trinity. At the same time, the aim of our communion is that our diversities will converge and be reconciled. In this way unity and diversity are held together within the framework of a *communio* ecclesiology by maintaining that unity is the goal and diversity its indispensable tool.

Along these lines pneumatology, the concept of catholicity and the ecclesiology of communion will help us to identify a proper balance between unity and diversity in the life of the church. Such a balance can only be secured through a dialectical approach where these two entities are held together and interpreted within a common framework. On the one hand, diversity must be related to unity and in a certain sense subordinated to it. On the other hand, unity can never be realized without a significant degree of diversity. Diversity is a gift from God that must be actively embraced. However, the gift of diversity should never be allowed to jeopardize an even greater gift, namely the gift of unity and fellowship. In view of communion we should therefore not speak of unity *and* diversity, but rather of unity *in* diversity. This is in keeping with Yves Congar's insistence that diversity is an intrinsic value of unity.[17]

Concluding Remarks: Unity and Diversity in View of the Church's Mission in the World

In his first encyclical, *Deus caritas est*, Pope Benedict XVI says that 'the church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the Sacraments and the Word'.[18] This corresponds to the fact that the church is not an end in itself, but the priest of creation and the first-fruit of a reunited humankind. Its mission is not limited to the saving of souls, but aims at the redemption of God's creation as a whole. This universal perspective also applies to our ecumenical efforts. Ecumenism is not an 'internal' activity; the point here is rather that the church should become visible as an effective sign of unity in the world.

It does not take much to see that such signs are desperately needed today. For our world is marked by division and strife on virtually every level – between rich and poor, men and women, young and old, etc. Human relations are frequently and seriously threatened. And there is a deep yearning for institutions and persons

that can demonstrate, through visible evidence and concrete deeds, that healing and reconciliation can still be achieved.

However, we must also face the fact that the quest for unity can be turned into repression. The most acute example of this is found in the persistence of aggressive racist intolerance. We therefore need bodies that can reduce our fear and teach us how to live with and handle diversity. The aim here must be to demonstrate how the richness of human life can be actively cherished – and not only passively endured. Lately it has become fashionable in some circles to talk condescendingly about 'political correctness'. In my view, such 'correctness' often constitutes a vital requirement in our current situation – particularly in the sense that it aims at helping us to live with and rejoice in diversity.

What I have said thus far indicates that the needs of the world in this field are pretty much the same as those of the church, namely a properly balanced relationship between unity and diversity. Once more, unity is the fundamental concern. But this unity will have to include a significant amount of diversity – at the same time providing a solid framework for the human generosity and openness that will enable us to welcome and embrace diversity. These virtues converge with the measures that keep the body of Christ together.

This suggests that the world is the main 'test-field' of our attempts to balance unity and diversity in the church's life. In the end, the key question is if and to what extent the church is capable of being a sign of true unity in and for the world. On the one hand, the sad fact that God's people have often been a sign of schism rather than of fellowship calls for repentance. On the other hand, Holy Scripture speaks of a church where all unwarranted human barriers are transcended and torn down: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3.28). And even if self-conceit and arrogance must be avoided, I see no reason why this ideal should be ignored or dismissed.

Notes

* This chapter was originally presented as a guest lecture at the University of Wales in Lampeter in February 2006, and is partly based on an article with the same title that was published in *Pro Ecclesia* 15 (2006), 186–204. In the earlier article, further references to the relevant literature can be found.
1. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, 848, 871.
2. See *Unitatis redintegratio*, 11.
3. See Yves Congar, 'The Church: The People of God', tr. Kathryn Sullivan, *Concilium* 1 (1965), 17–18 n. 13.
4. Edmund Schlink, *Ökumenische Dogmatik: Grundzüge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1983), pp. 557ff.
5. John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, 88ff.
6. René Beaupère, 'What Sort of Unity? The Decree on Ecumenism Ten Years Later – A Roman Catholic View', in *What Kind of Unity?*, Faith and Order paper 69 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1974), pp. 32ff.
7. Roman Catholic–Lutheran Joint Commission, *Ways to Community* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1980), §33ff.

8. *Lumen gentium*, 8.
9. Issued 29 June 2007; available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.html.
10. Cardinal J. Willebrands, 'Vatican's II's Ecclesiology of Communion', *Origins* 17 (1987), 32.
11. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 3.
12. Heinrich Fries, 'Das Konzil: Grund ökumenischer Hoffnung', in Franz Kardinal König, (ed.) *Die bleibende Bedeutung des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils* (Düsseldorf, Patmos Verlag, 1996), p. 114.
13. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 4.
14. Ibid., 22.
15. Roman Catholic–Lutheran Joint Commission, *Ways to Community*, §34.
16. J. M. R. Tillard, *Church of Churches: An Ecclesiology of Communion* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992).
17. Yves Congar, *Diversity and Communion* (London: SCM Press 1984), p. 40.
18. Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 22.

HOPING TO LEARN: AN APPROACH TO ECCLESIOLOGY

Kenneth Wilson

Introduction

It has become almost a cliché to say that the Church is a learning society. But so, of course, was Unipart, the independent company established by the Rover group to market spare parts for its models and those of other companies. It called itself a 'learning community' and attempted to enrol its entire staff into the Unipart University. If you were not learning, the philosophy was, then you were forgetting and that could be disastrous for you and for the company. As a former housemaster of mine said when summing up his experience of running a house, 'If things are not getting better, they are getting worse.' So I conclude that unless we are trying to learn we shall simply lose our grip on what we think we already know and slip away into a numb oblivion – surely the exact opposite of the purpose of a life of faith and of the being of the church. My purpose in this essay is to explore what this means for our understanding of the church, the extent to which it might be said to be true, and some of the conditions which must apply if it is to become more true. It seems to me to be of the essence of ecclesiology that a church which is not 'hoping to learn' lacks one of the necessary marks of being a church.

Gregory VII: A Learning Pope?

So let me adduce an example from a period of history that may be controversial, where the church can, I believe, be said to be hoping to learn. The distinguished historian R. F. Bennett writes, 'The Investiture Struggle was an attempt to study' – and, we may add, still more to revalue – 'human society and to arrange its parts in the light of Christianity and Christian law.'[1] I wonder whether Pope Gregory VII, deeply engaged in the contest as he was, would have recognized that as a description of what he thought he was doing – 'an attempt to study human society and to arrange its parts in the light of Christianity and Christian law'. I believe that he might well have done so. He was, in a real sense, a student of the gospel *and* (what we would call) world affairs; he loved God, wanted to practise the faith and to serve the church.

The twelfth century saw a renaissance of intellectual life, reform movements in the religious orders, and an increase in economic activity. They all influenced Gregory VII. A Benedictine monk, chaplain to Pope Gregory VI, he went into exile with him to Germany in 1046 and remained there, living in reforming circles after the Pope's death. He was attracted to an ascetic life and utterly committed to the virtues and obligations of the life of a priest. And yet he did not believe that it was the duty of the church, and therefore his duty, to leave the world alone; the church had a responsibility to God for the world and its flourishing. When he became Pope he tried to gather together these perspectives and to deliver them in policy decisions. The attraction of Emperor Henry III to him was that Henry III seemed, like the six popes between 1043 and 1073, to be committed to the reform of the church. On this basis it was reasonable that Gregory should believe that church and empire could, as it were, find ways in which their interdependence was mutually supportive and capable of being delivered in policies beneficial not only to the church and the empire, but also therefore of course to the service of God and man. Henry IV was an emperor of a different colour: his ambition needed to be reined in and Gregory VII acted accordingly.

Gregory VII was such a complex character that it is not, of course, easy to form confident judgements about him; however, despite his outbursts of indignation and temper – too frequent for his good and the good of the church – he was a man of passionate energy who was keen to learn about God *and* the world. H. E. J. Cowdrey, in the most recent study of Pope Gregory, writes,

> Another consequence of Gregory's indomitable energy was that, far from ruling as pope with a fixed and established set of principles, he was always learning and modifying his ideas and springs of action in response to changing circumstances and to changed perception of past perceptions and present needs. His actions were often unpredictable and unexpected. Like his attitude to Berengar of Tours, his mind could undergo sudden and radical changes of direction in response to promptings that were known to himself alone.[2]

I have taken the example of Gregory VII because of his high profile and because his motivation is so easily misunderstood. Clearly I should have to say much more, and in greater detail, to prove my point, but I suggest that what we have here is a learning pope in a learning church set in the midst of the radical changes of the twelfth century. Therefore Gregory VII can properly be said to have wanted to act with Christian responsibility in a world where, as he learnt more, he felt himself to be increasingly response-able. He did, of course, like any other Christian, make mistakes. His judgement was not infallible; no amount of faithful practice, for example, will eliminate the influence of character, personality, or psycho-physical states, however much the advice of friends and the discipline of the faith may increase self-understanding.

The Church: A Living Conversation

So how central to our understanding of the church is the claim that it is a learning community? It has been of vital importance from the very beginning. One of the things which we know from the gospels about the disciples, however many there were, is that they enjoyed the company of Jesus; they spent time arguing with him, discussing amongst themselves and trying to work out who he was, what he was doing, what their association with him meant, what their long-term future was and even, rather grandly, what the future of the Jews and the Roman Empire amounted to. Above all, we know that Jesus was always talking with them, telling them parables, engaging them in debate, and questioning their assumed values. He wanted to share his experience of living with God with those in daily in touch with him. He involved them in his conversation with God; hence when they asked him to teach them how to pray, he said they should begin '*Our* Father, . . .' He wanted them to join with him in his prayer and to make it a model for their own praying.

He was apparently popular for both good and bad reasons; so popular was he, and moreover so controversial, that his activities and the way he spoke worried the authorities. They too talked about him and wondered in their hearts who he was; was he the one who was to come? Indeed, it was not merely within his own community of the Jews, who were consciously looking for the Messiah, that his reputation was growing; he was talked about and in a sense engaged with very much more widely. For example, we know from Josephus that 'God-fearing' gentiles came to Jerusalem to worship at the Passover.[3] St John in his Gospel reports the interest of some Greeks who were among the visitors to Jerusalem for the feast: 'Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus"' (Jn 12.20–21). The Greek verb *eidon* carries the ambiguity that *see* does in English. It certainly means *cast eyes upon*, that is *see* in the literal sense, but it also means *be acquainted with*, *get to know*. These Greeks, according to John, wanted to meet Jesus, to become acquainted with him.

What we can see here is surely, in a profound sense, a preliminary gathering of communities around Jesus that begin to shape what we now call 'the church'. They offer perhaps contrasting styles of community, in Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Caesarea Philippi, in Rome, of how we can think of the church as a learning community. Each place has its own conversation located in the concerns of the society in each place, but all focused upon Jesus. Each is a body of people attracted by Jesus, who talk about him, argue about him and try to think through the implications of knowing and believing in Jesus. We who are now the church, the body of Christ, are the contemporary believing community of faith, drawn to want to know Jesus because of what we have heard about him. Perhaps, we believe, he knows the truth, and will reveal to us the God for whom we long. In his company we shall learn what it is to be the faithful, true, affectionate and concerned persons we want to be. Each of us is trying to work it out in our own local community, but all are directly connected with the one conversation begun by Jesus and sustained through the practice of the faith, reflection on Scripture, and attention to reason. Is

it possible? Is Jesus the one we are looking for? We want to know and so find ourselves actually involved in conversation with him, with his disciples, and with one another. The image is compelling.

The trouble is that the living power of this imagery tends to suffer in the dull light of controversial experience. Thus instead of talking about what it all means, where we are going, who we are and what God requires of us, we think we know, or even worse, we leave it up to others to tell us what we actually need to find out for ourselves if our faith is to be alive. In fact, we try to live as if we have arrived before we have even seriously begun to make the journey. The result has an impact upon the very understanding of the church as the community of faith knows it and experiences it. Definition blights experience, control replaces experiment, anxiety undermines confidence, and conventional practice becomes a substitute for living enquiry.

To say that the church can be construed in simplistic legal terms, or within a single, clearly defined power structure, is to misunderstand the proper significance and role of law and authority. The purpose of law is to protect, not to control; the purpose of authority should be to liberate and build confidence. But constriction of enquiry and domestication of faith within permitted limits is what is all too frequently associated in the public mind, and indeed amongst many believers, with being a good member of the church. This dead reductionist impression of Christian believing that many have is false and debilitating. The catastrophic result is that the life-giving conversation which nourishes interest, encourages affection and stimulates curiosity is inhibited by presumed regulation and bureaucratic control, so that the energy of faith is frustrated and the truth fossilized. When conversation comes to an end, the formal process of managing conformity that replaces it undermines the opportunities that flow from realizing the true identity of the church as the 'learning society'. The church is not simply a club like other clubs, with rules all members have to obey: it is a living conversation.

When the church fails to be a learning society the results are dire. Firstly, since conversation cannot be successfully legislated against or outlawed, real interest is driven underground. This is true in all societies: look at what happened in Poland, for example, under the Communist dictatorship. It is happening at the moment in the Roman Catholic Church with regard to discussion of the important matter of the ordination of women. Failure to deal publicly and honestly with the issue of homosexuality has undermined trust in the judgement of the Anglican Church not only on this but on other matters too. Conversation flourishes, despite all attempts to outlaw it. And secondly, there are large numbers of people who are in fact interested in things that are central to the life of the church but who have separated themselves from it because they have found better conversation outside. They have come to believe that the church is a gathered community of believers who are fixed in their platitudinous beliefs, who think they know what they believe, what it amounts to, what it means and where they are going. *Ergo*, they think, before they can become part of the church and join in its conversation, they have to bring their beliefs into conformity with those of the 'true' believers, but this would necessarily compromise their integrity and so they choose to keep themselves apart.

In fact, this is a huge mistake. To want God is to be trying to love God and understand the gospel of Jesus; *trying* is what it is all about. We Christians do not know, for there are no certainties in this life for the Christian, but by God's grace we know we want to know and are together trying to use all our talents to find out. That is why it seems inappropriate to me to call ourselves 'followers'; it suggests that we are being led and have no choices of our own to make. We are disciples, people who have signed up in order that we may learn by contributing in conversation to one another's understanding. On reflection it may be that we should recognize that there are more people 'of the faith' than there are 'of the Church'.

But of course there can be no successful trying if one believes that there is no chance of success.

God in Conversation: Creation and Incarnation

We need to wake up; after all, the situation is hardly surprising. The church is engaged in serious business because each of its members is engaged in the most serious business of his or her life. Meeting Jesus is more than recognizing a lifelong friend: it involves – *naturally*, I should say, because it relates to our natural environment as human beings – a revelatory proposal that shakes a person to the core. How could it be otherwise? For the person who addresses us in Jesus, whom we call the Christ, is, the Church claims and believes, God himself, the Word incarnate. All human fears are aroused – how can man look on God and live! Moses asked to see God's glory but was told by the Lord, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name "The Lord"; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But', he added, 'you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live' (Exod. 33.18–23). God presents his loving-kindness to Moses, paradoxically as Christians see it, as his gracious willingness to hide himself, so that humankind can be free to follow the law without fear.

Now in contrast we have to notice what Jesus says in response to Philip and Andrew when together they tell Jesus of the request of the Greeks who want to see him:

> The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honour him. Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say, "Father, save me from this hour?" No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. "Father, glorify thy name"'. (Jn 12.23–26)

Scholars are increasingly of the opinion that the term 'Son of Man' originates with Jesus and refers to his understanding of himself as in some sense the representative man, who is the messenger of the Kingdom of God. Jesus, as representative man,

nevertheless understands what it means to know God's presence: it means knowing the purposes of God in creating and putting one's heart, mind and soul into working with God to bring them to fruition. That is something to which Jesus is called, as are those who are his disciples and who dwell, as St Paul puts it, 'in Christ'. To do God's will is for Jesus precisely to make real God's presence, and so Jesus prays that God should glorify God's name in his giving of his life for the world's sake. Jesus explicitly sees this sacrificial act – at any rate St John sees it – as a life-giving activity; indeed it is a necessary condition of life, not an accident or a coincidence. It is only the seed that falls into the ground and dies that brings forth increase – and only then when the conditions are right.

And this is the point: the conditions have to be right. This is where St John's thinking through of his response to Jesus is so very helpful because for John, the circumstances are right. How could they be anything else? This is God's world, hence it can only be understood in terms of a creation, not a happenstance, and it is a world where in the last resort God's will is done – where God's love is triumphant and where, as St Julian of Norwich said, 'all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well'. It is a world which can receive God's glory in the incarnation without being destroyed: indeed, it is through God's giving of God's self to the world in creating that in manifesting God's glory the world fulfils its own nature.

So in giving his life Jesus shows that if you want God and therefore are trying to love God by seeking God with all your mind and heart and soul, you are working with the grain of the universe, and actually have God – not will have, but have. Hence Jesus dies to live: the apparent paradox should cause the hairs to tingle on the back of one's neck. St John connects by implication the Persons of the Trinity when he declares that nothing was made that was made, except through the Word. So the Word, which brings all things into existence, and which in Christ calls into existence the church to bear witness to the presence of God in God's world, is also the gracious presence of the Holy Spirit through which we shall be led into all truth. There is indeed resurrection – not a new beginning, but a fulfilment of God in creating because through raising Jesus, God bears witness to the very nature of the world to which God has committed himself. It is possible to love God and to enjoy God for ever.

It is to this living God that the church bears witness in her living, speaking and doing: this is God's world in which God has revealed himself in Christ and where it is possible to recognize him and learn to enjoy him for ever.

The Church's Conversation is Open and Inclusive

Other religions and people of no faith

For this to be a living reality we have to keep in mind that it is through the conversation to which God commits himself in creating that we are brought with Jesus into the divine society of the church. No conversation exists for its own sake. One might hazard the possibly contentious view that not even the delightful

energy of the conversation of the Persons of the Trinity has meaning apart from the purpose of loving creation that is of the very essence and expression of their life in unity. In like manner, the conversation of the Church is not self-referential and private, but public, inclusive, illuminating and affectionate. By working at the conversation we place the world of our understanding, and more particularly the world of our hopes, into the context of the realities that make sense of life. Talking through what it means to be the church, a community of believers who constitute a learning society, is an enthralling experience. I shall take three current cases, amongst a very large number, which pose questions for the church and with which we find difficulty in coping.

Firstly, there is the case of other religions and people of no faith. The church is a missionary body; indeed the Church of England has published a report called *Mission-shaped Church*, the purport of which could easily give the impression that the purpose of the church is 'church-planting'.[4] The task, it is assumed, is to make the entire world Christian. Our Lord calls us, or so we believe, to 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you' (Mt. 28.19–20a). Moreover, since Jesus told his disciples, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me', and that, 'lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age' (Mt. 28.18a, 20a), one has little choice surely but to get on with it by all means at our disposal. Success must be guaranteed by these clear assurances!

When we examine the history of missionary activity over the last two thousand years there are many good things, and hugely admirable people, but we also experience anxiety and indeed, from time to time, shame; what is more, we don't seem to be able to learn from experience, if some of the stories of the activity of some American missionary groups in Russia and Central Europe since 1989 are to be believed. And anyway, how do you think we are doing in this project? Is the thought that we are to make every person a Christian now or at the hour of their death a sensible dream, let alone a realistic hope? What hangs on the result? Is it that *only* Christians will be saved? What exactly is the understanding of God's saving act in Christ that is implicit here? These may seem naïve questions to us, but it is just such naïve questions with their simplistic answers that lie behind a great deal of current misunderstanding, pain and sadness both amongst Christians and those who exclude themselves from sharing in the conversation of the Church.

The Jesuit scholar Jacques Dupuis has some interesting thoughts on the matter. Since it is *this* world and not another world which God graces with his presence, there must be some sense, yet to be uncovered, understood and formulated, which illuminates how there are at present five major religions, at least one of which did not emerge until the Christian era, and such a large number of disenchanted people without faith. What are we to make of this? Dupuis suggests that there is a great deal more work to be done on the doctrine of incarnation in particular and Christology in general. The Christian church cannot compromise on the claim that the world is graced by God's presence but it could make more of the fact that the incarnation of God in Christ is in the world, and not exclusively or privately to Christians in the church.[5]

There are huge issues here. In the Eucharist, for example, the church celebrates the fact of God's creation of the world and God's presence with the world in God's people, and in that celebration it draws attention to God's presence with every human being. The 'Our' of the Lord's Prayer, '*Our* Father', refers to the whole human race, not just those present and praying. It is crucial to keep in mind that the eucharistic sacrifice made once and for all, and made on behalf of the whole world, is nevertheless made present on each occasion here and now through the fact that the one celebrant is Christ himself. What does this mean for our understanding of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam, or more particularly of Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and Muslims? How are we to understand that God in Christ is therefore also present in them? Or is that nonsense?

How can we take forward the conversation that we share with God and one another, so as to include members of other faiths? Substantial progress has been made at the top level. There are official conversations, as well as scholarly groups in universities and colleges working hard; they publish reports and books. However, there is more to the church's conversation than scholarly reflection, though its importance must never be underplayed. It is also a matter for individual believers, who on a daily basis, at work or at leisure, when travelling or in the normal business of going about their daily life, are brought into contact with other traditions. How can we help them to engage in conversation *with* others? How can members of other religions – not forgetting those of no faith – be included in the one conversation of God with the world in Christ to which, if the Christian church is right, it is her responsibility to introduce them?

Notice that in these last sentences there has been no reference to conversion, to missionary enterprise, or to developing schemes by which members of other religions will realize they have been wrong. Can we abandon such language and still be true to our own tradition? What would be the impact on our thinking about God and our relationship with the faith were we to do so? All of which raises in sharp form the second area where we have to continue learning. The church has claimed to have the truth.

The search for the meaning of what we confess

Truth has had a bad press recently. This is hardly surprising, since the twentieth century was the century of intolerance and paranoid commitment to ideologies by persons, parties and groups who created institutions to defend them: they turned inflexible dogmas into supposedly objective and incontestable truths defended by law and the power of the state. Totalitarian leaders were under the illusion that they were the only ones who had been introduced to the truth, and also therefore believed it their duty to enforce their views on others since the future well-being of the world depended upon it.

Unfortunately the church suffers from the same criticism. The teaching of the church, covering such matters as the existence of God, creation, redemption, resurrection, life after death, and the importance of notions such as sin and forgiveness and the sensitive interpretation of human life, are all dismissed by some

as dogmatic nonsense, contrary to reason and unsupported by any evidence. Considered in this light they are beyond criticism but at the same time they are proffered as the basis of unreasonable recommendations of behaviour on such matters as birth control, stem cell research, nuclear power and homosexuality. All that can be done, many assume, is to accept that it is the duty of all sensible people to oppose the Christian tradition in all its many manifestations. Of course, this is an argument against all religions, not just Christianity.

It is a most unfortunate fact that the Christian church has acted from time to time so as to give some substance to this accusation. One is reminded of the Syllabus of Errors of 1864, in which Pius IX in 80 propositions pronounced anathemas on most of the emerging principles of modern civilisation, as the church identified them. The malign influence resulting from reaction to these anathemas still rampages through much ignorant response to the church. It is easy to assume on this basis that the church had a private understanding of the truth that it was simply its task to get others to accept.

Actually nothing could be further from the truth. The church wants to know what it believes, and in whom it believes and what it actually means. It is keen to argue through its faith in every generation in the light of current developments in our understanding of the world. This is a Christian view, inherited from the marvellous Jewish tradition of arguing with God, found in the book of Job and especially in the Psalms. 'What's going on, God? What are you up to? The wicked prosper and the righteous are condemned to such awful suffering. What are we supposed to do? Wake up and do something about it!'

The purpose of argument and conversation is not, however, simply to find new ways of saying things which were perfectly plain but, by attending carefully to the manner in which ideas, hypotheses and judgements are emerging, to explore, in relation to them, what exactly we do believe. Thus, we have to consider what we mean when we pray, for example, for rain, or for healing, or for peace.

Such conversation is not new; Christians have always wanted to know what they are doing when they pray – one can only assume that this is why our Lord took such trouble to guide the church by giving her the family prayer. Thus health and peace depend upon knowing what to eat, how to exercise, how to behave well and how to speak courteously. Praying for health and peace must be related to our understanding of the world, our behaviour and the way in which we can best live in order to secure what God wants. Insulting behaviour is not conducive to peace and good relations, and is wholly different to positive criticism. The matter of praying for rain seems to almost everyone either a waste of time or unintelligible. But in praying for rain we recognize that we are in need of things which it is outside our power to secure for ourselves. Of course we could learn to be more effective in saving the rain that we do get!

Here we become aware of the relationship of hoping to learning. We can reasonably hope to make progress in apprehending the truth and learning justice, since this is God's world graced by the fullness of God's love. We can therefore learn to behave in ways that might seem unreasonable to those who have a more limited and constricted perspective. However, since we know that God wants peace and justice, that he wills to feed the hungry with good things and to bring all

people to himself, we can sensibly adopt policies and choose to behave in ways that may seem surprising to others. Courteous affection may be more important than getting our own way.

The church can base its life on the reality of truth and the importance of searching for it, so as to instantiate it in the life of the church for the world's sake, while at the same time having the confidence to recognize that the portion of the truth which it knows is not all that there is to be learned. The church is not in the business of infallibly deducing propositions from Scripture and tradition, and then forcing them on others. It is in the business of bearing witness to the truth and seeking it with its whole being. Moreover, it is not equipped to do it on its own for its own sake, but with others for the love of God and for the world's sake. As Newman said, 'Truth is wrought by many minds working together.'[6]

Learning from God's creation

Thirdly, there is the matter of learning from the world. No community has greater reason or greater opportunity than the church to listen to what the world is saying about its own experience and to develop its own language of faith in partnership with all the languages with which we enquire after the world's truth. There is no question here of selling out, as if we were looking to do no more than translate what we want to say into language that the world will accept. The language of faith means something. To this extent I agree with John Milbank and Radical Orthodoxy; there is an irreducible meaning implicit within the language of faith that is untranslatable. But it does not follow from this that the language of faith means something apart from, independent of, the developing languages of interpretation on which we rely in other aspects of human experience. The language of faith is rooted in all aspects of human experience. In this world, which is God's, we must expect to learn something to our advantage when paying attention to his world and how it appears to the best human minds to make sense. This is not only the case with the sciences, but with history and economics, and the arts in all their marvellous forms.

Moreover, the church has amongst its members persons who are specially qualified in all areas of human enquiry, who need to be equipped theologically to develop their conversation so as to feel the resonance and identify any potential clash between theological understanding and contemporary thought, always remembering that it is possible to learn from both. What is at least as important is that the church has persons at every level of competence within each area of human enquiry; they too need to be equipped so as to become sensitive to the nuances in practice which produce insight for faithful living and those which are destructive of its possibility. At every level and in each context, there is opportunity and interest.

Take, for example, the current arguments about global warming. Almost every reputable scientist is of the opinion that the major cause is carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels. Almost everyone on the planet is aware of the fact that something is afoot with the weather – the temperature is rising on the one hand and there are more violent meteorological events on the other. A tradition of

theological reflection, largely but not exclusively based in the southern states of the US, has hitherto denied this, regarding it as the trumped-up charge of the Left, born of jealousy, to threaten the God-given American way of life and provoke political instability. It was Sir John Horton, a distinguished British meteorologist, also of a modest Evangelical persuasion, who, beginning with a conference in Oxford in 2002, began to persuade his more vigorous colleagues in conversation that there was truth in the claims of scientists about global warming. The interesting thing for us is the method he adopted; he showed the importance of looking at the science and the theology alongside one another and bringing them into conversation. Thus maybe the scientists are right, global warming is a fact; but maybe because it is God's world we can do something about it if we want do. After all, God wants the world to flourish, not just America. And when you come to think about it, without the rest of the world, there will be nothing for America.

This is simplistic, too simplistic. But in ordinary terms, we have to begin with the problems we have and to try to talk through, in serious conversation, the implications for our future. It is the task of the church to adopt a stance that is conducive to public conversation about difficult issues. The church does not have final solutions, they are not revealed; what it has is confidence in the light of faith to tackle any problem, to try to make sense of it, and to contribute, in conversation with others, to the development of policies which may deal with the issues.

'Hoping to Learn': The Natural Stance of the Community of Faith

'Hoping to learn' is the stance which the church must take if it is to be itself in relation to God and to Christ and if it is to be led into all truth by the Holy Spirit. That stance includes the vision of the future that is hoped for, and the intention to learn from all its experience so as to discern how to act and to learn from the results. Hence, of course, we affirm that there is such a thing as natural theology – we can learn from God in the world and from the world as it is because God has graced it with God's presence. We have also to affirm the doctrine of revelation because that dimension of theological enquiry recognizes that all knowledge of every kind is dependent upon the being and nature of God. We can therefore never presume to make what we think we know of God, of ourselves and of his world everything that there is to be known, despite God's full revelation of himself in Christ.

The offer of life as proclaimed in God's good news is so full of apparent difficulty and subject to such regular disappointment that the opportunities can seem incredible, so incredible in fact that the church struggles to take God's promise seriously and is tempted to withdraw into non-engagement with the world. The way in which the church can deal with this difficulty is by renewing its life through striving to focus its attention on God in worship, most especially in the sacramental life. It is in the sacramental life that the church understands that while we begin the conversation with God anew every time we engage with it, paradoxically we all have the opportunity to make progress in our understanding of faith. Thus in baptism there is formally begun once and for all the conversation

with God on which eternal life depends – parents promise to talk the talk and to introduce their child into their conversation with God, and the church promises to develop its conversation with the child for the child's, the church's and the world's sake. Confirmation is the occasion when the child takes up the conversation in his or her own name.

In the Eucharist, while there is celebrated the once-and-for-all nature of God's presence in Christ, the Word of God, through whom all things were made, and of the fulfilment of God's redemptive creativity in God's raising of Christ from the dead, there is at one and the same time begun all over again the interpretation of the world's life in the sermon, where the preacher presumes to indicate the way in which the Word once given in Christ, and nourished and refreshed in the tradition throughout the ages, is alive and well and continuing to stimulate and engage his people in conversation. The question is, will the church take up the conversation in public, and will the members gathered locally develop the conversation in their congregations and communities? Will those present *be* the church and go out to love and serve the Lord by engaging the world in their conversation with God?

That we come to understand the importance of this is vital, for the local church is the universal church gathered in one place, and the universal church is no more than the local congregation writ large. There is only one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, wherever it is gathered. I realize that this raises all the questions about the relationship between the many traditions of church life; so be it, they are questions that cannot simply be ignored. As Father Timothy Radcliffe says in his recent book when speaking of the church, 'Christianity is gravely wounded in its ability to witness to the future unity of humanity, both because of divisions between Christians and divisions within the churches.'[7]

The recognition that the effectiveness of the church's witness to the unity of humankind was vitiated by public disunity and ecclesiastical competition was a main motive behind the Missionary Societies' Meeting in Edinburgh in 1910 which led to the emergence of the ecumenical movement and the later formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948. Since then there have followed the bilateral consultations between churches – Anglican–Roman Catholic, Roman Catholic–Methodist, Roman Catholic–Lutheran, Anglican–Lutheran, Roman Catholic–Orthodox, and many others. All are important, but without the regular commitment of every local congregation to develop locally its own conversation with God, they are of less value than they might be.

If with Jacques Dupuis we can work to develop a Christology that includes the fact that God revealed himself in a world of many religions, then surely Father Örsy, the Jesuit canon lawyer, is right to affirm that in our conversations between the Christian traditions we are not putting together a shattered body when we talk with one another, but attempting to 'discern the Body of Christ' and make a public reality of what God already knows to be one.[8] Christ's body cannot be broken. Indeed, the truth of this may be apparent when we consider the situation in our individual churches. We recognize our unity, though our disagreements and private passions sometimes disguise the matter all too well – hence, for example, the tenacity with which the Anglican Church is at the moment struggling to find ways forward in its fundamental perplexities.

Fit for Purpose?

There is a great deal of talk at the moment about the need to educate the laity. It is common throughout the churches – it is partly prompted by a potentially disastrous shortage of clergy, at any rate in the Western world, but I hope there are more worthy motives. If we need an educated church – and we do – this means an educated clergy as well as an educated laity. It could be argued that neither the clergy nor the laity is at the moment effectively educated for responsible Christian conversation in the contemporary world. When we are in church, we leave the world behind us; when we are at work, we leave our church in darkness; when we are at home we are tired and apparently content to have our opinions formed for us by the opinion-makers or entertainers of the media. Of course, I exaggerate – I hope. However, in none of these places do we sufficiently take account of the fact that the church and therefore each and every member of the church is in conversation with God *and* God's world and therefore 'hoping to learn'. If ever there was a context in which the well-worn theme of lifelong learning was relevant, it is surely in the church, the people of God, the people of the Word.

The church should live with the expectation of 'signs and wonders', not with the taste of death in its mouth. God's Word is life, and it is the language of life that the church speaks with the world.

Notes

1. R. F. Bennett, 'Introduction' to his translation of Gerd Tellenbach, *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1940), p. vi, quoting from J. P. Whitney, *Hildebrandine Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), p. 57.
2. H. E. J. Cowdrey, *Pope Gregory VII, 1073–1085* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 685. Berengar of Tours held the doctrine of the real presence but at the same time denied any material change in the elements. His views were investigated by Leo IX but no action was deemed necessary: it was Gregory who in a sudden volte-face condemned him in 1079.
3. Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.9.3.
4. *Mission-shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004).
5. Jacques Dupuis, SJ, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2001).
6. John Henry Newman, letter to Robert Orsby, 26 March 1863, in *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 425–6.
7. Timothy Radcliffe, *What is the Point of Being a Christian?* (London: Burns and Oates, 2005), p. 164.
8. Ladislas Örsy, SJ, 'True and False Reception', paper delivered to the Conference on Catholic Learning and Receptive Ecumenism, Durham University, January 2006, and personal conversation subsequently.

INDEX